

GELITECH

GELITOWER THREE

BY SHETIRA ANWAE

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SEASON 3 – EPISODE 1

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A NEW HOME

“This is all just so... weird,” the lovely, deep brunette shibi remarked to herself as she cautiously stepped out of the unpleasantly confining little cylindrical lift. The building’s sixth floor was even more sterile than the bottom floor lobby. The walls were pearly white. The ceiling and floor were glossy black. There was nothing on the outer wall besides the eight oval white doors, and to make matters even stranger, there was nothing to indicate which room was which.

Really, really weird, she thought, looking over her shoulder to watch as the tiny lift’s door closed with eerie silence. *I’ve never seen a place like it before. And now I’m supposed to live here?*

Nenya looked at the collection of lifts that seemed to be the room's only notable feature. The quartet of vertical tubes were arranged in a cloverleaf pattern. Between the lifts were planters which transformed the cloverleaf into a circle that took up much of the room's floor space. In each of these planters grew a well manicured mop of dark green ivy. Growing, perhaps, but the waxy leaves were just a bit too perfect. Were they real, or were they actually just highly realistic plastic?

The shibi leaned down to look at the ivy a bit more closely. It was real. She could tell that from the places where it had been cut in the course of its maintenance. The moist soil it was growing in was real as well. But...

Nenya stood back up and looked around again. There were no visible vents. Nothing she could see that might be circulating and filtering the air. But if that was the case, how could the air be so bereft of smell that not even damp earth, less than a meter away, had any

noticeable odor?

The shibi backed away from the planter and again looked around the room. The more she looked, the more time she spent thinking about what she was seeing, the less sense it all made to her. It was just... wrong. A liminal space that her mind just couldn't quite comprehend. A place that no living thing was meant to see, let alone explore.

Nenya's eyes turned to the eight doors in the hope that the space she currently occupied had been composed simply to discourage people from lingering in a particular space. It was a common enough architectural strategy, but how could she not linger if she couldn't tell which of the attached rooms was which? Was there some secret that someone hadn't remembered to reveal in the message assigning her room to her? Was she just too dull to see something that most would consider obvious?

The confused and deeply disturbed shibi

pulled out her comm and began to reread that long, somewhat rambling message. She was certainly in the right building. It was the Gelitech Dorm Tower Number Three. According to the message it had been one of twelve such dorm buildings in the Mashiva Mariners' University campus. All of them had been paid for by the famous makers of biogel based lifestyle goods as a showcase of 'pure', biogel inspired, high-tech architecture.

"Pure," she muttered, shaking her head as she looked for something, anything really, that might enlighten her as to how she was supposed to identify the room that had been assigned to her. "Come on. How do I find room C? Which room is C?"

While the message displayed on her comm offered no useful enlightenment, the painfully obvious that Nanya had been overlooking was more than happy to step into its place. The building's computer responded to her question by displaying a set of lovely, glimmering

purple holographic room numbers on the left panel of each sliding door. On the right panel were displayed the names of those who were assigned to live there. The blank walls between the doorways were adorned with pulsing holographic arrows that directed the thoroughly surprised shibi's attention to one door in particular.

“Ah,” Nanya sighed, shaking her head and silently chastising herself for failing to try voice commands. If voice commands worked for most functions in the living areas of starships, why wouldn't they work here as well? It was MMU, after all. “There's room C. And there's my name. I just hope it's a little less weird inside. I really don't want to spend the next four years questioning my sanity like this.”

The door leaves of room C slid aside as Nanya approached, revealing the single room apartment that was to be her home for at least the next four years. Much to her considerable

displeasure, what she saw was more of a cold, sterile chamber than a proper living space. Indeed, aside from certain consideration to the needs of student life, it didn't look all that much different from the one she'd just come from.

The small dorm room was shaped like a truncated wedge, about twice as wide at its far end as it was by the door. To make it feel even more confining, the walls curved upward and inward, following the same smoothly arched shape as the door through which she'd entered. The top of the arch was made up of a single lighting panel, its cool white glow showcasing the unsettling perfection of the room's pearly whiteness.

