

Aaron regarded the entirety of his new cave for the third time that hour. He had little else to do but stare around at what had become his own personal hell. His leg was too fucked up to move, the ankle screaming in pain whenever he tried to lift himself. And even if he could leave, the cougar was out there, likely waiting for him. He was surprised that it hadn't followed him in already. It must have lost his scent in the storm. That was his only saving grace, at least for now. Even so, if the storm didn't let up soon, he was still doomed.

He'd been hiking the mountains in his home state, as he often did, even in the middle of winter. He was a seasoned hiker and the weather that day had been forecast as favorable. Thus, he wasn't too concerned about the signs of an oncoming storm. He'd been outside in worse weather and never gotten into trouble, after all.

Aaron had been a fool to ignore the warnings. His own pride had been his downfall, his confidence that he would be alright, regardless of what happened. He'd been taught as much by his father from a young age. A man didn't run and hide. Besides, if it was only a minor storm, as he'd figured it would be, then the guys back home would have a good laugh at his expense for weeks!

Inclimate weather was not his only bane on this trip. He'd hardly heard the low growl in time to move as the unseen cougar attacked. Fortunately, it had been cautious and hadn't made a second attempt to strike immediately. It had likely been a mother with cubs around; cougars didn't usually attack humans otherwise. He hadn't seen them, but it seemed likely with how persistent the cougar had been.

Aaron thought he'd gotten away when he'd slipped and broken his ankle on a patch of ice buried beneath the snow. A rookie mistake. He was lucky it had happened near the mouth of this cave; otherwise, he'd be left totally exposed. It had taken a great deal of strength to crawl inside the dark cavern, but somehow he'd managed.

Under normal circumstances, Aaron wouldn't have worried too much. Though he'd not packed many provisions, he wasn't too secluded from the rest of civilization. The cave he found was at least warmer than outside and he had left careful records of his planned route with local ranger stations. Someone would be along to find him soon enough.

Yet the storm that raged outside showed no signs of stopping. Aaron could be waiting for days before help was able to begin searching. And even if the storm did stop soon, the cougar might be angry enough at the interloper to pay him a visit. He could melt snow for water if need be, but gathering any food or wood for fire was out of the question with how fucked up his leg was. He wasn't likely to starve, but freezing to death was another matter.

He'd made his way as far back in the cave as he could to avoid the storm. The cave was deep, illuminated only by the light of his flashlight as Aaron studied its details every few minutes or so. He tried to keep the flashlight off to conserve battery, but boredom was a powerful motivator as the hours ticked by.

Feeling fatigued, he turned on his flashlight one more time before trying to close his eyes. As he scanned the contours of his prison, his flashlight fell on something strange he had not yet seen. It was jagged, only a foot high, and did not match the texture or patterns of any of the rocks in the cave. It almost looked organic, though Aaron had never seen anything like it in all of his years of hiking. Even his knowledge of science and wildlife left him stumped as to its identity.

Figuring what the hell, he decided to crawl a little closer to investigate. He touched the oddly warm surface, a stark contrast to the chilly cave. It almost reminded him of an egg. But what could possibly make something like this? It was far too large to be the egg of anything he knew. Its texture reminded him of an insect hive. But the winter cold should have killed off anything like that, right?

Aaron hardly had time to cry out as something suddenly burst on the egg's surface and coated his face in a blast of foul-smelling fluid. Nearly gagging, Aaron wiped his face, trying to remove the sticky gunk. The quantity was such that it easily soaked through his glove, and Aaron flung the useless garment onto the cave floor with an audible splat. The fluid was thick, off-white, and stung a little on his skin. And, worst of all, it stank!

He crawled as far back away from the thing as he could, wondering what the fuck it was. Had he just been exposed to some sort of harmful chemical compound? He would have sought medical attention, had that been an option. But as it was, there was little he could do but hope it wasn't infectious or toxic.

He allowed himself to drift off, finding it strangely easy to pass out. Awakening sometime later, he felt incredibly groggy, unaware of how long he'd been out for. He'd lost his phone on the way in, and he wouldn't get a signal out here regardless. It was still dark in the cave, and he could still hear the storm howling outside.

