

Glow Worm

by Evil Dolly

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The girl was kneeling on the bare floor of the back of the van. Kneeling was all she could do. Her wrists and ankles had been cuffed behind her back and were chained to a bolt in the floor. Her shoulders were killing her and she could barely breathe thanks to having her jaw stretched wide around a thick gag of cloth and tape which had been crammed mercilessly into her mouth while she had been unconscious. The gag had soaked through and she was now drooling onto the floor. She wasn't sure how long she had been in there, in the dark, but it felt like she been alone and waiting in terror for hours. The inside of the van had grown stifling and she was already exhausted and sweaty from struggling. The van was empty except for a roll of tape and a pair of paper grocery bags against the opposite wall. Earlier she thought she had heard muffled voices nearby, but now all she could hear was the hum of a lawn mower from somewhere in the distance.

She didn't know why she was there or what was going to happen to her. She couldn't remember much of anything. The whole day felt scrambled and disjointed. Had she been drugged? There had been a woman, she was sure of that — a memory of a woman near a blue van, beckoning to her in the empty lot of the park. The woman had touched her arm and then... the world had dissolved into a dizzying miasma. After that, nothing but the shock of waking up to the noise of a garage door closing and finding herself alone and bound in the rear of the van. Who had taken her? What did they want with her? Rape? Torture?

Worse?

She moaned into the gag, then dry heaved around the spit-slimy rag filling her mouth.

Then came the rumble of a large trash bin as it was pulled on its plastic wheels somewhere adjacent to the garage. A minute passed, and again she heard voices through the walls, growing louder and clearer. On aching knees, she inched closer to the van doors to better listen.

"... took in the trash can and scrubbed the bathrooms," came a female voice. "I'll do the rest later. I really have to go. I have to get to class."

"I didn't forget," replied a second woman who sounded older than the first. "Did you do the dishes?"

"You know I didn't. I'll do them later, I swear." There was a pause. "I can't be late today."

"I wouldn't dream of making you late. Oh, before you go, can you bring the groceries in from the van?"

The van? The bound girl stiffened.

A door was opened, followed by the sound of footsteps on concrete. The van's rear doors swung open, spilling in light from the house. Holding open the doors was a young woman, college-aged with a dark pixie haircut. Her eyes widened with horror — a visible tremor passed through her body when she saw the girl kneeling and drooling in the back of the van.

"*Fuck!*" she shouted and jumped back.

The girl in the van fixed her with a desperate look and cried into the gag.

The young woman looked toward the open doorway to the house. "What did you do?" she asked, shock in her voice, then she looked back at the bound girl. "I'm so sorry," she breathed. Then she shut the van doors and walked away.

The girl's muffled scream filled the van.

"What the fuck did you *do*?" the young woman yelled as she returned to the house.

Utterly calm, the older woman asked, "Did you grab the groceries?"

There was a long pause, followed by stomping footsteps. The van's doors were yanked open again by the girl with the pixie cut. She looked distraught, but she resolutely refused to make eye contact with the kidnapped girl as she gathered up the paper bags into her arms. The doors were slammed shut again. There came the sound of cans and bottles being placed on a counter top.

"*Why* is there somebody tied up in your car?"

"If you have a better idea of how to get an unwilling person from point A to point B, I'd love to hear it."

"This isn't funny!" the girl shouted, a hint of hysteria in her voice.

"Yeah, it kind of is. And don't raise your voice. She's a surprise. For you. Do you like her?"

"W-what?"

"You've been working so hard for me, you deserve a reward. Since you've been spending so much time fretting over our earthworm that I thought maybe you could use a pet to keep you company."

"A pet? A pet? I don't need a pet! I don't want..." The young woman choked and stammered on her words. "Why are you doing this? Why do you keep doing this? I have to go and take a *test* right now! How can I take a test when there's... when I know there's a kidnapped *girl* in the van?" she asked. "*You're ruining my life!*"

"You're ruining my life... what?" the woman prompted.

The girl hesitated. "You're... ruining my life, Mistress."

"You're a personal assistant — you have no life," the woman replied lightly. "But, anyway, I'm not. By the time you get to class you're going to be perfectly calm. You'll do fine on your test."

"Yes... Mistress." The girl sounded subdued.

"Off you go, then. Don't want to be late," said the woman. "On your back you can stop by that place on, um, Hawthorne? Get me a tuna salad sandwich and maybe some cheese blintzes. Oh, and stop and get me a vanilla chai."

"Yes, Mistress."

There was a period of silence. The terrified girl in the van shuffled anxiously on her knees. The other girl had left. Just left her. Was she going to get help while she was out? It didn't sound like it. It hadn't sounded like she was happy about this, so why hadn't she tried to free her? Just what sort of insanity had she been dragged into?

Then came the sound of approaching footsteps, heavier than before. The doors swung open, revealing the older woman. She was in her forties and had a weather-worn look to her with long, straight hair. She was wearing boots, tight jeans and a colorful Led Zeppelin tank top, and there was something about her which gave a somewhat feral impression. The girl recognized her as the one who had lured her close and knocked her out.

"It's just you and me now," the woman said with a grin.

The girl tried scooting away to the extent the chain would allow.

"Yes, I know you're sore. I hope you agree the reaction was worth the wait. That look on her face — priceless. I wish I'd been recording that," said the woman. She looked down. "Thank you for not pissing in my van, by the way. That's good manners."

The girl whimpered.

"Well, she didn't want you," the woman said, "so it looks like I'll just have to cook you up and eat you."

The girl's eyes went wide — she screamed into the gag.

"Relax, I'm just kidding. I wouldn't cook you. I'll definitely eat you raw."

The crying girl struggled against the cuffs and fell over, hurting her shoulder.

The woman laughed. "I'm kidding! You're fine. C'mere." She took hold of the girl's

ankle and dragged her closer to the door. The girl screamed again and tried to pull away. "Stop it, *you're fine*," said the woman, exasperated. She reached in and pushed her finger against the side of the girl's head. "*Rela-a-ax*. You're alright."

The girl felt a strange buzzing in her skull for just a moment and then it passed, along with some of her panic. She stared at the woman with terror in her eyes.

The woman smirked at her. "That's better." She climbed into the van and started to unlock the chain. "So, you've already met Daphne, my maid and so-much-more. She's the main reason why you're here, just to let you know. You're going to be her toy. Don't worry, she'll love you. She just has to get used to the idea. Oh, and Daphne's not her real name, by the way. I make her go by it because she hates it so much. 'And this is Daphne, my personal assistant.' You can feel the resentment coming off her. I eat that up." The chain clattered to the floor of the van, but the girl's wrists and ankles were still cuffed together and she was still unable to stand. The woman hopped back out and pulled the girl onto the bumper. "She does just about everything for me. She cleans, she gardens, she drives... she'll be doing my taxes, but don't tell her that. It's a surprise. Bound to a life of servitude and hating every single minute of it." She smiled to herself.