Instinctively drawn away from harsh interior of the room, Nanya's eyes focused on the room's broad, full height windows. These offered a fairly sensible view across City Highway 201, otherwise known to the locals as Spaceport Road. There, a reserved copse of

dense woodland served as a barrier between Mashiva's Shipyard District, and the unsightly Industrial District to the west. The only feature than besmirched the deeply green strip of tangled woodland was the six track railroad right of way that cut straight toward the dorms, before vanishing into tunnels that ran beneath.

Much closer than the trees and the incessantly darting commuter trains was a narrow balcony. The center window pane could slide to one side, offering access to fresh air, a couple of nice, comfy looking outdoor chairs, and escape from the harsh whiteness of the room's interior. A harsh whiteness to which the shibi now returned in hopes of finding some way to make it more comfortable to her eyes.

Immediately to the right of the doorway was a shallow, squared off alcove in the wall. Into this had been installed an L-shaped desk, with it's main surface sticking out almost to the center of the room. Within the alcove, above

the smaller, narrower arm of the desk, was a single bookshelf. Above this was a set of covered cubbies which offered a more private place to store things.

“This is so strange,” Nanya murmured as she put her deep pink duffle bag down on the floor beneath the desk, right where a chair *should* have been. But there was no chair. In fact, there wasn’t a single seat in the room whatsoever.

What there was, however, was a section of shiny black glass slightly recessed into the wall beneath the desk. It ran nearly the full length of the room, and made the puzzled shibi wonder if some of the room’s furniture was designed to fold out of the way when not in use. If that were the case, though, then why was the desk itself not retractable, considering how far it stuck out into the room? And what was the patch of black glass on the wall beneath the bookshelf for? And the little black hemisphere beside that?

The shibbi turned to the left side of the room at gazed with considerable consternation at what, she could only presume, was intended to be her bed. Within the full-length alcove were what appeared to be a pair glistening black mattresses. One was placed directly on the slightly raised floor of the alcove. This wasn't *too* unusual. Plenty of cultures considered such a sleeping arrangement to be perfectly acceptable, her own included.

The other mattress, however, was attached to the ceiling. Was it just being stored there? Could she drop it down to double the height of the bed? Of course, those questions were purely academic at the moment. She had no way of accessing either of them, as the whole alcove was filled with a clear, slowly undulating substance.

“What in the hells?” Nanya muttered to herself as she stared into her own slowly shifting reflection on the surface of the clear... something. “This is all so ridiculous! How am I

actually supposed to live in a place like this?!?”

A light, airy chime filled the room. “Hello!” a bright, feminine voice called out from nowhere in particular. “Welcome to Gelitower Three! My name is VixNeta, and I will be your very personal assistant for the duration of your residence here! Before you settle in, we’ll need to set up your personal residence preferences. Let’s begin!”

INFORMATION SYSTEMS

“VixNeta? Gelitower? Wait a fucking minute! This isn’t that crazy biogel lifestyle crap, is it?” Nanya demanded as she came to the abrupt and very unpleasant realization that the glistening black bits, and even the clear, undulating substance that filled her bedding alcove, were actually all made up of that famous, and infamous, living goo. “I didn’t apply for the biogel thing. I applied for information systems! Why the hell did I get assigned to this... this... place?”

“A neutral analysis of your application suggests that you have a distinct interest in biogel and biogel technology, including biogel based information technology,” VixNeta replied. “In due consideration of these factors,

you have been assigned to residence in this fully biogel equipped dorm room, controlled by the most advanced biogel information technology currently available to the public. This carefully composed environment will facilitate your familiarization with biogel and its many useful functionalities. This familiarization will assist you in informing your future educational path decisions here at M.M.U.”

“Seriously!?! I just said I was interested in biogel and wanted to take some basic elective courses!” Nanya replied with a huff. “Did I say I actually wanted to do that whole biogel thing? You don’t seriously expect me to slather myself with that black goo, do you?”