Aaron soon became aware of a strange numbness on his hand where he'd wiped away the thick fluid from the egg. That was how he'd decided to classify it, strange as the idea was. It was much more likely to be a bit of fungus or plant. But he couldn't shake the idea that the... THING... was some sort of egg. An egg of what, he had no idea.

He carefully moved his stiff fingers, trying to alleviate the numbness, but he found they weren't quite working properly. Aaron couldn't see them in the dark, though assumed it was a symptom of the cold. Regardless, he decided to take a look. Yet when he went to grab his flashlight with his numb appendage, he found he couldn't work his lower arm at all!

Aaron carefully reached out with his other hand for the flashlight that lay on his right side. Breathing in deeply, he tried to quell the anxiety that threatened to overwhelm him. Accidentally, his searching fingers brushed over the skin of his numb arm and he gasped. Instead of his warm flesh and modest arm hair, he felt something cold and hard and bumpy. What the hell...?

He made a move for his flashlight again, wondering if he'd perhaps moved back over beside the...thing... in the corner again. He fumbled it on with one hand and hesitantly shone it down towards his other arm. He was not prepared for the sight that greeted him.

The surface of his arm was covered in a thick, brown shell-like material with several patterned ridges protruding up the length. He touched it again, noticing how solid it was. The skin felt cool, as though it was no longer giving off heat. His wrists still worked, though the range of motion was restricted. And there was another bend further up in his arm that Aaron could move a little if he focused. The alien skin was almost to his elbow now and seemed to be slowly spreading if the advancing tingling sensation was any indication.

The worst part was his hand. It barely even looked human! His pinky and ring fingers were stuck together, as were his middle and index fingers. He couldn't move them separately anymore! The brown, hard skin had covered his palms and crawled up his fingers, giving them a pointy appearance. The brown skin looked more and more to Aaron like a mottled brown insectoid carapace. What was it called, chiton?

He then realized with horror then that the fluid had not only touched his hand. He hadn't realized it at the moment, but after concentration, he realized his face tingled as well. Though not as intense as his arm, it was noticeable nonetheless. What the hell had happened to his face?

He fumbled for the mirror in his shaving kit, thankful for once that he'd packed it. Placing the flashlight on the floor, he allowed it to illuminate his face in the dark cave, providing some instant relief. Humans were not meant to exist in total darkness for extended periods. Pulling out the mirror, he opened it carefully with his good hand. Still, he hesitated a little, scared to see what had become of his face. But he had to know.

A scream of terror pierced the cave walls at the sight reflected in the mirror. The muddied brown skin had taken away his lower face and his beard. His mouth was open in shock as a pair of...something... stood out a full fucking inch from just below his jaw. It looked like an insect's pedipalps, something used to aid in eating. He looked disgusting! He was at least thankful nothing else had changed yet, but from the tingling in his face and upper arm, that wouldn't remain the case for much longer.

The thing in the cave with him had to have caused this. Part of him wanted to examine it, but Aaron was scared that if he were to come into contact with it again, it would simply ooze more of that mutagenic fluid over him. What the fuck was it? And more importantly, what the hell was it changing him into?

He had to get out of there and seek help. But there was no way he could leave with his leg fucked up. And it seemed as though the storm had not yet abated. The howling winds and fierce cold beyond the confines of the cave were a sign that he was stuck here, forced to endure this horrific transformation. Aaron sat back down, defeated, tears welling in his eyes as he turned the flashlight off to conserve battery power.

There was little Aaron could do but sleep and try not to focus on what was slowly happening to his human body. He slept fitfully when he did. Dreams of the changes plagued his mind, seeing himself becoming a massive insect, crawling about in the safety of his cave. He often awoke with a start at the horrific images, feeling around in the dark to see how much more of his human self he had lost.

Despite himself, sometimes the dreams made him feel powerfully aroused, and he was shocked to notice that his pants were stained with his seed on more than one occasion. In his dreams, he felt something on his groin, massive and throbbing with a powerful need to expel...what? It was an alien sensation, something the human Aaron could not identify. Perhaps it was the thing that frightened him more than the changes, the realization that he was altering in patterns of thought as well.

