

You wake up slowly to a series of lights, bright and disorientating in your new surroundings. You try to focus, but all you can see is a shattered image of your world spanning around you. No matter how much you try to make sense of it, you have no idea what it is. One thing you do know is that your field of view seems much larger than it should be. You have nearly a 360-degree view of the room, yet the images are extremely distorted. Your brain struggles fruitlessly with both the perspective and the lack of focus your eyes grant you. You can't help but notice that your eyes have been unblinking the entire time, and you hadn't actually opened them when you awoke.

You are clearly on all fours with your head looking up, but the position seems surprisingly comfortable. You try to stand up, but you can't seem to. You try and blink, but nothing happens. You attempt to move your eyes from side to side, but there's no response. Your efforts trigger alien impulses in your body, and you quickly stop each time, alarmed by their presence.

You struggle to recall the last thing that occurred before you woke up in this state. You remember your lab was working on a method to transfer the consciousness of one human into another. Your research had made leaps and bounds in the past few weeks, and you were all sure you were ready for human trials.

It posed an ethical dilemma in the scientific community, but you'd vowed to only use it on individuals who were brain dead and had donated their bodies to science. It had the potential to save lives and improve the quality of life for those with debilitating illnesses. You'd all decided that the gains were worth the risks and continued your research in secret.

With the lack of a volunteer, you'd decided to undergo the procedure yourself. A healthy body with a vegetative mind had been donated by a family for this very purpose. You would simply determine if you could maintain a normal level of functioning in the new body and if there was any lasting damage to your own mind or body once you returned. You knew there were risks, but there was no other way to move forward without a member of your team testing the procedure. It was a minor cost, you thought, knowing how much it could benefit humanity.

You remember getting in the chair, the anesthetic putting you under. Your mind was somewhat aware even as it fell into unconsciousness, as though it was racing towards a brilliant white light. And then you awoke. Here, in this body. Where your vision is blurred. Where you can't hear. You can't even feel your chest contract, as though you aren't breathing! Are you perhaps dead, in some sort of afterlife? The scientist in you would deem that impossible, but what other explanation is there?

Your legs, your fingers, your arms, everything feels stiff and numb. Joints move in response to mental stimuli, but they are all wrong, far too many, and in different locations that your limbs should have been. Most bizarre is the third set of limbs that flail in tandem with your others, situated roughly in between them. There are other sensations, like something on your back that moves with alarming flexibility and something at your backside that twitches at your prompting.

After a few moments of determination, you start to recognize things in the room around you. It is difficult from the perspective you now see the world from, yet you manage some rudimentary orientation. You appear to be on a horizontal surface with massive valleys and peaks, with differing shades signaling separating sections. To your shock, with some effort, the separate images seem to compound into one. Yet from the literal hundreds of angles, it is impossible to fully conceptualize what it is you are looking at. You can also tell the entire surface is radiating heat, though it is not your legs or arms that are presenting the information.

A loud sound suddenly shakes through your entire body. You cannot hear but somehow instinctively know the vibrations are generated by some sort of noise. Like the heat, they are not detected through any part of your body you can relate to. You are certain you lack any ears. The tremors are instead radiated through some growths on your head you were previously unaware of. Likewise, a series of holes in your midsection also seem stimulated by the violent waves assaulting your relatively small body.

In response to the stimuli, you can see the hundreds of screens before you change color like a massive white mountain is moving past your vision. A sudden surge of what you can only call terror runs over your form, but it is not the same as the general feeling of fear or anxiety that you are accustomed to. In response, your back legs fire, and your entire body suddenly shoots hundreds of feet into the air. You feel exhilarated, yet at the same time, you know your body should be ripped apart from the force of the acceleration.

You can see both up and down all at once, and for a moment, you fear what will happen when you fall back to earth. Yet strange muscles on your back unfurl by reflex, and suddenly you aren't falling anymore. You are soaring through the air in a straight line with no direction as to your destination. Are you. . . flying?

Just as quickly as your flight began, you land on a vast smooth surface, and your body goes still. Your mind seems to relax once more, the earlier panic gone. Your body is still, the earlier signal that triggered your reaction absent. You take stock of yourself again, clearly not in the body of the volunteer. But you are still alive. Then where are you? Or, perhaps, more appropriately, what are?

Doing your best to fight the concern you have with your body, you reach out to move the various appendages so far removed from your human understanding. Something is waving atop your head, orienting themselves towards where you perceived the vibrations to originate from. Their shape and location remind you of an insect's antenna. In fact, you recall reading that many insects viewed the world as a vast wall of tiny mirrors, each seeing fragments of the larger whole. Are you an insect now?

You can't hear or smell like a human, but your antennae take in both pheromones and vibration, both senses allowing you a partial awareness of the world. The sounds are distant, at least to you. But there is still something moving in the distance as best you can tell. You can't make heads or tails of the olfactory senses assaulting you, but there is a familiar quality that your new body works to take in.