The girl made a pleading sound through her gag. The woman ignored her.

"Did you hear the way she was speaking to me? She's gotten so used to the new normal that she's started scolding me as if her morals are important. It's really endearing... you know, to a point. Eventually I have to slap her back down. But... I find it keeps me grounded. Okay, so..." The woman looked her over as if checking that everything was in order. "Let's get this show on the road. Upsy-daisy." The woman picked up the girl and slung her over her shoulder with ease, revealing a strength that a woman her size had no right to possess. The girl was startled and disoriented. The woman carried her out of the garage and into the house, still talking casually.

"She can't act against me, of course. No free will. I reached into her head and yanked *that* weed out by the root. Who wants that around, I ask you? But I let her keep her opinions. It's amusing to watch her struggle, so I let her stay her human. You know, unlike me and you." They passed through the kitchen and a dining room, where a small pile of unsorted mail was sitting on the table and a bowl full of painted wooden fruit. "As for you, I infected you while you were sleeping. Just letting you know: your old life is over. From now on, your biomass belongs to the Enthralled Host," the woman informed her. "Fresh, young biomass."

The girl began to kick frantically, causing her to slip off the woman's shoulder despite her strength.

"Whoa, whoa, whoa." The woman let the girl slide onto the floor. They were in a hall next to the entrance to a spacious living room. "That's enough of that." She stood over her and pressed her hand to the girl's forehead. "*Settle down*."

The girl went still, suddenly to afraid to move. Her eyes darted around, taking in her surroundings, looking for something, anything, that might help her.

The house's architecture, along with some of the sparse furnishings, looked like it hadn't been updated since the 70s. There was dark wood paneling on the walls of the living room, an avocado green carpet, and even a conversation pit sunk into the floor. In contrast with the dated style were some recent additions, like a huge, new-looking flat screen on the wall and an expensive sound system.

The woman followed the girl's gaze and chuckled. "Yeah. Just moved in a few months ago; we're still settling in. The previous owner hadn't changed a thing since... I don't know, a long time. It's a time capsule. At first, I was like, 'This has got to go.' But, you know, I think it's starting to grow on me. It does have character," she said, looking around with a speculative eye.

The girl believed the woman was absolutely insane. She couldn't think of what to do. Play along, do what she was told to avoid angering her captor? Just hope an opportunity for rescue or escape? Or should she fight back at every possible opportunity?

To fight... or to play dead?

"You poor thing. You probably think you don't deserve this. Right?"

The girl hesitantly nodded.

"After all, your life has been hard enough. You don't need this. Let the bad luck land on someone else, for once. Right?" she asked. "You want to know why I picked you? It's because you're so sad. You wear it all around you like a coat. I could taste your loneliness on the breeze." She flicked out her tongue as if tasting the air. "Such deprivation. Such coldness. Hardly a kind word since you were born — barely even a hug. What kind of parents were those? Smells like..." She inhaled deeply. "Foster parents, is it? Treating your existence like a nuisance? You just wanted to be loved and hugged like everyone else. Well, that's done with. It was all a bad dream. You have a new life now."

The girl stared, then shook her head a little in denial. How could the woman know anything about her? Had she been stalking her?

"I have to wonder. Approaching a stranger with a van like that? I wonder if some small part of you wanted to be... taken away," the woman said. "But I know what you want. A little dignity." She leaned over and unlocked the ankle cuffs, freeing her legs. "After all, you can still walk. Come on, let's get you squared away before she gets back," she said as she pulled the girl to her feet.

The girl staggered unsteadily. Her ankles were throbbing and her legs were half-asleep. She knew it was pointless to run with her hands cuffed and with the woman holding onto her cuffs' chain. The woman guided her down the hallway and into a sitting room full of couches and chairs. The front door was mere steps away, yet impossibly out of reach. Through a large bay window facing the street, she could see by the setting sun that she was in a house at the end of a cul de sac. All around were suburban ranch houses with normal, suburban things going on within their walls. Farther

down the street was a man in a red shirt edging his lawn with a weed-eater. She took a few, small steps toward the window, calling out weakly through the gag for help.

The woman pressed into her from behind and nuzzled the her ear, her eyes on the man in the red shirt. "Shh-sh-sh-sh," she cautioned with a smile. "We must keep a low profile. We're supposed to lead a quiet, domestic life. Our work is done behind the scenes."

She lead the girl away from the window and urged her to walk down a short, darkened hallway behind the sofas. She opened a side door and flicked on the light, illuminating a small bathroom. "Here. You'll probably want to be empty for what's coming," she advised and pushed the girl inside.

The girl looked around. The tiles and the porcelain were all a vaguely unpleasant shade of salmon. Other than that, it was a perfectly average bathroom: hair products, lotions, a hairdryer, a toothbrush. It was all spotlessly clean. It didn't at all look like the sort of place where one might be butchered in the tub, which the girl was now imagining would be her fate. There was a window, currently latched, which she thought she might be able to squeeze through if she got the chance. She shuffled to the toilet, since she did, in fact, badly need to pee. She glanced over her shoulder. The woman hadn't closed the door. Instead, she was watching while leaning against the hallway wall, arms folded, with a patient smile on her lips. The girl gave her a look of entreaty for privacy, but the woman simply arched her eyebrow. Resigned, she slowly worked down her shorts with her restrained hands and sat to relieve herself.

It was a strange moment of calm after the long hours of being bound in the back of the van and the last few minutes of terror and confusion. She gazed at her bruised knees, then at the fuzzy bathmat beneath her feet. It was surreal. Was this really happening? Her short, unhappy life ending like this? She was terrified of what the woman had in store for her — what kind of pain or violations was she going to have to experience before the end. She didn't want the pain. She didn't want to be killed. Though, the woman *had* said she was a 'pet', right? Maybe she'd end up like one of those women on TV, held captive in a basement for decades. She wasn't sure which was worse. A long string of drool dripped from the gag to fall between her feet, and she began to cry.

"Life is... so weird. Can you guess what I used to do? Not all that long ago? Three guesses," the woman said. The girl continued to cry, unable to guess even if she wished to. "Alright. I used to teach girls like you to ride horses. Well, not like *you* — your parents would never have sprung for something like riding lessons, would they? But, yeah, that's what I used to do. Even Daphne doesn't know that bit of my past. I like to stay a mystery. I trust you not to tell." The woman strummed her fingers on her arm. "You know, you have no idea what's really going in the world. All the secrets and unseen things, the monstrous things moving right below the surface. What goes on behind the shuttered windows you walk past every day. Or what could be happening just around

that alley corner when you hear something strange, but some deep part of your brain tells you not to peek, and so you pass it by. Well... I peeked. I don't regret it a bit," she said. "I can promise you this: that thing you're worried most I'm going to do to you...? Not gonna happen. You can't even guess what's about to happen to you."