VixNeta didn’t need to say a word. All the displeased shibi had to do was look around her designated abode for the answer. Of course they expected her to have her beautiful body permanently coated in shiny black biogel. They were probably hoping that she went much

further with it too. That was how things usually went for biogel-clad freshman here, wasn't it?

This definitely wasn't how Nanya had wanted her youthfully rebellious adventure to start. It wasn't that she found biogel displeasing to the eye. Quite the opposite, in fact, and especially when compared to all the other sorts of severely body altering horrors that were so popular with young, rebellious shibi like herself. Young, rebellious shibi who weren't going to stop at merely casting off the snappy, overly competitive, and deeply unpleasant culture that their elders insisted had to go on, lest the whole universe come to an abrupt end.

No. Nanya and her rebellious peers were going to all go so much further than just walking away from their home. They were going to cast aside everything it was to be a shibi. That included their shibi bodies, almost invariably given up in exchange for

unspeakably monstrous forms, so utterly divorced in body and mind from their former selves that no one would ever know what they'd been. No one would ever associate them with their cast-aside culture and its ruling herd of imbecile elders again.

Despite her intentions, Nanya just couldn't quite cast off all of her unpleasant shibi ways. She really was quite curious about biogel. Still, she just couldn't help but insist otherwise. Then again, she definitely hadn't planned on introducing herself to biogel so quickly. She'd wanted time to get a feel for it. Time to decide exactly how she wanted to use it in order to cast off her shibi body and everything it represented.

Nanya began to wonder if someone, somewhere, had taken account of her people's nature. She'd showed curiosity about biogel in her application, but had been very definite about choosing a different major. But... here she was. Surrounded by the trappings of the

biogel lifestyle whether she wanted them or not. Had they actually gone and assumed that just because she was a shibi that she actually *did* want to go all-in?

“Would you like me to set myself, and this room, to the defaults typically preferred by female shibi of your age and personality?” VixNeta inquired.

“No,” Nanya replied without even a moment’s consideration. Responding otherwise was almost sure to result in her very premature transformation into some manner of biogel object in very short order. Then again, if the computer was taking her shibi nature into full account, would ‘no’ actually mean ‘yes’?

“Excellent!” VixNeta replied with disturbing enthusiasm. “Let us begin assessing your residential desires!”

“Residential desires?” Nanya inquired. Instead of getting a clear answer, she’d been

left to wonder exactly how the machine had interpreted the word 'no'. Had it taken it as an actual no? Or had it taken it as a yes? Or was it performing a pre-programmed routine and expecting her to just play along?

“I will ask you three questions that will help ensure that the initial configuration of your residence will meet your expectations for comfort and functionality,” VixNeta replied. “Question one: Firm or soft?”

“Uh... soft?” Nanya responded with a confused shrug. Was she being asked about her 'bed'?

“Question two: social or solitary?” VixNeta inquired.

“Uh... solitary? I guess?” Nanya replied. She was definitely more of a solitary soul, at least when it came to home life. She could only assume that was what the computer meant. Assume, and hope.

“The third and final question,” VixNeta said.
“Light or dark?”

“Uh... neither? Both? In between?” Nanya responded. “I don’t really understand the question.”

“Residential preferences recorded,” VixNeta stated with a cheery warble and a complete indifference to the shibi’s confusion. “Preferences will be applied shortly. If you have any questions, concerns, or require assistance with anything whatsoever, you may summon me by name! Please enjoy your stay here in Gelitower Three!”

“Hey! Wait a minute!” Nanya snapped. “You can’t just ask a few stupid questions and just say ‘have a nice day’ and expect me to...”

Without any real warning, the black ‘glass along the wall began to undulate and swirl amid a cacophony of sticky, gooey noises. The shocked shibi stepped back so quickly that her back pressed into the cool, wobbly surface of

the biogel that filled her 'bed' alcove. She jerked away and stumbled toward the door, watching in horror as the glistening black biogel spread into the room.