He could feel the changes slowly crawling up his arm and face as more of his humanity was robbed from him. Yet he could only moan helplessly in the dark as another joint snapped in his arm, or another patch of his face was claimed by the relentless marching carapace. Thankfully, the changes were not painful, though they were extremely discomforting. It felt like the skin, muscles, and even bones were dissolving within to make way for this godforsaken flesh!

The arm still worked in its new configuration, though Aaron scarcely had any idea how to use it. His fingers were long gone as well, the tips pointed and curved into some sort of claw-like appendages. He'd turned on his flashlight with his human hand to view the changes after a time, curiosity getting the better of him. After sadly staring at what had become of his arm, he would turn it off again, softly sobbing in the dark, not caring that he was losing water.

The changes to his face were even worse. He could feel his mouth dissolving away, his tongue, his teeth, his gums, and his lips all distorting towards different functions. He tried to talk or yell several times but was unable to make anything beyond a clicking noise that made him shudder. His mouth now consisted of a series of moving parts, tiny limbs, and a pharyngeal jaw that moved in tandem with each other. He had no idea what kind of food he would eat with these insectoid appendages. The idea made it hard to sleep.

The more he changed, the more Aaron came to realize that his soon-to-be form was like nothing on earth. Nothing known to science, at least. The body parts were decidedly insectoid, though he still retained a relatively human size. Was he becoming a giant insect? An alien? Some sort of hybrid? Not knowing the future that awaited him was in many ways worse than the process itself.

The changing flesh continued to crawl up his head, soon robbing him of his nose. Aaron could feel it slowly sliding into the thick brown carapace over a few hours. He didn't bother turning on the light again to see it, afraid of the horrific visage. As best as he could tell, there were no nose holes in place of his missing nostrils. Though he was able to breathe, he no longer possessed a sense of smell. Yet, the putrid stench of his own body, as well as the grotesque stench wafting from the egg at the other side of the cave, had made him nauseous. Losing his human sense of smell was the one reprieve he had.

He had little to do as time slowly marched by. The storm seemed to have finally let up, but the pain in his ankle was even worse now. He couldn't even move his leg. And the changes left him unable to move parts of his body conflicting with his human physiology. He had nothing to do but sleep and await the ongoing changes that were making him a creature out of his wildest nightmares.

Aaron did his best not to allow his thoughts to drift to his friends and loved ones, none of whom knew his whereabouts. That life seemed like a distant dream with all that was becoming of him. Instead, he found himself worrying if the cougar would be back but again he figured there was no point. There was little chance the cat had waited out the storm for him. And, even if it were, what would it make of the creature he was becoming? Would it still consider him a tasty meal, particularly while he was helpless?

Trying to determine his final form left Aaron puzzled. He truly looked like nothing he'd be able to conceptualize. He'd recalled some alien insect models from various video games, disposable bodies that were shot up into masses of exploding guts by the game's protagonists. He nearly threw up from the thought of that being him but instead felt a strange churning in his gut. Something had evidently altered in his digestive system, creating some strange concoction of fluids that thankfully had no effect on his changed physiology. He dared not to think of what it would do to his still-human esophagus if he were to throw up!

Aaron had little notion of the passage of time in the cave. Occasionally, he saw sunlight pouring in that was replaced by darkness shortly after, but the cycles made no sense. He wondered if it had to do with his changing faculties, or perhaps his erratic sleep cycles. It didn't matter. It had been some time since he'd become trapped here, and no one had found him. He had likely been given up for dead.

He felt hunger, to be sure, but with his leg messed up, he could not find food. Memories of the taste of his favorite foods elicited feelings of disgust from his altering body. He felt cravings for something else, perhaps live flesh, but he couldn't be sure. Evidently, his new body could go for long periods without eating, given that he was still aware and alive after all this time.