The girl glanced up at the woman and, for just a split second, it seemed that woman's pupils were glowing in the gloom of the hallway. Then it was gone. The girl blinked and tried to clear her head.

The woman clapped her hands together. "Enough lolly-gagging. C'mon, we've got work to do. My fingertips are tingling with anticipation."

Reluctantly, the girl lurched to her feet and pulled up her panties and shorts with as much dignity as she could muster.

"Did you flush?"

The girl looked at her dully, then awkwardly pressed herself against the toilet in order to reach the lever.

"There you go. Daphne wouldn't thank you to leave a surprise in her bathroom."

The woman lead her from the bathroom to a door at the end of the hall. The girl stepped into the dark room, expecting to find herself in a bloody torture chamber. Once the lights were switched on, she saw it was just an ordinary, small bedroom. It, too, hadn't seemed to have changed much since the 70s. The walls were painted orange with white trim and on the bed was a dark yellow comforter. Along two walls were large, boxy shelves populated with a meager collection of books, and opposite the bed was a dresser and a dark brown desk, currently covered with books and loose papers filled with notes.

"I know, right?" the woman said from behind her. "This is Daphne's room. The, uh, paint came with the house. She absolutely hates orange. Can you guess why I gave this room to her?" she asked. "Technically she still lives at her dorm, but I have her sleep over most of the time; keeps her handy. She also naps in here quite a bit since I work her so hard. I let her have her naps. You're going to help with that."

The girl looked around, frightened and bewildered. Apart from the assault on the senses, there was nothing threatening about the room except for the woman.

"And this is where you'll be spending most of your time," the woman said with a grin, and picked her up and tossed her onto the bed. She bounced and hit her head lightly against the headboard, just enough to hurt. A pillow fell over her face. She groaned into the gag.

The woman grabbed her and dragged her down the mattress a little, pulling her head out of the pillows, and then tugged off her own boots. Beneath she was wearing striped socks of pink and green. She climbed onto the bed, straddled the girl, and sat down on her thighs. "Hey. If I took the gag off, think you'd beg me to let you go?"

The girl hesitated, then nodded.

"Would that work?"

The girl looked at her, confused, then nodded vigorously.

The woman laughed. "Oh, I like that. You're funny!" she said. "I've kidnapped an optimist."

She set about to roughly tearing the girl's clothes off her body and tossing them on the floor. The girl kicked and tried to resist to no avail. The woman was bizarrely strong and heavy, and easily kept her pinned down.

"So-o-o, about a month ago — this is just a little back story — so, a month ago we brought this chick home," she said over the sounds of tearing fabric. "Wait, that needs context. See, the lawn here, it's just awful. It's dry, it's hard, you can hardly grow a thing. But I know worms are good for the soil. They fertilize it and aerate it and all that. I decided to make, well, an earthworm, so we brought this woman home. She was kinda rude, you know, had a bad attitude, so I had no reservations against doing that to her. Well..." She held her hands up in mock surrender. "Okay. That's not exactly true. She did have a bad attitude, it's true, but mainly I just wanted to destroy something pretty. It's kinda what I do." She laughed lightly. "No reservations, either way."

"I made Daphne dig the hole in the back garden as best she could — I had to finish it off, she's not very strong — while I worked on... well, her name was Tabitha, but I named her Wormitha, because, you know: kind of a joke. Popped her in the hole like a carrot and buried her so she can eat dirt and make good, rich soil. Long story short; it worked! You can really see the difference and the plants have been growing like crazy. Do I have awesome ideas, or what?"

The girl was having trouble following along while she was being stripped naked. Had the woman just confessed to burying someone in the backyard? Buried alive? Or dead?

Having torn the last scraps of clothing away, the woman rolled the girl onto her back and began to examine her body with a critical eye, sliding her hand down the girl's chest and belly. The girl bucked violently, but the woman was undeterred. "A bit small in the chest, but that's not going to matter." She took hold of the girl's face to see it from different angles. "Not bad raw material," she said. "Not bad. You know, with a just few tweaks and adjustments I could make you stunning. Gorgeous. But that's not what I'm going to do." She paused. "Well... yes and no. You'll certainly be stunning. Your meat is simply begging to be sculpted into something unique and wonderful."

It sounded like the woman was talking about mutilation. The girl's whimpers grew shrill. She started to kick wildly, trying to strike the woman's head from behind.

"Hey. *Hey.*" The woman smacked the side of the girl's head and pointed a finger at her face. "Be nice. I could make this un-godly painful if I wanted to. I've been very gentle with you so far. Behave."

It was enough to intimidate the girl for a moment. She stopped trying to kick, though her body remained tensed and ready to fight.

"*Any-how*, ever since then, Daphne keeps digging in the garden, uncovering

Wormitha's face, checking on her, talking to her. I'm not sure if she's worried she can't breathe down there, or maybe she feels bad for her, or guilty for her participation. Could be she just wants someone to talk to. Talk at. All Wormitha can do now is just gurgle and puke mud. Either way, I figured maybe my maid is lonely and needs some company, someone that isn't me. Or maybe she secretly has a thing for worm-girls. If she doesn't, she soon will because that's where you come in!"

The woman lifted herself up enough to flip the girl over beneath her. It took a moment for the girl to realize that she was unlocking her cuffs and setting her arms free. She immediately reached up and tried to claw the gag loose, but the tape was too tightly wound to easily work free.

"I've been thinking of making a few more worms to cover the rest of the yard. But then I thought: while I'm at it, why not make a special worm just for Daphne? Since she's been obsessing over Wormitha so much."

The woman placed her hands on the girl's shoulders and ran her thumbs up along the insides of shoulder blades, as if to give her a massage. The knots and pain in her shoulders and neck from having her hands cuffed behind her for so long vanished entirely. The relief was so sudden and so welcome that the girl stopped struggling and went still for a moment. Warmth spread through her body like a slow ripple: relaxing her cramped muscles, soothing her bruised knees, taking away her headache. She exhaled deeply.

The woman slid her hands across the girl's shoulders and down her upper arms. When she reached her elbows, she took hold and slowly drew them together behind her back. The girl grunted in surprise and discomfort as her elbows were forced to touch above the small of her back, making her spine arch. There was some pain, but not as much as it seemed there should have been. She started to struggle again and her hands fluttered, but there was only so much she could do while held in that position except to protest and hope for the woman to release her. But the woman didn't let her go. Instead, she leaned into the girl, adding her weight to the pressing of the girl's arms firmly into her back. Strong vibrations began to penetrate her muscles.

The girl freaked out. The strange sensations, the weight of the woman on her back, the strenuous pose... she screamed and beat her feet against the mattress in a flurry of kicks. All the while, the woman was speaking softly, repeating, "It's alright. You're fine. You're fine," in the indulgent tone one might use with a small child who had become hysterical over a minor injury.