The black goo wasn't spreading out in search of NENYA. It was slowly expanding into strange, irregular shapes along the wall, and beneath the desk right next to her duffle bag. As the seconds ticked past, these forms shifted and began to solidify into things that were, on the one hand, quite familiar, yet on the other, not just a little bit disturbing owing to their physical substance.

Taking up most of the space between the desk and the windows was a big, puffy, biogel couch. Solid blocks of biogel served as end tables. Biogel 'plants' with luminous, transparent purple leaves and black stems sat atop these in black biogel pots. Two more of these plants were formed on the desk, beneath the bookshelf. Beneath the desk formed a big, puffy black biogel chair.

No sooner had the biogel stopped moving, a bright holographic computer screen formed above the desk surface. A luminous force field tactile keyboard took shape beneath it. Ninya's university mail account popped up without prompting. There were a number of new messages that clearly needed her immediate attention.

"Dammit," Ninya muttered as she took a tentative step toward the desk, and the comically large chair that stood in the way. She wanted to carefully lean over it to look at the messages, but was so afraid to touch it that she couldn't get close enough to read the small text. The last thing she wanted to do was get coated from neck to toe in the gooey blackness... or worse.

"They do this on purpose, don't they?" the shibi muttered as she gingerly touched the cool, strangely oily feeling surface of the chair with one nervously quivering finger. It was so slick and wet to the touch that she fully

expected her fingertip to be covered in oil or something similar as she drew it back. Much to her astonishment, however, it was completely dry. “That’s so... strange. How can it feel so wet if it isn’t actually wet with something?”

Nenya again reached out, this time with her whole right hand. She slid it over the soft, slick back of the chair. She could just about imagine what it might feel like to settle down into its thick, disturbingly enticing cushions. To let herself get comfortable in its glistening, living embrace. To let it...

“It’s... it’s just a chair,” the shibi told herself as she bit her lip and nervously started to slide herself between it and the desk. It was so big and puffy that she couldn’t get by without rubbing her posterior firmly against it. It felt... strange. Almost wrong. “It’s just a weird chair. Just like all the other ones that are all over the place around here. They don’t actually just do things to people, do they?”

Neyna cringed as she took hold of the desk edge with both hands, and let her modest rump slowly press down into the glistening blackness. It was like sitting down on a half-filled water cushion. Before she even knew it, she'd sunk down until the sides were well above the tops of her thighs.

“Ugh,” the shibi muttered as she tried to get comfortable. The biogel was a bit too cool for her liking, and the heavy softness made it difficult to keep herself sitting level. Perhaps if she leaned back and really settled it, it wouldn't be that big of a problem. Her skepticism about the biogel, however, kept her sitting straight upright.

On the other hand, at least she didn't have to feel the biogel's oiliness all over her legs. Apparently, that quality of the living substance didn't have the ability to pass through even the thin material of her tight 'fey-li style' shorts. And, quite oddly, those shorts didn't slide along the biogel nearly as smoothly as they

should have if it actually been as oily as it had felt.

For a few long moments, Nyenya waited to see what the biogel might do to her. She naively imagined that she could somehow escape at the first sign of trouble. At the first feeling of something strange happening. Fortunately, the biogel didn't seem to have any inclination to demonstrate otherwise.

The shibi looked at the holographic screen. Most of the messages were just the sort of mundane things a new student would expect to receive on her first day at university. Welcomes. Listings of services. Class schedule. Those sorts of things. Two in particular, however, caught her eye.

The first was a message noting that she'd been assigned a job as a part-time assistant to the night librarian on weekends at M.M.U.'s main library. She hadn't requested a job. Was it a requirement for freshmen? She wasn't sure,

but given the fact that she'd been assigned it, she had to assume that it was.

Nenya frowned and shook her head. A weekend overnight job was definitely going to put a severe crimp in her future social plans. She was going to have to think of some way to get around it. Could she work different nights? Was it just a temporary arrangement that wouldn't last past the first semester? She was going to have to find out, but that was going to have to wait until tomorrow. For now, there was that other odd looking message to attend to.

Hello Nenya!

I'm Mia, and I would like to personally welcome you to the superb Information Systems Technology program here at Mashiva Mariners' University!