It soon became evident the infection had traveled through his blood, as it was not just confined to the areas he'd been exposed to. This realization came once Aaron awoke to a strange discomfort in his abdomen. He could feel something poking through his ribcage, pressing tightly at the edges of his clothing on either side. He had no doubt they were a new pair of insect-like limbs popping out of his insides. He could feel their presence as much as he could feel his own arms!

It did not take long for them to grow to the point of being as flexible as the new arm. Even in their current state, Aaron could ascertain they had the same range of motion as his new arm did, sporting those same clawed hands and multiple joints. The thought of them getting longer and bursting out of his clothing was absolutely appalling! Yet, that was the inevitability if the changes continued the way they were.

Extra arms were not the only new bodily appendage he would have to contend with. Something was poking up at the top of his head as his hair began falling out and pooling on the ground. Like the additional limbs, he found they could move independently as they grew steadily longer. He wondered if they were akin to an insect's antenna. The changes to his body seemed to suggest as much.

Despite his disgust at the additions, he found their mobility an interesting experience. They could move at his prompting, but they also often moved in response to certain stimuli. Though he lacked the facilities to properly process the data, Aaron assumed that they might be trying to intercept scent molecules in the air. Other times, they seemed to move in response to minute vibrations in the cave that Aaron would have otherwise been blind to. He had no idea what they were, but trying to discern their origin was an adequate distraction.

His internal organs were slowly changing, though the process causing the transformation at least kept him alive despite the obvious conflict in his anatomy. Once, he felt his heart stop beating, and waited with bated breath to see if he would go into myocardial infarction. To his surprise, he didn't. He had no idea how an insect's simple system of fluids could possibly support the still human parts of his body. But for now, at least, they were, and he was still alive. For better or for worse.

A similar thing happened with his lungs shortly afterward. After a slight ache in his chest, he found himself short of air and panicked as he struggled to breathe. After several inhales, he realized he wasn't able to take in oxygen via his mouth.

A panicked part of his brain told him his clothes were confining, that he couldn't breathe with them on. With a struggle, the combined efforts of his former arms and his new limbs slicing at his parka and undershirt were enough to cut through and expose the hideous flesh underneath. In shock, he realized he was able to breathe again. Dimly, he recalled that insects could breathe through holes or spiracles along the sides of their abdomen. It was then he decided mournfully to tear off the remainder of his clothes. He didn't need them anymore.

Despite all the horrific mutations he had undergone, the strangest change of all was centered in his ass. Aaron awoke one morning to feel the flesh of his hips and rear expanding before the skin began to harden like the rest of his flesh. It soon became impossible to sit the way he had been, and he'd been forced on his side to sleep. Once, when he went to relieve himself, he noticed how close his anus was to his balls. Had it been moving this whole time?!

Feeling around the area revealed more changes that had somehow escaped him prior. With a start, he realized that his balls seemed smaller, the skin smooth and hairless as they began shrinking. His cock, too, was minute, almost half its flaccid length no matter how much he teased himself. Even erect, it stood only a mere two inches.

Despite this, however, he found he was never more powerfully aroused in his life. He still came often from vivid dreams of something that he could not recall. His cock was



covered in fluids every time he woke up from one of those intense dreams. He shuddered as each time he came, his asshole had moved a little closer to his cock, which itself had shrunk slightly. It was as though each orgasm diminished the load his testicles could produce. Yet, that did little to halt his intense orgasmic pleasure.

One morning he awoke to see that his cock had indeed shriveled up into his anus, even though the surface skin was still covered in his rank ejaculate. Shortly after that, the entire surface of his ass began ballooning rapidly within a period of only a few short hours, forming a tapering point. It was beginning to look disgustingly like an insectoid abdomen! Not only his humanity, but his maleness seemed to be taken from him! Aaron had no idea what he would eventually become, but it seemed, at least, to lack male genitalia.

For a long time, he'd avoided looking at his face, knowing the horrific changes that would be reflected worse in the once-familiar reflection. He'd been aware of the alterations for a while and avoided using the flashlight for fear of what it would reveal. But his other arm was starting to change and he didn't know how much longer he could operate his equipment with only claws. Part of him knew he would regret not saying farewell to his human visage.

