New Planet, New Body, New Life, Part 2

Inside the vat, Marl waited, and thought. Waited, and thought. Waited, and thought. The brain pulsed and wriggled against her other vatmates, crammed in like a can of sardines, with barely any space between them for the nutrient fluid keeping them alive. Being just a brain isolated from all her senses, however, she didn’t know this. For five weeks she had existed like this, completely unaware of anything and everything. Since she wasn’t even aware of which way was up, she was even oblivious to the fact that she was upside-down at the bottom, her frontal lobes squished by the weight of her fellows… the brains that were in there with her. Three hundred and six other brains, each with their own hopes, dreams, and thoughts, sat and thought with her. Near-identical, without any outward clue to their identity… pulsating and wriggling against each other, oblivious to their neighbors.

Three weeks passed. The brains thought some more. A mechanical arm lifted the vat off the pushcart, tilting it slightly as the brains swirled around, bumping into each other. Marl wondered if they had forgotten about her somewhere, then mentally shrugged. If she was going to be a brain in a jar forever, she might as well get used to it.

They couldn’t feel the vat move, but as they shifted their positions they slipped against each other, different parts of their minds feeling different pressures. Their brainwaves spiked as random parts of their minds were stimulated, spiked again as they all simultaneously wondered what happened… then returned to calmness as they returned to their isolated thoughts. Marl wondered if she hadn’t been forgotten after all… then promptly went back to her contemplation.

Scaled hands attached a tube to a connector at the bottom of the vat. What appeared to be a brownish-gold stegosaurus-man, a crystal dome containing a brain atop his head, had entered the room and began to take the first steps to preparing the brains for transplant. He hummed to himself, as he turned a valve. The plates on his back stuck through a specially-designed pair of surgical scrubs, his spiked tail brushing the floor absentmindedly.

Marl shot through the tube, the helpless brain deformed by the pressure, her thoughts completely incoherent as she traveled through the support fluid. “Venus pink a fifteen cow baba balloon!” She thought, as she bumped into a tube wall. “Weeds deep zero peas, cats, it’s Mondays!” These “thoughts” continued for some time… until with little fanfare she landed upside-down in a basin of brain support fluid. “Hglhlbk…” she thought, as she pulsated helplessly and a bit disorientedly.

A small green compsognathus made his way to the stego, barely 4 and a half feet tall- but the dome atop his head containing a massive, oddly shaped brain brought it up to five. “Alright, Teryn, so what brain do we have here?” He rubbed his long neck absentmindedly, his small predator’s snout twitching as he suppressed an urge to drool at the helpless, pink wad of meat. It was so inconvenient to have such a large brain with such a long neck, but he wouldn’t have traded his body for the world… besides, there were apatosaurs who had it worse with neck length.

The stego shook his head. “Haven’t probed it yet. I was just about to start.” He took a thin metal tube from the surgical tray next to the brain, then picked up Marl in his free hand. He pressed a button, and filaments of wire spread out from the tip… snaking their way into the helpless, pulsing organ.

Marl felt like everything was electric, as her grey matter was zapped, probed, and stimulated, her brainwaves were catalogued by the device. “Peanut slippy marble farty zing! Zoos pick a doodle never twenty oops!” She thought, mind scrambled again. In Teryn’s hand, he felt the organ pulsate faster… then a light on the rod turned green, and the filaments retracted.

“Okay, this is… Marl Stephenson, it’s supposed to be settled into Body 45028,” Teryn said. “You want to get it tied in now, Grego?” Privately, the stegosaur-man marveled. The new cerebral probes the department had shipped from Earth were nearly twice as fast as the old ones.

“She is a SHE, not an it,” the compy replied, as he reached out to grab the brain. Marl pulsated weakly in his hands as he turned around, briskly walking out of the brain room. Teryn soon followed. “It’s important to not treat our patients as mere objects, no matter whether they’ve been scooped or not.”