I am extremely excited to hear that you've expressed a personal interest in biogel information systems and would like you to know that I would just love to make you a part of our extensive and expanding biogel information system network. First, however, you're going to need to dress yourself in a magnificent coating of perfectly polished biogel and spend at least one month enjoying its unique qualities. Again, all you need to do is let VixNeta know, and she'll do the rest.

I hope you enjoy your biogel experience here at M.M.U., and can't wait to see you around campus covered in shiny blackness. Once you're ready to join the biogel information systems network, and I just know you're going to want to, see me in my office at the Biogel Systems building. I'll be more than happy to give you the most incredible biogel intellectual experience that you can possibly imagine!

Sincerely, Mia Kaiow, Lead Biogel

Information Systems Engineer, Mashiva
Mariners' University.

Nenya couldn't help but notice the odd wording of the offer. "Become part of the biogel information systems network?" she murmured to herself. "Does that mean... literally?"

The shibi's attention was broken by the distant and distinctly unpleasant sound of rolling thunder. She looked up from the holographic screen to stare out the window at a line of dark clouds looming ominously to the west. She knew about the Mashiva Valley's infamously intense multi-day storms, and the terrible flooding they so frequently caused. The prospect of the latter didn't really bother her all that much. Leaving the university campus wasn't something she was likely going to have to do for at least a couple of weeks. The prospect of the storm itself, however, sent

a shudder down her spine.

Back home, a typical thunderstorm rarely lasted more than an hour. Even then, they made her feel unreasonably anxious, despite the fact that she knew they'd pass by quickly. Here, however, she would have no choice but to endure the rain, wind, lightning, and thunder for two, perhaps even three, days. Just thinking about it made her start to feel the first tense pangs of anxiety in her chest. The fact that she was in such a strange and unfamiliar place only made them worse.

Nenya was torn between deciphering the mystery of the strange message and looking for some way to ease her growing anxiety. Something familiar might make her feel a little better. It might take the edge off the strangeness of her new apartment. But... what?

The shibi's stomach rumbled. Her day had been so hectic that she hadn't found time to eat

in at least the past six hours. Something nice and familiar to eat would certainly make her feel a bit better. Or perhaps something to drink. But where was she going to get it?

There was no place to obtain food in her room. As far as she could recall, there didn't seem to be any sort of food service in the building whatsoever. The looming storm made going out virtually out of the question. Of course, she could trek all the way to one of the big cafeterias using the network of tunnels beneath the campus to avoid the rain and thunder, but she just couldn't summon the energy for that.

Nenya took a deep breath and watched as a bright flash of lightning that lit up the whole valley. The storm was advancing over the vast farm fields that lay beyond the city of Runai, just past the giant reservoir to Mashiva's west. She couldn't tell how fast it was approaching. Whether or not it was going too slow for her liking, or too fast, she didn't know. Either way,

she was almost compelled by her room's layout to watch every moment of its approach. There weren't even any curtains to block the view.

Nenya was almost sure wind up with full-on anxiety attack if she couldn't get her hands on something comforting, and quickly. But... it seemed as if the only way that she was going to find the familiar comforts she desired was to summon VixNeta again. That machine which the strange message suggested had the power to cover her body in biogel. Could she actually trust it not to lead her astray?

"VixNeta?" Neyna asked, biting her lip as she waited for the computer to reply. She really didn't have a choice but to ask. Either that or go out without any guarantee that she was going to find what she was looking for. That she would have to come back to this strange room without anything to soothe her anxiety. That she would be paralyzed by her fears at the time when she needed to be most focused and attentive, as she took her next

steps into university life.

“Hello!” VixNeta responded with its unnaturally cheery tone. “How may I please you today?”

“Where do I get a drink?” Nenyā asked, desperately hoping for an answer that didn’t involve further encounters with biogel.

“What sort of drink would you like?” VixNeta inquired.

“Hot lanni cream-tea,” Nenyā replied. It was common enough that it should be available someplace like M.M.U. “Were do I get hot lanni cream-tea around here?”