More curious than afraid now, you try and move your mouth, but the actions trigger several motions that stun your human mind. There are literally dozens of interlocking parts where your mouth once was. You try and move them actively, but it is impossible to control them with your limited understanding of their functionality. Your specialty is human anatomy, not insects!

Next, you try to move your limbs, but your feet can't seem to grip the surface underneath you, making you stumble awkwardly. As you concentrate, you become aware that your fingers and toes report no tactile sensations from the surface below. More alarming, however, is the realization of an additional pair of limbs between your arms and legs. Your arms, in tandem with the new appendages, seem to share the same dimensions. Your legs, or what has become of them, are far larger, bent in three places, and in odd shapes that you are only just beginning to conceive.

That is not the most alarming feature of your new anatomy, however. You reach out, tentatively, trying to move the carapace atop your new body. The hard surface along your back houses the wings that allowed you flight. They unfurl rapidly, and you quickly stop, not wanting to take off against your will.

Your flesh is rigid, an immovable insect exoskeleton. Your preconceived ability to articulate your body is gone, and your skin is unrelenting. You aren't even breathing as you should be. Do insects even have lungs? You can feel minute breezes entering your body from the sides, tiny spiracles that allow a semblance of gas exchange. There is no sound of a heartbeat. Are your internal organs so simple now you are hardly aware of them?

You don't know what species you are. The dimensions are all wrong for a fly, and you would be able to hover, you think. You try moving your back legs, and something rubs on the exoskeleton of your abdomen. It elicits a loud vibration that excites your new mind. You continue the motion, amazed by your ability to control the frequency and strength of the vibrations by adjusting the muscles in your legs just slightly. It's then that it hits you. You must be in the body of a cricket.

How could this have happened? There should be no way to transfer a mind into something so small, so far removed from your human anatomy. But what other scenario explained your current predicament? Did a cricket jump on the man's head during transfer? How could your team have prepared for this possibility?

You can't hear sounds like a human, but you assume the vibrations you are detecting must be human voices. Occasionally you feel more powerful waves of force as the gargantuan pillars move around. You realize they must be your teammates. Yet you can't look up to see their faces. You have no way to tell who is who. You can smell them, though, your antenna picking up their sweat and hormones and chemical smells. You realize you can tell they are all male, which is accurate for your colleagues. All of them seem healthy. Yet this information is of no use to your insect brain, so you find it difficult to analyze.

You are desperate to get the attention of your colleagues. You need to alert them that you are indeed alive, that you can still be transferred back into your own body. You fight your instincts and leap towards a massive wall that you think is a pair of jeans. Your clawed feet easily grip the surface and allow you to hang there.

You try to think of what you can do to prove you are alive in this body. But first, you have to get their attention. You leap again, hundreds of feet in the air relative to your tiny body, as you land on something warm and covered with massive hair and boulders. You take a moment to assess your surroundings and realize that you are on a hand.

No sooner does this hit you than a series of vibrations are followed by a massive breeze that alerts your cricket brain. You are forced to jump to avoid being swatted as you fall a thousand feet to the floor. You land unharmed but are forced to jump again to avoid the titanic black shape that bears down on you. Your colleagues are trying to kill you for getting too close!

You lament that there is no way you can conceive of for your team to recognize you as anything but a simply annoying insect. They couldn't fathom that a mind could be transferred into so simple a body without further studies. Another attempt to gather their attention could end your life. You can't even discern what they are saying. You can only

imagine they are discussing how your experiment has failed and the financial toll its failure will take on your team.

You are left wondering what they will do with your body and mind and what will happen when they try to reverse the process. Yet you are without a way to tell when they conduct the experiment. In the interim, you are stuck looking for the donor body to allow the transfer of your mind into a human form. Even if you could find it, you would surely be caught and squished, denied even the meager existence granted a cricket.

Resigned to your fate, you make your way out a window into a field where you can detect others of your new species. You know some of them are looking for food, looking for mates. Your body wishes to join them. You have no alternative other than to appease the new instincts in your mind. Your legs rub against your thorax, making the distinctive resonance you know will tell nearby males that you are a fertile female ready to mate. That is all your new life as a cricket has to offer.

You wonder briefly about interpreting the experiences of your new form in ways that might benefit the world. No human has ever experienced life from this perspective, and in a controlled scenario, you might find it fascinating. With no way to convey your findings to the outside world, you are even removed from that dignity.

You allow your thoughts to fade and the cricket to take over as a mate comes by to fertilize your eggs. It is the only reprieve you are granted, to allow your thoughts to wane and live out the meager existence you have as a tiny insect, so far removed from the human life you once knew. As your thoughts fade, you can only hope your endeavors yielded some useful data as you begin your new life in earnest.