All at once, the vibrations ceased and the woman released her. The girl attempted to move but her arms seemed to be stuck in place. She rocked back and forth on her stomach — her elbows refused to budge from that spot. Had the woman used glue or something to fix her arms like that?

The woman climbed off of her and sat on the edge of the bed. Panting through her nose from effort, the girl was able to pull her legs under and get up on her knees.

Her back was forced into an arch by the position of her arms. She tried looking over her shoulders to see what was holding them in place. She could feel the skin of her upper arms and back being tugged as she moved — it had to be glue. The woman was watching her with a wicked smile and laughing silently. The girl twisted and pulled, trying to free her arms, finally making a sound of frustration and flapping her forearms helplessly. Then she caught her reflection in a small mirror above the dresser on the far side of the room. There was her tear-streaked face distorted by the large gag, but she didn't register any of that, because behind her back...

It took several moments to process what she was seeing, because what she was seeing couldn't be. The skin of her upper arms and upper back had somehow merged together, as if her arms had been vacuum-sealed beneath the flesh of her own back. She shook her head repeatedly in fervent denial of what her eyes and nerve endings were telling her.

This wasn't real. She had been drugged. The woman had drugged her and now she was hallucinating. It was the only explanation. She looked at the woman's grinning reflection in the mirror and for just a second... it *looked* like she was running a light purple tongue along the tips of a mouthful of the long, thin fangs of some deep sea creature. Flushed with adrenaline, the girl spun around on her knees to face her, but the woman had shut her mouth. The next time she parted her lips to speak, her teeth were normal.

"You really need to calm down."

It was drugs. It had to be.

The girl braced a foot under herself, preparing to jump off the bed and make a run for it. The woman took her wrist and gave it a tug, easily pulling the girl off balance and making her land on her butt. She fought frantically to get free of the woman as she pushed her back onto the bed and straddled her once again. The girl screamed, which caused her to start retching again; the gag was tickling the back of her tongue.

"That can't be comfortable. Here," the woman offered. She pushed the girl's head to the side and cut the tape with... had she used her fingernails? She gave the tape a quick, hard yank.

There was a flash of pain from the tape being ripped from her skin, taking some hair with it. Suddenly the girl's mouth was empty. She coughed convulsively, trying to swallow and gasp for fresh air at the same time. Her jaw was stiff from having been stretched so wide for so many hours and she couldn't close it properly. She began to hyperventilate, working herself up to scream for help, hoping to alert the woman's neighbors.

The woman clamped a hand over the girl's mouth. "Worms don't speak. I need you to be quiet." She drew close and pressed her fingers to the side of the girl's head. That strange buzzing filled her skull. "In fact, you don't really need to talk again. Ever."

With growing desperation, the girl tried to speak, to shout, but for the life of her

she couldn't remember how to form the words. All she could manage were soft exhalations.

"It's not like you had anything important to say."

Rage bubbled up inside the girl and spilled over. She lashed out and bit at the hand covering her mouth, catching one of the woman's fingers between her teeth. She bit down as hard as she could.

The woman only laughed. "Ooh. So *ferocious*. Can you feel that?" the woman asked as she drew close. "The divide growing? The other-ness creeping in? The facade of humanity slips so easily once the form starts to fall away."

The girl shook her head like a wild animal, trying to tear, trying to hurt. As long as she drew blood, she didn't care what happened to her. Then her teeth shattered. Inside her mouth, all of the girl's teeth started to painlessly crumble and dissolve on her tongue like sugar candy. Wide-eyed, the girl coughed and gagged on the powdery muck that her teeth had become. She touched her tongue to her gums and found them empty. The hollow sockets were closing up, as if she had never had teeth to begin with.

The woman withdrew her undamaged finger from the girl's lips. "It's alright. That wasn't really a punishment. Your teeth had to go, anyway," the woman told her. "A love bite's not gonna hurt me, but I can't have you nipping at Daphne even by accident." She pressed her hand against the side of the girl's head, and the girl's mind buzzed. "*You're a loving pet*. You're not feral. You're domestic. Don't bite. Don't fight. Relax. You can be sad. You can be happy. But you can't be mad. I'm stealing that from you."

The girl's anger guttered out and fear took its place. She shrank back into the pillows in terror. This couldn't be happening. *None* of this could be happening.

The woman gave her a look of pity. "I can see how this might demand an explanation, though you aren't really owed one," she said. "When I was rebirthed into the Thralldom, oh, about a year ago, I was found to have an aptitude for an uncommon gift: Corruption's Touch. Which makes me one of the *Dilectae*...the beloved. That puts me, eh, *some-what* high in the Host hierarchy. You're at the bottom. That's why I get to tell you what to think and feel." She smiled sweetly. "We're all servants of the Flowering Choir — *not* as sweet as the name implies. Specifically, I belong to Our Lady of Flesh and Chaos. You belong to Her now, too, though you don't know it. I do *Her* will by making flesh more... exotic. Shaping it to my will. Though, honestly, I'm still not sure whether I'm being subconsciously influenced by Her when making new creations, or if by just doing what I do adds to who She is. I don't know — She's never spoken to me," She shrugged. "It doesn't really matter, in the end."

The girl was staring at her.

"Believe me, I know... it'd sound crazy to me. *Still* sounds crazy, but here we are. Your arms are fused to your back and I have fangs in my vag." She took a deep breath. "You probably didn't need to know that. Forget I said anything; it's just an experiment."

The girl's gaze traveled from the woman's face to her denim-covered crotch and

back again.

"Anyway, you don't need to understand any of this. My point is... when I say you're going to be a lowly, little worm, princess," she said, raising a finger in the air and slowly bringing it down to touch the tip of the girl's nose, "you'd better start believing it."

The girl tried again to speak, but nothing came out. The woman ignored her and began gathering the girl's tangled hair together behind her head. She pulled... and all of the hair painlessly came out by the roots. The girl stared in utter shock as the woman leaned over with placid smile and dropped the hair into a small trashcan beside the night stand. She brushed at the girl's scalp with her hands, removing shorter hairs that had escaped.

The girl was bald. She couldn't believe it. Just like that, she was entirely bald. She could feel her bare scalp against the slightly rough weave of the comforter. She was being physically ruined! It had to be a hallucination or a horrible nightmare. *Anything* but reality.

"You should be thanking me for making you more interesting."

This could not be happening. Shutting her eyes tightly and clutching fistfuls of the comforter beneath her, she willed herself to wake up and make it all disappear.

"I see you're wishing for the comfort of darkness," the woman said. "I can give you that, though it's not going to make the monsters go away." Placing her hands flat against the girl's temples, she slowly moved her thumbs down across her brow. The vibrations grew intense, she could feel it throughout her skull, and there were tiny sparks of pain behind her eyes. Frightened, she shut her eyes even more tightly as the woman's thumbs passed over her eyelids and nose. In their wake... was nothing. She couldn't open her eyes, couldn't *sense* her eyes or feel them move, nor could she breathe through her nose.