VixNeta didn’t reply. Instead, and much to Nenyā’s considerable surprise, several odd sounds came from behind the biogel panel beneath the bookshelf. It was almost like someone had hidden an old style vending machine in the wall. Clunk. Thunk. Whoosh. Hiss. Then the biogel melted away to reveal a

small alcove containing an insulated can of hot lanni tea.

“Your hot lanni tea is ready,” VixNeta announced.

For a few long moments, the astonished shibi was left speechless. Apparently, her room did have food service after all. “Does this thing do anything besides drinks?” she asked as she reached out and took hold of the can. She took a sip of the sweet, creamy tea, reveling in its light, floral aroma.

“A selection of popular basic per-packaged snacks is available,” VixNeta replied. “You may peruse the menu on your comm using the M.M.U. Life application.”

“Thank you,” Nanya replied, taking another sip of tea while trying her best to focus on her remaining messages. No matter how much she tried, however, her mind kept switching back and forth between the looming storm and that strange biogel network message. VixNeta had

been mentioned in the message. Perhaps the computer might know more about what it actually meant. “VixNeta?”

“Yes?” VixNeta replied. “Do you require something else?”

“This message here is asking me to become part of the university’s biogel information systems network,” Nanya said, pointing to the holographic screen. “What does that really mean? Does it mean a network of people who are doing biogel information systems stuff? Or does it mean... like... literally becoming part of an information systems network? Like... a computer network or something like that?”

“That is an interesting question with components that may prove to be quite personal in nature,” VixNeta replied. “An exploration of its aspects requires due consideration prior to commencement.”

“Uh...” Nanya replied with a raised eyebrow.

“Presuming that you have considered the matter appropriately,” VixNeta went on, “do you genuinely desire that I help you commence your personal exploration of the question?”

“Well... yeah,” Nanya replied as another, somewhat closer flash of distant lightning distracted her from the computer’s unusually worded reply. “Why else would I have asked?”

“Very well,” VixNeta answered with an even cheerier tone than before. “I will now assess the data available. Once my assessment is complete, I will assist you in opening your exploration.”

“And how long will that take?” Nanya questioned with considerable skepticism. What could possibly require that much time for the computer to assess? Surely it already had all the relevant information at hand!

“Up to three hours,” VixNeta replied. “I shall inform you when the assessment is ready. You may then commence your exploration at your

leisure.”

“Fine,” Nanya replied, rolling her eyes. It didn’t make much sense. Then again, nothing so far had really made any sense.

Another flash of lightning caught her eye. The storm was slowly getting closer and now she had yet another cause for nervous anticipation to add to the thunder and lightning. But what else could she do but wait?

“It’s probably just trying to make me read all this other stuff first,” the shibi sighed as she turned back to the other messages. They were certainly more important than that strange message, and not a few required a timely reply. “Let me get through all these and then maybe I’ll lay down on the couch and try to relax. If I can relax. But with this storm coming... I just don’t know...”

BEDTIME STUDIES

Thunder rolled hard and heavy through the night sky. Bolts of lightning flared through the low clouds, and smote the tall lightning rods that poked up from the roof of almost every building in the city. Vast quantities of energy were thus directed into massive underground steam generators tucked away beneath the low lying districts, and in the deep bowels of the New City proper. These directed steam into giant turbines, not to produce energy, but to drive the massive pumps that kept water from the city's vast maze of subways, tunnels, and even some of the long abandoned Old City mines.

No one was really sure why the old, abandoned mines needed to be kept pumped

dry. The valuable ore had long since been plundered, leaving nothing but bare tunnels, vast stopes, and myriad dangers that no sane soul would dare to face. Collapses. Bad air. Fungus. Mold. Slime. Magic flowstone. And even, if rumors were true, a colony of gorgons who happily decorated their cavernous abode with the petrified bodies of interlopers who chanced to discover their home.

Nenya sighed. For a video channel dedicated to documenting the long history of the City of Mashiva, she would have expected more urban facts than urban myths. Then again, urban myths were just as much part of the city and its life as the facts, weren't they? But still...