With his one good hand, he set up the flashlight to shine on himself, wincing at the sudden bright flash. He tried blinking a few times but found he couldn't. Had he no eyelids anymore?

The light soon woke something primal in him, fear for his survival. Evidently the thing he was becoming preferred the dark. Yet he was determined to see this through, his final action against the changes that had stolen so much from him.

Lifting the mirror, he stared in stunned silence at the alien face reflected back at him. His mouth had changed already, but he wasn't prepared for the sight of his sloped head and hairless scalp. There was nothing of the human visage he had enjoyed all his life!

Worst of all were his eyes. They were still human, still retaining their familiar brown that he'd always know. Yet, now they were massive, taking up far more of his face than he'd been accustomed to, almost half its diameter. There was a reddish glint to them, and they bulged out slightly, unblinking eyes staring out into the vastness of the cave.

Aaron could take no more. He threw the mirror at the cave wall but was unable to hear it smash, lacking external ears. His antenna did, however, pick up the vibrations, though his mind deemed them non-threatening. The realization terrified him. He had fallen so far from humanity!



Soon after, he felt his eyes begin to tingle, as though they, too, were losing human functionality. Though not painful, the sensation did erupt over their entire surface. He could still make out shapes in the dark surfaces in the cave, even without external light. His vision was distorted, as though warped into a dozen separate mirrors he was looking through simultaneously. He wanted to cry at his lost humanity but he no longer had the tear ducts to do so.

Not too long after the loss of his human eyes, Aaron detected the vibrations of something scratching at the entrance of the cave, like a low growl that reverberated through his antenna. Part of him recalled the beast that had trapped him here and wondered if the cougar had come to investigate. Aaron could still not move; his feet remained unchanged and his human ankle was still broken. He may have transformed into a fearsome creature, but his mind had still not changed enough to fully work his body. He resigned himself to the death he wished he'd been given weeks ago, to save himself from this horrific transformation

Even his altered eyes could make out the familiar silhouette of a cougar slinking towards him. The beast regarded him with some curiosity. The scent wafting off his body was clearly like nothing it had smelled before. Yet the beast was hungry; she had not fed in several weeks and despite the repugnant stench of the thing in the cave, it was helpless and easy prey.

She moved closer, sizing up her prey to make her strike. His changed eyes revealed a thousand angles of his oncoming death. He longed for the ability to close them, to avoid seeing his end as the cougar leaped towards him.

Yet, before she could strike, some instinct awoke in him, some drive or desire that was not human. Aaron hardly had control of his body as he grabbed the cougar in mid-jump. The beast snapped and squirmed but Aaron's clawed hands held her fast with an unnatural strength.

Aaron hissed and felt something gurgling up inside of him, a sensation like vomiting. Instinctively, he shot a spray of viscous fluid that sizzled and popped as it hit the cougar's flesh. The cat screamed in pain, but from what Aaron could tell, he had aimed for the creature's limbs, and whatever he had sprayed had simply melted them, preventing the animal from dying but leaving it effectively disabled.

His fattened abdomen then reached out, and Aaron felt something extend from the tip and pierce the cougar's flesh. An amazing sensation flowed through his genitals as something thick oozed from the tip of his new ovipositor and into his prone prey. Several more followed

soon after, massive orbs that pulsed and pumped from his abdomen, sending shockwaves of ecstasy through his body that no level of human sexual experience could ever compare to.

Spent, he dropped his limp prey into the cave floor as his ovipositor slid back into the protection of his abdomen. The cougar laid there, breathing heavily, stunned and in agony. Aaron found himself wondering if he should eat it. But his body did not hunger for the smell of the prone animal. The new instincts that had awoken in his mind knew to leave it alone, that something was happening inside the beast. All he needed to do was wait.

As the days passed and the cougar grew more lifeless, Aaron's own changes flowed over him, giving him a new sense of vitality. His legs began to snap and stretch to match his other four limbs, the previous injury finally repaired. His toes fused and grew those same insectoid claws, only a little stronger and thicker, allowing him to stand erect in the cave. Walking as an insect took some effort for the still-human part of Aaron's mind. But his changing brain eventually seemed to develop the motor skills needed to move his otherwise unruly body.