Teryn sighed, before turning towards the north wall. A domed-brained raptor and triceratops wheeled a surgical gurney into the room… containing the body of a blue, striped allosaurus lady. Six feet tall, green slitted eyes staring forward with only the occasional blink, with a long tail that stuck through a hole in the gurney, it just lay there. It breathed faintly, the top of its head removed, empty except for what appeared to be some sort of computerized pump, sending signals to the spinal cord to keep it breathing and releasing the occasional hormone. “The body’s ready for her, Grego, just need to take the neural stimulator out.”

“Then do it…” Grego muttered, as he looked through the tools he needed to complete the transplant. There was the neural fuser, a thick cylindrical soldering iron-like device for grafting the spinal cord to the brainstem. There was the dome and enclosure- a clear polymer dome that would change hue to protect the organ beneath from sun or laser blast, and a metal rim to bond it to the skull itself. There was the osseofactor, looking like a multi-nozzled ophthalmoscope, for making sure the dome enclosure grew into the rim of the skull and stimulating bone growth. “Check is done, we can tie her in when you’re ready.”

“Alright.” With a yank, the stegosaurus tugged the neural stimulator out of the allosaur woman’s head. The body spasmed, and lay still, breathing more faintly without the computer to regulate its bodily functions in place of a brain. “She’s ready!”

“See? Using the proper pronoun for a disembodied brain isn’t hard…” the compy replied, as the stego lifted the allosaurus off the gurney and onto the operating table. He clacked restraints onto the unoccupied body so if it spasmed during the reconnection procedure, nobody’d get a claw to the face.

The compy smiled, lifting Marl’s erratically pulsing, confused brain in both claws, beholding it in his slitted eyes… then gently, tenderly, kissing it atop the frontal lobes. “Sit tight, my disembodied friend. You’ll have a body in but a moment.”

With his right he lowered Marl into her new body’s skull. A perfect fit, as it should be. The interior of the allosaur head was specifically designed to perfectly hold her. With his left he took the neural fuser, aiming its beam at the place where the brainstem and spinal cord met… Grego using a syringe to squirt regenerative neurofluids onto the area as Marl took control of a body for the first time in nearly six years.

“A twitch… she’s moving!” Teryn exclaimed, as the right leg of the allosaur jerked. “Move her around, get her other side of the cord connected!” Grego shifted Marl around, the greyish-pink blob of nervous tissue twitching as her other leg started to spasm wildly.

“Maaa…uruhhhh…?” The allosaur tried to speak, as its eyes confusedly started to spin around. “Nghuh…..” it moaned, Marl thoroughly mixed up by how her lobes had been manhandled over the past few minutes. “G…ham I here?” she asked, trying desperately to refocus her eyes.

“Success!” Grego exclaimed. “The surgery was a success!” Teryn chuckled, then looked into Marl’s new eyes. “Yep! You’re on Cretacia now, notice anything different?”

“Urgh… I feel like I got, like, a thousand concussions…” Marl growled, breathing deeply. “AND I’m in a body, unlike the past six years, but something feels really different. Not in a bad way, a weird one.”

The compy turned to face Marl and smiled. “That’s to be expected, after being transplanted into a body different from your old one… that reminds me… how do you like your new look?" the surgeon asked, holding up a mirror to her face. Marl gasped.

The figure strapped to the operating table was covered in a dark bluish, tiger-striped hide, lightening on the underside of her tail, jaw, and belly. Her three-toed, birdlike feet flexed, her toe claws polished and glistening. Her breasts were ample, but not to the point they seemed overlarge, or would threaten to fly everywhere should she break into a run. Her hand's claws glistened, razor-sharp but small enough to not be a bother when she was at work... and her beautiful head! The body's head turned, and a satisfied growl came from her throat as she admired her shiny, predator teeth, her powerful jaw, her emerald predator eyes.... part of her skull cut away to reveal a twitching, pink brain whose bottom half was implanted inside. "I love it..." Marl said, with a start. It wasn't the scratchy, deep voice she expected from her new body... it was her original voice!

“Well, I’m glad. If you didn’t, you’d either have to pay to grow a new one or just make do with what you have.” The compy snickered, reaching for the cerebral probe. “This may feel bizarre, we just need to make sure your lovely lobes aren’t damaged.” Again, metal filaments snaked out from the device… spreading over Marl’s twitching, gelatinous surface and worming their way in.