It was getting late. She desperately wanted to sleep, but the thunder and lighting were keeping her awake. There seemed to be no escape from them. No escape other than the distraction provided by the holographic video screen that hovered upon the surface of the bedding alcove, opposite the couch on which

she lay.

It had been quite the surprise that the universal media control app on her comm had summoned the holo-screen. It had been her last hope of entertainment after discovering that the M.M.U. Life app was only good for summoning snacks, checking schedules, making appointments, and buying university branded things. She would have that a place like M.M.U. would have had a universal app for just about everything. Or at least one app to control everything in her room. As it turned out, there wasn't one, unless you counted VixNeta, and that was definitely an app that she didn't want to download onto her own personal comm.

Nenya's thoughts turned from the odd documentary and its speculations about the depths beneath the Old City. It was late. Very late. VixNeta had said it would only take three ours to get its information in order. Surely, far more time had passed than that.

Almost as if on cue, a soft chime sounded. “Good evening, Nenya,” VixNeta cooed with a softness to match the darkness in the room. “I have completed my assessment of your prospects with regards to the biogel network question and am pleased to report that your inquiry can be answered far more quickly than had originally been estimated.”

“Huh?” Nenya replied, thoroughly perplexed by the computer’s declaration. Was she really *that* tired, or was it actually trying to deliberately confuse her?

“Would you like to commence the first step of your exploration now, or would you prefer to wait until some other time?” VixNeta inquired.

Nenya sighed and rubbed her eyes with both hands. She was tired, but so long as the storm persisted, she doubted she was going to be able to get any sleep unless she could figure out how to cut her apartment off from all the

thunder and lightning. Or at least cut herself off from it all.

“I’d rather go to bed,” Nanya replied with a shallow yawn. “Someplace where I can’t see or hear this damned storm.”

“Would you like me to configure your bedding alcove to satisfy your desires?” VixNeta asked.

“Well... sure,” Nanya replied without knowing quite what that was supposed to mean. “I mean, I guess. What are you going to do with it?”

Just as with her first can of lanni tea, VixNeta replied with actions rather than words. The clear biogel that filled the bedding alcove melted away. The floor mattress puffed up. A heavy blanket of glistening blackness parted from its surface, while pillows formed at the end closest to the windows. Finally, along both sides of the alcove opening, wavy curtains of shimmering black biogel took

shape.

“Oh! Uh... that’s... that’s okay, I guess,’
Nenya stammered at the alcove’s
transformation into something one step short
of mundane. After spending so much time
sitting on her biogel desk chair, and laying on
the biogel couch, the prospect of laying down
on a biogel bed, perhaps even under a biogel
blanket, didn’t seem quite so perilous.
Assuming that clear biogel didn’t come back,
that is.

“That’s not going to fill back up with the
clear stuff while I’m in there, is it?” the shibi
asked as she stood up and walked to the alcove
opening. While the room had previously
smelled almost belligerently neutral before,
the air was now taking on the piquant scent of
natural latex rubber. This wasn’t particularly
displeasing, but it did suggest that the bedding
in the alcove might not be quite so innocent as
that elsewhere in the room.

“You may request a return to the encasement configuration at any time,” VixNeta replied.

“No thank you!” Nanya responded as she looked down at the soft, puffy mattress. She wondered just how deep she was going to sink into its surface. Was it going to feel as oily as the chair and the couch? More importantly, was it going to feel cool beneath the blanket, or was she going to be warm and cozy? Should she keep wearing the warm, soft pink exercise pants and shirt she liked to use for pajamas, or should she slip into something more appropriate for a nice warm bed?

“Nudity is the universally preferred manner of sleeping in a biogel bed,” VixNeta observed. “The uniformity of sensation greatly enhances the quality of relation and sleep.”

Nanya pulled her shirt off and tossed it onto the couch. “Okay. I’ll try it.”