She couldn't make sense of what she was feeling. Her hands were trapped at her sides, but she could feel by rubbing against the fabric of the comforter and pillows — her face was gone. *Gone*. Where her eyes and nose should have been was now nothing but smooth, flat skin. Was this forever? Had she been blinded forever? This *couldn't* be happening, but it was! She had *no face*. It was worse than mutilation — she was being erased!

Absolute terror. She thrashed wildly. She threw back her head and shrieked. All that came out was a hoarse, high-pitched squeak.

The woman clasped both sides of the girl's head. They buzzed. It felt for all the world like her fingers were dipping into her brain. "*Calm down.*"

The command couldn't be denied. The girl's breathing gradually slowed to short pants. She knew she should be panicking. She knew she had every reason to panic. But it just wasn't there. She could feel fear, yes. Horror, yes. Yet she was strangely calm, as if suddenly disconnected from herself.

"I know it's a little bit of a shock. You'll get used to it sooner than you think. Hey,

I'm actually making you over in my image, more or less. You should be flattered. I don't have eyes or a nose in *my* true form, either, and I do just fine. I do have an impressive set of antlers, though," she said.

The woman cupped her palms over the girl's ears and pressed. When she took them away, her ears were missing. Not even holes had been left in their place, just a membrane of smooth skin. Unlike with what happened to her eyes, she could at least still hear. The girl tried to beg her to stop. She wanted to swear she would do anything, *anything*, if the woman would just make this stop. She couldn't even mouth the words. She felt the woman place her fingers over her lips.

"I will it," the woman said, "and it happens."

The girl felt her lips stretching and engorging, growing fuller and wider, tripling in size. They felt inflated and enormous to her. The woman rubbed her thumbs along their edges, shaping the perfect cupid's bow.

"It's really more biology than mysticism. But then... it's more art than science."

The girl gagged when the woman thrust her fingers past her fattened lips and massaged her toothless gums, which tingled as they grew and formed into ridges that replaced her teeth. They felt too soft to be made of bone.

"Bite."

The girl hesitated, afraid.

"*Bite*," she repeated.

The girl bit down hard. Her gums collapsed around the finger like firm foam rubber. The woman easily withdrew it from her mouth. "Good, that'll work. No hard bits. Nothing sharp or bitey. Nothing but hug-able softness. Alright, hold still, now."

The woman trailed her fingertips down the girl's face. Beneath them, amid intense vibrations that seemed to numb her skin, the girl could feel her skull changing. Empty eye sockets filling in, nasal passages collapsing, bone plates shifting. Her body shuddered, her mind reeled, trapped in the darkness. She desperately clung to the woman's knees — the only part of her she could reach — as a point of contact to reality. She wished she could make herself pass out. She willed it, over and over, but she remained awake and aware, forced to feel every alteration.

When the woman's hands were finished, there was nothing but a featureless curve from the girl's upper lip to the top of her forehead. Beneath the pristine skin and its softening layer of fatty tissue was a smooth plane of bone without the slightest evidence that eyes or a nose had ever existed. The girl's jaw trembled. The woman rolled her over onto her front and the girl's face was pressed into the comforter, and she could feel just how appallingly, perfectly smooth her face had become. She wanted to cry, but she no longer had the ability. She didn't even have tear ducts. She silently screamed at the absence of ... everything.

"You're alright. You're fine. This isn't so bad. It's not so bad," the woman crooned as she rubbed her hands across the girl's upper back. "Here. I can make this feel more

natural." The vibrations came and she tightened up and smoothed over the bunched skin between her shoulder blades while rearranging the muscle and bone beneath, making them pop and shift. When she was done, the girl's elbows felt as natural trapped behind her back as they would have hanging at her sides, though still entirely constrained. "I wonder. A skeleton of bone or cartilage?" the woman mused. "Let's go with a mix. But these..." She placed her hands on the girl's trapped upper arms. "Definitely cartilage. They'll be more bendy, and you'll be more comfortable."

The vibrations came, and the girl felt her arms conform even more closely to her back. She pounded her feet against the mattress.

"And let's take care of these, while I'm back here." She stroked her hands down the girl's forearms.

In moments, they too had merged with the skin of her sides all the way to her wrists, angled down so that the palms of her hands were above the points of her hips. Only her hands were still free, though all that her fingers could reach was her lower abdomen and upper thighs. When she strained, and she did strain, she found she could pull her hands away from her body by a few inches, as if the skin binding her forearms was elastic, but they always returned to rest against her hips.

The woman rolled her onto her back. "Oh, no, those will have to go."

The girl felt the woman take her hands and start to pluck her fingernails off, one by one. It didn't hurt, exactly, but it was horrifying all the same, feeling her nails sliding away from her fingertips. She struggled, but there was nothing she could do while the woman was sitting on her thighs. Once the nails were all gone, the woman massaged her fingertips to cover the bare nail beds with skin. Once her hands were free, she dug her weirdly smooth fingers into her thighs. It was a small thing, losing her nails, but she suddenly felt even more vulnerable.

"You need neither fang nor claw for your new life. In fact, there's a lot you won't need. Alright," she said, rubbing her hands together, "this is the hard part. Let's streamline you and get you up to code. There's too much superfluous in here." She placed her hands on the front of the girl's shoulders and slowly began to push them *in*. The vibrations filled the girl's chest, and it felt for all the world as if the woman's fingers had penetrated her ribs, passing through her flesh and bone like it was soft clay.

The girl gasped. She could *feel* her bones popping from their sockets and resetting, organs shifting and changing, growing or dissolving. There were tingling jolts and brief sparks of pain as nerves were severed and rewired.

"You won't need that. Or these. You'll need one of those," the woman mumbled to herself. "Did you know you're prone to heart disease? Among other things. Not anymore, though. I'll fix all of that for you. Don't worry... you're going to live a long, *long* time. Hmm... belly button? You don't need that. Let's widen those hips a bit, though."

It was too much. The girl gave up trying to beg for mercy. She rocked her head back and forth while grasping at empty air with her hands. She felt her pelvis split and

spread, followed by the bizarre sensation of her thighs and butt growing fuller.

"I don't want you to think I make worms exclusively. I'm just working through a theme right now," the woman said conversationally as she worked. "I'll be honest, it was very satisfying to turn Wormitha into that grotesque... thing. But she's beautiful in the eyes of our goddess. I'm sure that's a comforting thought for her." Her hands passed along the outside of the girl's thighs. "Still, I didn't want to make just another copy of Wormitha: all pinky-brown... translucent. Not cuddle material, at all. She's way too slimy and slippery. You have to be special."

The girl felt the woman forcing her thighs together and she realized what was about to happen. She fought back, attempting to keep her legs part, and then felt her inner thighs fusing together as one. She opened her mouth and let out a silent scream. Then the woman slid a hand into the crevice remaining between the girl's thighs, and the girl could feel her vagina start to shrink and disappear within her as her genitals were erased. Her rectum soon followed. She bucked her hips wildly, trying to escape the woman's ruinous touch.