Marl spasmed forcefully, once, twice. “Marine sundae does a fifteen twenty-five seven yee-haw!” She babbled. “Hrglglblpuppies….” She gurgled, as the device searched for any irregularities in her brain patterns, and found none….save for the ones the device was causing. “Bahahahaha!” She guffawed, eyes pinwheeling, as drool began to pour out of her mouth. The device’s filaments retracted, leaving the recently embodied Marl a drooling and giggling mess.

Grego paternally patted Marl’s brain (sending her spasming and laughing again), then fitted the metal bonding band onto the rim of her skull. A perfect fit. Grabbing the osseofactor, he prodded the bone, the osseous tissue growing into the metal itself… it wasn’t coming loose anytime soon. He took a deep breath, then reached for the shining plexiglas dome that would protect her brain from the world…

"Uh, before you put it on, would you mind if I... touched it?" Marl replied, sheepishly, pointing to her brain. Grego gave a start, the compy wasn’t expecting her to regain her faculties so soon! Her daggerlike teeth formed a slight smile. “I mean, it looks like it’d be fun to touch.”

"Just... don't damage yourself," the compy surgeon replied. "Those claws are no joke." He undid the straps around Marl's new arms, and sighed. Every brain that got shipped here wanted to touch themselves after their surgery, sometimes playing around with themselves so much they had to undergo brain regeneration therapy.

Marl looked at the twitching, throbbing mass in her new head, and for a moment her thoughts became... philosophical. "I've been just a brain for five years..." she thought, as her predator mouth curled into a stoic frown. "I'm a dinosaur now, but, technically, I’m a brain IN a dinosaur, just like when I had my human body… ugh, it’s so confusing!”

And that all ended when her finger brushed the surface of her brain. “Ngk~“ she said, as she controlled the involuntarily urge to spasm, suddenly smelling what appeared to be burning electrical wiring. “Hmm…” She prodded a bit below that, and she felt the taste of soy sauce, lavender and chocolate on her new tongue. She shivered as she stroked the slimy, warm surface of her brain, biting her lip as she tried to suppress a moan.

“Alright, that’s enough… you can do that on your own time when you’ve gotten to your quarters,” Grego sighed, as Teryn held down the arm she was using to play with her brains. With a click-hiss, he pressed the dome’s surface against the lip of Marl’s open skull, the new allosaur squirming as she felt her wrinkles twitch against the glass. “There. NOW we’ve gotten you all tied in.” Teryn screwed four bolts into Marl’s dome rim, keeping the allosaur’s brain protected- then he pressed another button on the operating table, and the restraints snapped open.

Marl staggered to her feet. "Wooh! This new body's weird…” Her three-toed feet splayed out, she tried to balance… but her knees buckled under her.

“I got you…” The stego grabbed her arm and pulled her forward. “You got sucked out of your body… like, five years ago? Brains tend to have a hard time with doing something after they haven’t been doing that thing for a long time. Take it slow.”

Marl nodded. “Ah… okay. So.. what do I do now I have my body?”

Grego sighed. “We’ve got three hundred and five other brains we need to get tied in, so we’re not going to be free. We do have volunteers that help us with that sort of thing…”

Almost as if on cue, a door to the operating room opened and a pachycephalosaur’s head appeared. The dome of bone that would normally appear on a pachy head was instead clear, giving a view of his massive, pulsing brain. “Uh, is this the right room?”

“Yes it is, Spike,” Teryn said. “Marl here's just been tied in, why don’t you show her around? Get her some clothes, requisition her a computer, maybe show her the sights?”

“Sure, Teryn,” Spike replied. “Come on, lady. We’ve got things to do, people to see…” He walked over to Marl. "So, let's get you what you need..."

As they walked out of the room, Marl stumbling and Spike catching her, Marl could hear the compy searching furiously for the cerebral probe. Her brain twitched with anticipation, eagerness even, as she shifted the stolen implement under her hospital gown. Her frontal lobes were going to have some FUN later on...