Despite her worries about VixNeta’s periodic

bouts of duplicitous language, nothing out of the ordinary had happened. Even the strangest things in her room were turning out to be far less strange than she had imagined. The biogel was just performing the functions of various mundane objects, and doing so in ways that offered so many options that no other technology could match. That was something she could definitely appreciate, and something that she found herself now wanting to explore much more thoroughly.

Nenya untied the belt string on her pants and let them fall to the floor around her ankles. She kicked them back toward the couch, and they landed at its foot, right next to her pink duffle bag. She took a deep breath. She bit her lip. She stepped up onto the alcove floor.

“You have no activities scheduled for tomorrow,” VixNeta noted. “Would you like to sleep in?”

“Sure,” Nenyra replied as she reached down to pick up the edge of the biogel blanket. She could barely get a grip on it.

“Allow me to assist,” VixNeta said as the blanket slid down sufficiently to allow the tired shibi easy access.

“Thank you,” Nenyra replied as she flopped down onto the glossy black mattress beneath.

“Ah!” the surprised shibi gasped as she instantly sank into the warm, soft mattress so far that she was almost completely beneath the level of its upper surface. Only the somewhat firmer pillows kept her head raised above the rest of the puffy blackness.

Nenyra was practically helpless, wiggling and squirming about as she tried to get herself in the middle of the bed. It was no use. The biogel was just too oily against her skin.

“Can you make this any firmer?” the shibi asked. “So I’m not sunk in so far?”

Again, the response was an action rather than words. Nanya found herself rising up as the mattress became considerably less puffy. She still had trouble getting herself straight in the bed, but at least she could move around with considerably less difficulty.

“Thank you,” Nanya said, rolling onto her back and closing her eyes as the blanket began to slide up over her. “Oh... that feels so...”

“Pleasant?” VixNeta replied.

“Yeah,” Nanya responded with a deep, sonorous sigh as the oily-slick, and pleasantly heavy blanket seemed to flow up her legs, over her tummy, and around her modest breasts. It almost felt like it was liquid.

The curtains closed, casting the bedding alcove into complete darkness. The rubbery membrane seemed to absorb the sound of the thunder, while a fan blew cool air into the chamber, drowning out what was left of the sound with its soft hum. The shibi took a deep

breath. The storm was gone. She could finally relax and get some sleep.

“Before you dream,” VixNeta softly cooed as the shibi hovered on the cusp of falling asleep, “would you like me to commence your exploration as you rest?”

“Yeah, sure,” Nanya replied, neither really hearing or comprehending what the computer was asking.

“As you wish,” came VixNeta’s reply.

Nanya was overcome by the scent of warm rubber. As her mind wavered on the edge of dreams, the oily slick biogel seemed to hug her more closely. It began to creep in the open pockets of air around her legs. Up around her sides. Even up into the crease of her firm little rump.

It was just a dream, of course. A dream born from watched videos, imagined sensations, and the very real feel of the biogel bed in which she

lay. An arousing dream, that made her feel sexy. Even horny.

Nenya could feel the biogel pressing into her body. It slipped smoothly into her tight little ass. It opened her soft pussy and thrust deep inside. It felt so good. So dreamy. So... perfect.

The shibi could no longer move. It was as if the biogel bed had encased her with its now quite firm surface. It was touching her everywhere except her head. It was touching her... and loving her. Loving her to sleep with its tender thrusts and firm rubs against her hypersensitive little clit.

Waves of whirling, dreamy arousal filled Nenya's half-conscious mind. Pulses of growing pressure gripped her between the legs, and within her quivering abdomen. One by one, they drove her toward climax. She was helpless to resist.

All at once, she came crashing down. Firm thumps took the place of pulsing pressure. A

wave of euphoria cast a final layer of fog over her already dampened mind. Sleep took hold, even as the final orgasmic pulses shuddered through her body.

Nenya drifted into the world of real dreams. Dreams that she wouldn't remember. Dreams that wouldn't affect her life in any way, shape, or form whatsoever. But that first dream... the dream that wasn't really a dream... that would have consequences that no one could possibly have foreseen. No one, perhaps, save another, very particular university overnight librarian...

TO BE CONTINUED...