"I know, I know," the woman told her. "But it's not like you were doing anything fun with it."

The flesh of her thighs continued to flow and swell, filling in and covering over the gaps, burying her crotch and unifying her buttocks. She groped to feel herself with her hands; it almost felt like she was wearing an extremely tight skirt, if the skirt was made of her own living skin.

The fusion spread down her legs, melting her calves together and covering her knees. The skin-skirt had reached her ankles.

The woman stood at the foot of the bed. "Little toes-ies," the woman said, poking the girl's tightly curled toes. "You won't be needing those, anymore." She took the girl's feet in her hands and squeezed them, as if giving a massage. The girl pumped her legs, trying to pull free. "Be still, little worm," the woman said as the bones in the girl's feet collapsed and disintegrated. The dissolution traveled all the way up her legs to her mid-thighs. She was still able to wiggle her thighs independently beneath her skin, but below that point it felt like her legs had become a paralyzed, boneless sack of meat. She could still feel everything, but nothing below her thighs would move or respond.

She was being destroyed. She was trapped, mute, in her own body as it was being mangled. This was happening. It just kept getting worse and worse. She wanted to pass out. Or lose her mind. Anything that would free her from this nightmare. She thumped her head against the mattress.

"You're fine. You're safe. Don't worry," the woman told her. She wrapped her arms around the girl's legs. "This... is gonna feel a little weird," she warned. Then she pulled.

The girl felt her skin stretching like warm taffy. She was frozen from the shock of it. The sensations were indescribable. It was as if her fused legs were being inflated like a narrow water balloon, her flesh bulging as it passed through the woman's arms. One the

woman reached the end where the girl's toes had been, the mass flopped heavily onto the bed and dangled over the edge of the mattress. The girl's nerve endings were sending confusing signals. It felt as though her legs had become one long, fleshy tube. It was a tail. From the hips down, nothing but a boneless tail. She shook her head in disbelief.

"More of a worm by the second! But I think... let's shape it up; you're a little too round." The woman pressed her hands onto the girl's new tail, working her way down, making it a little flatter than it was round to transition smoothly from the shape of her hips, tapering down to the its tip. "Much better. Now to move some of your insides down into here... and get your new muscles hooked up right. Ring muscles... a new heart..."

The girl went rigid and shuddered as she sensed things moving around inside her. She didn't want to know what was happening in her body. She just wanted this to be over.

Suddenly, she found that she could move. Rather, that she could move the tail. Its strange muscles didn't move in the way she was used to. Instead, it pulsed; she could feel the waves and contractions pass down the length of it. Just like in the body of a worm.

Her first reaction was of pure horror, for she had little control over this *thing*, this appendage, which had replaced half her body. She floundered and rolled on the bed as her tail writhed and wound itself, making frantic knots in worm-like fashion. To the side of the bed, the woman was clapping. The girl flailed, knocking her tail against the shelves and nearly lurched herself off the bed. The woman caught her.

"Whoa, whoa. Eeaaasy girl. Settle down. You're way too energetic," the woman said as she deposited her back onto the bed. "Flopping around like a fish; you could wake Daphne up. That defeats your whole purpose. So, we'll just turn your muscles to mush. Just a little." She moved her hands down the girl's body, and, as she did, an almost pleasant lethargy soaked into her taut and twitching muscles. The girl could only writhe helplessly on her back. She was suddenly so weak that she could hardly turn herself over, much less get out of the bed. Instead of flailing, her tail lazily rolled from side to side.

"It's going to take you a little time to learn your new body. Probably not as much time as you'd think. What a nice little worm you're becoming."

The girl felt ruined. She knew she didn't look remotely human anymore. She was unrecognizable. She had been made into a freak. A monster!

Why her? Why *this*?

"Yeah, you're not human anymore, but neither am I. So what? Now for some finishing touches," the woman said, as she brushed her fingers here and there. She placed her hands over the girl's small breasts. The girl felt them start to expand.

The girl was stunned by the sensation of her breasts growing heavier on her chest,

spilling out from beneath the woman's hands. They felt huge, and they weren't perky or round. The woman was giving her naturally large, sagging breasts which flowed down either side of the girl's torso like half-filled pillows, nearly touching the bed. The girl wasn't sure how she felt about this development. Large breasts weren't the worst transformation she had faced today, but they took her even farther away from the person she had been. And they certainly wouldn't make trying to move around any easier.

"Daphne thinks big boobs look cuddly. Don't let her know I know." The woman dug her fingers into them and squeezed them roughly. There was no pain at all when she did so, like there should have been, only tension and pressure. "Lovely! Okay, you're almost done. And speaking of cuddly..."

The woman's fingers passed over her body, leaving a strange tingling in their wake. The tingling spread outward, making her skin grow warmer. As it spread across her hips and beneath her hands, the girl could feel that it was... fur? It was fine, thick peach fuzz that felt more like short, dense velour fabric than any kind of natural hair or fur. It spread over her hands, encasing them like gloves, which somewhat muted her sense of touch.

"You're going to be irresistibly hug-able," said the woman as she induced the fuzz to grow over every inch of the girl's body, from the tip of her tail to the crown of her head. Her breasts and nipples, her featureless plane of a face, even her lips were covered. "Perfect. You know, in preparation for this I ate a caterpillar, and a moth, some fuzzy leaves I found... a mouse — I swallowed a fucking mouse — trying to find the just the right genes for your fur. None of it came out right. In the end I had to experiment on myself to get it just right. You should be grateful I went all that effort just for you."

She thrust a finger into the girl's mouth again, causing her to gag, but also causing the fine fuzz to line the inside of her mouth: her cheeks, her gums, her throat, even her tongue became furry. Her mouth went dry as her salivary glands withered away. She coughed and squirmed.

The woman rubbed her hands over the girl's body. "No cold slime here. You're all snuggly warm!" She dug her fingers into the girl's sides, tickling her. The girl squirmed involuntarily and tried to roll away. "Oh good, that still works." The woman stepped back and considered her. "I was thinking about taking away your arms entirely. It would make you more wormy. But seeing your hands there, the outlines of your arms beneath the surface... makes you a little more disturbing. It's like the human you used to be is straining to get out, and that works for me. Hmm. Okay. I think you're done! I suppose I could leave you with something nice." She touched a finger between the girl's hips and circled it around and around, awakening a tangle of nerves deep inside, where her crotch used to be. A sudden warmth and arousal flared in her body. In a matter of moments, it felt as though she had been stimulated for hours. She gasped and arched her back.

Sexual arousal was the last thing she wanted now, but she couldn't force it to go away, nor could she prevent her body from reacting. She squeezed her buried thighs together and ground her hips in the air. Waves pulsed down her tail as it stretched and contracted. She suddenly wanted to come. She *needed* it. Her fingers fumbled at the skin between her hips, straining in vain to reach the insistent spot below. It was useless. Even if her hands were free, that part of her was now trapped deep inside her new body. She rolled her head back and writhed on the bed.

