

LIMB AWAY 11: PURPLE PATCH

by Paul Watson

"...the mice were licking their paws."

"So what happened..."

"Exactly." Foster explains, his hands moving with excitement, "They swallowed the solution and it produced global..." he stops as he pushes the door open. "What are you doing here?"

"I work here, don't I?" Hemmings replies, hunched over his laptop, a camera connected to the usb.

"Matter of opinion."

"I meant, it's a little...unusual to see you here at this time of the morning."

"Uh-huh. Just writing up my findings from last night."

"Last night?"

"We've had a breakthrough, 'Loretta'. I know what the purple does. I'm just writing it up now."

"Weren't we supposed to not do anything with that?"

"Where's your spirit of adventure? You think Edison would have got anywhere if he'd sat around waiting for permission?"

"Right. So, don't keep us in suspense..."

"I'll present the preliminary findings at the team meeting. I'm sure you can wait until then."

"It looks like we'll have to." Foster replies, going to his own experiments.

"Jerk." Loretta mutters.

The others trickle in, all expressing surprise at seeing Brad here so early, except Drone who expresses no opinion, and getting the brush off until the team meeting.

"Well," Doc Harrison starts, "I'm glad we have a full complement of researchers eager to attack our challenges." All eyes turn towards Brad, but he appears not to notice. "So, we'll start with Mr Foster's research on..."

"Actually, Doc..."

Doc's eyebrows rise, "Mr Hemmings, there's no need to interrupt. We'll come to you and your discoveries later."

"I'm sure everyone is going to be far more interested in my findings than Hank's size cont..."

"You were plenty interested a couple of days ago." Loretta mutters.

"Hemmings, we will come to you in your turn."

Hemming leans back, arms folded as Hank explains about the effects of the rats swallowing the diluted solutions.

"Heh. That could solve our money problems."

"How so?"

"If Hank can get the dosages correct, we could take over the cosmetic surgery business."

"Need I remind you, Hemmings, that even that industry requires FDA approval of its products for safety."

Hemmings shrugs, "So we just let the word spread that we've got something that works and they'll either lobby the feds to approve our stuff, or they'll pay us a fortune to keep it off the market."

"Very Machiavellian, Hemmings. I'll be sure to take it up with Ms van Dyne."

"Yeah, you do that, Doc. Now, about the purple..."

"Fine, Hemmings. You have the floor."

"Thank you, Doc. You're too kind." he connects his laptop to the screen, "So, the purple goop you get when you combine LimbAway and LimbAhoy has...unique properties. As we all know, LimbAway removes what it's in contact with and LimbAway either restores it or adds more. Pussy's been..."

"Hemmings. Please do Ms Henriquez the basic courtesy of using her actual name."

"Sorry, so, Jennifer has been investigating how the additions are chosen. Yes, Doc, I know that implies intentionality on the part of LimbAhoy, and that's not what I'm suggesting. But the point is that, regardless of how the additions work, when it is used on the site of LimbAway use it always

restores the limb exactly as it was.”

”That would...appear to be correct. So, you are saying that the purple behaves differently?”

”Yes. It works like you’ve applied LimbAway to the area and then LimbAhoy.”

”So it erases the limb and restores it immediately? Isn’t that essentially no change?”

”It would be if it worked exactly like LimbAhoy, ‘Loretta’. My findings are that it does not. Instead of restoring the limb, it functions more like the area was not exposed to LimbAway. The limb that ‘grows back’ isn’t the same as the limb removed.”

”Are you...”

”I think pictures will serve best.” he moves to a folder and clicks on one image: a woman, naked beside a crumpled bed, her features blurred and with legs where her arms should be, making her quadrupedal.

”That is...an interesting effect.”

”Yes. Using LimbAway to remove the altered limbs and LimbAhoy to restore them restores them to their proper configuration. So it’s only when they’re mixed that this effect occurs.”

”Very...”

”There’s also some interesting interactions that I’ve passed to Pussy, to Jennifer, to assist in her research. However...”

Next picture: Presumably the same woman with her arms hanging from her hips and legs from her shoulders.

Next picture: Same woman with hands reversed.

Next picture: Same woman, her head backwards, looking in some awe down her back at her rear.

Next picture: Same woman with breasts in place of her limbs.

Next picture: Same woman with her head also replaced with a breast.

”There is a limitation to the effects. They only produce human limbs. However...”

Next picture, same woman, still with a breast sitting mutely on her shoulders but her limbs restored, only a much darker shade of skin than the rest of her body, or what they showed in the previous pictures.

”As you can see, even when it restores limbs, it doesn’t restore them exactly as is.”

Next picture, the woman licking lips that are where her nipples were.

”We get the idea, Hemmings. No need to show us the entire slide-show.”

Hemmings shrugs. “Ok, Doc. As you say. So, unanswered questions are basically we know LimbAway and Ahoy become more...fixed after 48 hours. We don’t know if this does the same. Or how that would manifest.”

”And how do you propose to test that?”

”On the mice, at first. Then Drone...”

”No. Absolutely not. One of the conditions of Drone’s employment here is that it is restored to Ms Jacobs before leaving for the end of the day. A potentially permanent change is not going to happen.”

”Guess you can always experiment on yourself.”

”Or some other volunteer, Loretta. Guess we’ll see how the mice respond. Can I hand over to Pussy so that she can update on my contribution to her research?”

”You may hand over to Ms Henriquez, yes.”

Jennifer steps up, still noticeably blushing. “From Brad’s notes, it appears that the limb formation is essentially random with purple.”

”That isn’t what we see with LimbAhoy. It produces results that make sense for the region.”

”Yes, Doctor H, but the purple results in more chaotic results.”

”Those pictures didn’t seem very chaotic.”

She colours again. “No. That confirms something we were considering with LimbAhoy. It produces the limbs the participant expects. To some extent, it is psychoresponsive. The purple formulation appears to be even more so. Brad told the...lady involved what would happen and when he did that, the changes followed those instructions more closely.”

”How?”

"We believe similar to the placebo effect. The subject's belief primes the body to react to the product in a particular manner."

"And the same with LimbAhoy?"

"We need to test it, but that seems plausible."

"And how do you intend to test it? