Another sheet of paper appeared from the printer. All the text on it would be gibberish if it wasn’t happening in a lab on the Moon. But it was the last, tenth summary of observations made over the past week, and while waiting for it to be processed, David dozed off on the keyboard. Woken up by printer noise, he got up and threw a look on the printout. ”Is it running out of ink or something?” he thought, noticing that the letters were more gray than black, “Maybe there’s some extra-”

There was a sound like a slight knock on the metal walls of the station. “…extra ink in the storage…” David finished his thought. This probably was a sound of a little asteroid stroke the outer covering, and it was nothing to worry about, because, apparently, the on-board computer didn’t detect any critical damage to the module. David took all the printouts from the table and went to the storage to put them in the archives and get some ink for the printer.

Another knock came from outside. And another one. Passing by the window in the storage, David looked in it. There was the same colorless surface and black starry sky – nothing suspicious, but the knocking was not going to stop, and it was not visible what exactly was it. “These are not asteroids” David realized: the sound is too soft, as if something lighter is knocking. His skin crawled: this shift he was alone in the entire station, and it seemed that there was something alive outside it.

Suddenly the knocking stopped and there was silence for a moment. David was about to breathe a sigh of relief, but he heard a humming from the airlock room, as if the airlock started to open from the outside. It’s definitely was something there, and now it was trying to get into the module. David looked carefully at the airlock from around the corner, and judging by the glow of the low pressure indicator, it really was opening. He took an oxygen mask off the wall: why would this creature close the airlock back if it can breathe in a vacuum? However, the control panel made two beeping sounds the first of which meant that its outer door was closing, and the second - that the inner one was starting to open.

And, finally it opened completely. Despite how dangerous it was, David was still watching from around the corner, expecting to see something like an alien from movies. But what he saw was completely different: it was a tall animal-like creature with some kind of neon glowing devices implanted in the body. One of these devices was a mask with an orange digital face on it. The creature left the airlock and looked around. David suddenly felt its gaze on him and wanted to hide around the corner, but then realized that it was too late.

“Hello,” the creature said in a soft synthetic voice, “no need to hide; I’m only here for research purposes.”

David didn't expect this and didn't say anything. The creature was also silent, curiously examining David.

“What’s your name?” she asked.

“Hi…” he answered unconfidently, “I’m David” Almost everything about this situation puzzled him.

The creature smiled. “Nice to know, but I meant the name of your species.”

“Oh,” David said, “I’m a human… Homo Sapiens, scientifically speaking.”

“Thanks, I’m Alba, since we use personal names.” Without saying anything else, she went to the laboratory, examining everything that comes along the way. The printouts that David had dropped on the floor in a hurry also caught her attention: she picked them up and began to read the first one.

“May I ask why you were knocking?” David asked.

“To create echo and see what’s inside here,” the protogen answered, “your house is not an ordinary object for this moon, so I was wondering what it is.”

“It’s a research station, not a house” David said. “How do you know my language?”

“Don’t you have such technology?” she replied a little surprised, still reading the printouts. “Anyway, I can’t tell you the details yet. I need to know more about you.”

“Alright, what do you want to know first?”

“No, that's not what I meant. Since I’ve found life forms here, I have to study them. How many humans are there in this place?”

“There's no one here but me,” David replied. He decided to answer honestly, just in case, even though he knew it was better not to say that.

Alba looked up from the paper. “You are the only human here?” she asked.

“Yes, no one will arrive until the end of the month. Do you need more people for your research?”

The protogen came closer. “No, one is enough,” she said, “It even makes things easier.” The digital mouth on her mask disappeared and then the mask opened, revealing the real one. She opened it wider and leaned over David. “I just need to do one thing.”

David immediately drew back from her. “What are you doing?!”

Alba closed her mouth. “By first, I need to eat you. It may sound weird, but this is necessary for research.”

“Sounds more like you're just hungry.”

“Well, actually, I am… but I wasn’t lying to you, just let me swallow you and you’ll see.”

David didn’t say anything. They stared at each other for a few seconds, after which Alba took a step towards him. David stepped back and found himself standing right in the doorway of the vault. Without thinking twice, he sharply took another step back, hit the button on the wall and disappeared behind the closing door.

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After a little work with the door mechanism, Alba entered the storage. She saw a lot of shelves and boxes with some electronics, various tools and office supplies. “I don’t want to scare you, but I can find you by smell,” she smiled, “but I really won't hurt you, don't hide please.”

She looked around the room and went to the lockers next to the door. “You are in the middle one” she said and opened one of the lockers. There was nothing there but clothes, mostly David's lab coats.

“Oh… then why is the air warmer here?” She looked at the contents of the locker in confusion and slowly opened the next one. “That’s why!” she exclaimed joyfully, when she saw David in there. “Alright, it was funny, but it's enough.” She took David by the shoulders and lifted him up, closer to her face.

“Please…” he mumbled.

“Trust me” Alba said, opened her mouth again and pushed David in. He started to struggle and try to get his head out of her maw. It was hard for her to swallow such a heavy and huge object, moreover he was struggling a lot. She gathered enough strength and made a slow, deep gulp. It made a squirming bugle appear on her neck and move down when Alba made another, less deep but more confident gulp.

Now David was inside the protogen down to his waist. He still was trying to get out, but his hands slid along the throat walls and it had no effect at all. With a few more gulps, Alba grabbed his legs and pushed him deeper. A bulge appeared on her belly, squirming and growing bigger with every swallow she made.

David’s feet disappeared into protogen’s mouth too, she closed her mouth, and the virtual one appeared on the same place on the mask. After one more gulp, the bulge on her neck traveled down into the stomach, stretching it into a huge, almost round shape.

“Ah, perfect, now we can start” Alba said, patting her belly. “Make yourself comfortable, it may take a long time.”

“Can start what?!” David shouted, “This isn’t a research, you just ate me!”

“But I’m not going to hurt you at all.” Alba said, “You see, my stomach is not just for digesting food, it’s a very complex device with a lot of sensors in it.”

“Is it?” David asked doubtfully. It was dark in Alba’s stomach, and its walls felt just fleshy, without anything special.

“Yes. As a proof, I just found out your volume and mass with its help – it’s about 0.0714 cubic meters and 76.29 kg.”

“Seems true, but-”

“Also, I can see you recently burned your finger,” she continued to chatter, “I can heal it, I just need time.”

“Alright, that’s pretty cool. Will it hurt?”

“No, it won’t, although you may feel a bit dizzy sometimes” she answered. “Now, if you don't mind, I'll start it.” Her stomach growled and slowly started to push David from all sides, gurgling a lot.

“It will be a lot of work,” Alba said, “you are much more complex than I thought. The process may take a long time.”

“Well, it’s quite comfy here after all, so I don’t mind.” David replied. “Wait, where are you going?” asked he anxiously, hearing a sound of the airlock opening.

“I just want to walk around the station, I'm not used to such a strong gravity” Alba answered, “Don’t worry, you’ll be able to breath.”

Alba came out of the airlock, easily jumped onto the roof of the station and sat down. Her stomach rumbled, adjusting to new body position and gravitation. It also got a little bigger because of the vacuum outside. Alba looked at it as if thinking about something, but apparently there was nothing to worry about.

“Is this the planet you are from?” she asked, looking on the sky. “It looks… amazing.”

“Thanks…” David replied in a sleepy voice. “I hope it wasn't a hint at anything.”

Alba smiled. “I just noticed that one of my sensors tells me you're tired” she said after a pause, “why don’t you have a nap?” she wanted to ask, but noticed that David was already asleep. “Well, have a good night, human.”