"Such frustration! A little strong, though. Let's keep that going at a low simmer," the woman said merrily. "It makes you wiggle so fetchingly."

The arousal died down, but didn't vanish entirely.

"Now, let's tune you in." The woman placed her hands on the girl's head. The buzzing returned, penetrating her brain and making it hard to think. This time, though, the woman didn't issue any commands. Instead, the girl felt something strange, something like a river current which was flowing through her mind. The current smoothed down her thoughts and anxieties like river stones. It whispered tranquility, whispered obedience, whispered a desire to fill her role. When the woman took her hands away, the current remained.

"It never goes away. Welcome to the Enthralled Host," the woman said as she stepped away.

The girl shook her head, trying to clear it. She didn't understand what any of this meant.

"Look at you. Damn, I am bad-ass! Do I do good work, or what? I'm very happy with how you turned out. I suppose it wouldn't hurt to let you see yourself. Would you like to, just this once? I'll let you look through my eyes just for a moment," the woman asked from the foot of the bed. She took hold of the tip of the girl's tail. Suddenly, the girl could see again. After the darkness, being able to see was jarring, especially since it was through someone else's eyes.

She saw herself. Lying on the yellow comforter in the orange room. She was... *alien*... to herself. That couldn't be her. It couldn't be her! She saw her bald, faceless head with its unnaturally full lips. She saw the large, sagging-soft breasts that couldn't possibly belong to her hanging from her chest. She saw how her arms were hidden, trapped inside the skin of her back, how her grasping hands stretched and pulled at the skin of her broadened hips. And she saw her tail, how it stretched from her hips a good six or seven feet, tapering to a tip that was squirming in the woman's hand. As she tried to move, she saw the peristaltic wave passing down the length of the tail, beneath her skin, like a giant worm. The skin of her tail grew looser the closer it got to the tip, giving the appearance of ruched fabric folds sliding over top of the muscle beneath. She was entirely covered in pale green velveteen peach fuzz. It made her look like a nightmare plush toy.

"And wait 'til you see this," the woman said as she turned off the light switch.

In the dark, her whole body glowed a very faint greenish-yellow.

The woman turned the lights back on and released the girl's tail. Her blindness returned, but her mind's eye was full of visions of herself. What had been done to her? It was... amazing, in some sense. Magical. But it was also beyond terrible.

"See? You're adorable. You know what? I'll give you this," the woman said. She stepped closer and touched a finger to the girl's forehead. "Even earthworms can sense light, so it's only fair."

A faint, yellow-red glow replaced some of the darkness. The girl realized she was seeing the light and shadows, though she wasn't sure how. She had no eyes to see with, nor could she even blink. But there was the blurry, indistinct shape of the woman standing next to the bed.

While she wiggled, trying to process everything, the woman straightened the bedspread and gathered up the girl's trashed clothes. "I've been thinking of other projects, apart from some extra garden worms for the yard. Hey, since the plants are growing so well, maybe a slug to eat the weeds? And the house could use decorating, some exotic houseplants, don't you think? Maybe... hmm, maybe even a beanbag chair. You know, to match the decor. That could be entertaining," the woman said thoughtfully. "Well, you just settle in. She'll be home soon."

The woman was gone. The girl was alone in the room.

Alone and waiting, like she had been in the back of the van a couple hours ago. Had it only been a couple hours? After all that had just happened, the sudden peace was strange, almost dreamlike. There was a bird chirping outside the bedroom's window as if the world was still normal. And maybe it was, except that she had slipped through the cracks and landed somewhere unreal, someplace populated with strange gods and their monstrous servants hiding out in suburbia. She had slipped through and now she was trapped inside her own mutated and freakish body.

She didn't know how to feel. Exhaustion? Despair? Her mind was almost numb. She knew she must be shocked. She thought about her life and how much had been taken from her. Her hopes. Her entire future. Everything. There wasn't a lot to miss in her old life, but even at its worst she hadn't been a human worm. She wondered when people would start to notice she was gone. She wondered *if* people would notice she was gone. She wanted to cry. Even if they could see her now, no one she knew could possibly recognize her. Ever. She couldn't even speak to tell them who she was. They would just run in terror.

The current flowing inside her head was washing her horror away. The less she thought about anything, the more tangible it became. It was almost like a song, but she couldn't make out the words. It was almost like a scent that conjured warm nostalgic feelings, but she couldn't make out what it was or from when. She allowed it to flow around her, for it gave her an escape and soothed her un-cry-able tears.

After a time, she started trying to make sense of her body. She still couldn't believe

that this was forever. She bit down on her dry, velvety tongue. She felt her body with her hands, as much as she could reach. She squirmed and wiggled on the bed, feeling the movement of her tail. She still didn't have much control over it. She found it was difficult to stay still, between the struggle to fight against the bondage of her body and the unreachable arousal deep between... where her legs *used* to be. Left on her own, deprived of other stimulation, it seemed to get stronger. A tingling knot of nerves that were acting as though, despite her situation or her feelings, she had been mercilessly teased and held on the edge of orgasm and demanded relief. It was maddening! She desperately clawed and tugged at the elastic, velvety skin above her former crotch. The more she squirmed in frustration, the stronger it became. She forced herself to lie still and tried to think of anything else.

Finally, she heard voices elsewhere in the house, growing closer. Anxiety seized her chest, she began to breathe heavily. She had forgotten Daphne was coming back and that she was lying in her bed. Someone else was about to see her. A normal, human person was about to see the thing which she had become. Her tail twitched in agitation.

"Why is she in my room?" Daphne's voice came from the hallway.

"Because she's yours," the woman said. "Come on."

"No, I don't want to see!"

The woman entered the room, pushing Daphne in front of her.

"Oh, my God!" Daphne exclaimed.

"Goddess," the woman corrected.

"What did you *do*?"

"You keep asking me that, when every time you can clearly see what I've done," replied the woman.

Daphne sounded speechless.

The girl could only see their shadows moving. She squirmed with humiliation, which made her tail pulse in its contractions. She wanted to hide her face in shame, but she had no face to hide.

"She's your new best friend," the woman informed her. "I made her just for you. Her name is Glow Worm."

The girl shook her head in denial. Glow Worm? That wasn't her name. Her name was... was...

Why couldn't she remember her name? How could she forget her own name?

Daphne shook her head. "I didn't want... I don't want this! W-why *this*?"

"How many girls in the world can say they have a pet worm? She's all yours. You'll have to be responsible for her and feed her."

"Feed her?" Daphne echoed.

"Just empty a few jars of baby food into her mouth every day or so. She doesn't need much," the woman said. "Oh, make a note. Stock up on baby food next time you go shopping."

Daphne said nothing.

The woman's shadow moved. "She needs you," she said.

"I don't want her to," Daphne said quietly.

"It's true. She's been abandoned and ignored and neglected since she could walk. Hardly anyone's ever hugged her and meant it. Such a lonely little creature. She's been waiting for this her whole life."

The girl named Glow Worm squirmed, self-conscious and saddened.

"She needs lots of love and lots of hugs. She's the best stuffed animal in the world because she can actually love you back," the woman told her. "You can tell her anything you want. You can hold her when you sleep. And she's a lot lighter than she looks, so you can drag her out to the sofa to snuggle with on our movie nights. She even glows in the dark."

Again, Daphne said nothing.

"I knew you'd love love her! Well, I leave you two to get acquainted. I have blintzes waiting for me. You can wait until tomorrow to do the dishes, if you want," the woman said lightly. She didn't sound the least bit bothered by Daphne's reluctance.

Daphne sighed deeply. "I'll do them now."

A while later, Daphne returned to the room and spent a long time at her desk, turning pages and studying, acting as if there wasn't a kidnapped and transformed worm-girl lying on the bed behind her. The silence was filled with tension. The girl was upset, but was helpless to do anything about it. She knew Daphne hadn't asked for this. She had been thrust upon her like an unwanted gift. A burden. She had seen for herself the grotesque thing she had become and she couldn't blame the girl for wishing she wasn't there. The rejection stung, nonetheless. She didn't want to be hated. She wanted to be comforted. She attempted to stay very still and not be noticed, afraid of upsetting the girl even more, but occasionally her body had different ideas and she found herself grinding her hips due to the unquenchable heat in her vanished loins which would flare up from time to time.

Abruptly, Daphne stood up and went to the door. "I can't study with her in here!" she shouted down the hallway.

"Yes, you can," came the woman's voice from elsewhere in the house.

Daphne made a loud noise of frustration like a petulant teenager.

"And you *will* cuddle her tonight," the woman added.

Daphne shut the door loudly. She stood at the foot of the bed, glaring at the floor. She exhaled sharply through her nose and looked at the book she still held in her hand. "Medieval English lit," she said with a bitter little laugh. "Not that there's much point in a degree now." She tossed the book on the desk and went around to the side of the bed. She made an angry sound and tousled her short hair before flopping onto the bed, making the girl bounce. She lay there in silence with her arms crossed.

The girl was exceedingly uncomfortable. She squirmed with agitation, her dangling

tail tip slowly swishing back and forth past the edge of the bed. She didn't know what to do. Not there was much she could do. This wasn't her fault! She was the one who had been kidnapped and mutilated and turned into this girl's pet.

Daphne finally gave her a sidelong glance. "Welcome to the family, I guess."

The girl rolled her head back. She wished she could say something.

"I'm really sorry about what happened to you. I want you to know I didn't ask her for this. I'd make her change you back if I could, but I can't make her do anything," she said sadly. "You aren't the first. Like, there's a... did she tell you about Wormitha?"

The girl nodded. She could still do that, at least.

"I feel so bad for her, but I can't do anything to help. I can't do anything that goes against her. I never had to live with a kidnapped person before. What do you do with that? Now there's you, too," said Daphne. "Did it hurt? I hope it didn't hurt. When she, uh, made Wormitha... it looked like it should have hurt, but she didn't act like she was in pain. She looked scared, though. At least, up until her face was gone. I hope you weren't too scared." Daphne rolled onto her side to face her, propping herself up on an elbow. "I know you have it worse than me, but... I'm a prisoner, too. I miss my old, boring life. I was so happy, you know, just going to classes, doing my thing. Then she comes along and just... picks me. I don't know why. Now she's taken over my whole life. I have to do everything she says. She'll tell me to clean the house like I'm an actual employee or something, so I scrub and clean until I'm worn out because I... I don't now, I *have* to. I mean, she's never actually hurt me or anything, but I know what she can do to people. I'm kind of used to it now, but I still get so scared sometimes. My real name isn't even Daphne, and I can't tell you what my real one is because she won't let me." She flopped onto her back and pressed the heels of her palms to her eyes. "She has her hands in my head. The worst part is I know I'll never get away. Even if I could, I don't think I'd have the guts to, anymore. I've seen what she really looks like. Did you see?"

The girl couldn't answer. She wasn't sure what she had seen.

"Was what she said true?" Daphne asked. "No one ever... hugged you, or anything?"

She tried to shrug, but couldn't quite manage it.

"Well, why not? Was your family bad to you?" Daphne wondered. "That sucks, if it's true. I'm sorry. I like my family. I went to visit them last Christmas during break. She let me. They don't know anything about, you know, *her*. Or what's been going on, or the th-things I've seen. I can't tell them anything. I had to pretend like everything was completely normal. Nobody else knows. I'm... I'm all alone," she said, and her voice broke, as if she was saying it aloud for the first time.

After a minute of awkward silence, she said, "Um, so, I guess we should get this over with. I have to cuddle you before I can get to sleep because she said I have to. She didn't say for how long, though, so... uh." She reached over and helped the worm-girl roll onto her side. Her enlarged breasts flopped over and spread out under their own

weight, one stacked on the other like plump pancakes. Daphne placed her hand on the girl's waist and slowly stroked it. "W-wow. Wow, you really are soft. You feel really nice. Okay." She scooted her self a little closer, squashing the girl's fleshy, velvety breasts between them. "Sorry, I... uh, sorry. I just, um..." Her hand traveled down the girl's hip to the top of her tail.

The girl hid her face into the pillows in shame; she couldn't stop the worm-wave from pulsing beneath Daphne's hand as she tried to pull her tail up. She felt repulsive.

"Weird. That feels kinda cool." She wrapped her arm around her waist. "So, I'll just hold you for a little bit, okay?" She hugged her. A short while later, she squeezed her tighter and tucked her forehead under her chin.

The girl could feel the heat of her breath against her skin. It felt wonderful. Daphne didn't act afraid of her, at all. She cautiously wiggled her body closer to the girl, who didn't seem to object.

After a little while of staying in that position, she realized heard Daphne snoring softly against her chest. She had fallen fast asleep with her arms around her, fully clothed and with the lights on.

A warm lightness bloomed in her belly. It was almost dizzying. She reached out with her fingers and found the bottom of Daphne's shirt, which she clutched tightly in her hand. She didn't know quite why she was feeling this way. To be embraced like this, even accepted like this. Such a simple act of human contact. It had taken becoming a monster in order for her to have this. She would have cried if she had been able, but they wouldn't have entirely been tears of sadness. She wasn't sure if it was because of her life-long desire to be held and loved by someone, or if it was because this was what the woman had programmed her to feel. She wasn't sure if she could even separate the difference between command and desire. All she knew was that, for the first time in a long time, she felt something like happiness.

The girl curled her tail and gently draped its end around Daphne's leg.
She glowed.