Aaron soon found himself scuttling around his cave effortlessly, reveling in his newfound locomotion. Yet he soon found himself restless. He needed to hunt. He had been too long without food.

Scurrying out into the snow one night, he found his body unaffected by the cold. His antenna picked up pheromones and vibrations across the land, as good as a map of where everything was and had been. He didn't wish to stray too far from the cave, but he needed to feed, and resolved to do it quickly.

Aaron the human was a little concerned at how quickly the instincts had taken over since he'd assaulted the cougar. Yet the feelings they brought gave him such a sensation of pleasure, his human rationale was simply along for the ride with what the creature dictated. Another part of him was still curious about what his new physiology required of him.

He was aware of his brain making the few key assertions that a predator would need for hunting. The direction of the wind, the scents of animals, and their usual trails, the proper locations of cover. After a few careful calculations, he quickly crawled up a nearby tree, instinctively knowing that a herd of deer often crossed this path at night. They would not see him, and should not smell him if all went his way.

Part of his mind was excited at the prospect of the hunt. He was a patient predator, but he needed to eat, to prepare himself to make a colony and for the next generation. The idea should have frightened him, but the insectoid part of him was excited from the idea of continuing

his lineage. Once his offspring were born, he could begin the important work of building a proper nest. But for now, he had to provide fresh flesh for himself.

His antenna picked up the footfalls of the approaching deer long before they were in position. His body relaxed as still as a stone, not moving so much as an inch, lest he gave away his position. He waited a painful 10 minutes, 20, waiting for his prey to land in just the right position. So close, just a little further...

Target in sight, Aaron ejected a spray of his stomach fluid at the closest deer, hitting its legs and knocking it over, causing it to bleat in panic as its herd mates ran in terror. He could detect the vibrations of its cries and see the shattered images of it falling over, helpless. A successful strike. He quickly fell atop his prey and used his pharyngeal jaw to make a quick, clean, killing blow.

Part of his human brain was mortified at the act, but mostly he found himself enamored by the sensations of hunting, the exhilaration of the kill, and the satisfying feeling of rending flesh with his mouthparts. He dragged his kill back towards the cave to finish it, eating his fill and leaving little other than the bones. His new digestive tract could handle most of the tissues of the animal he'd killed, to his delight.

The feeding left him satiated, for the time being, allowing him to turn his attention to the other acts of his alien body. At last, after several days, he detected a tearing of flesh and bone as something began to work its way out of the now-dead cat lying in his den. He'd been aware of them long before their birth. His progeny that had been injected into the cougar, to feed and grow off her insides until they were ready to burst free.

Soon, five of the creatures burst forth from their host, scurrying around the cave as fully as Aaron did himself. They were much smaller than him, though they were fully formed, resembling miniature versions of the insect he'd become. He could smell them, detect their powerful pheromones. And they could detect him. Without really knowing how, Aaron's body was sending them signals via scents, giving them orders, telling them to feed and bring food. They quickly obeyed, heading out into the frozen wasteland to fulfill their duty.

Aaron soon felt the need to spit, similar to the sensation of his acid spray before attacking prey. As he did so, he released something new, a sticky, hard substance that was quite malleable under the touch of his insectoid hands. He set to work, following some instinct or drive that had him place the resin around the base of the cave, as though building something. The work at least occupied his time and thoughts, giving him a sense of purpose akin to the act of laying larvae in the dying cat.

He, now perhaps she, as she began to view herself, built her nest while her new offspring scoured the frozen land. They would feed, bring back food for her, and sometimes bring her live prey to infect and spawn more offspring. All the while Aaron's new mandibles oozed their thick resin, working to turn this cave and the rest of the mountainside into a suitable nest.

She felt powerfully fulfilled in the acts of her new insectoid body, more so than any human experience could match. Any fleeting human resistance was gone, the former human fascinated in experiencing this new life. She was the queen of her new domain, bent on growing her hive and spreading her influence, thankful for the gift of life and purpose the egg in the cave had given her!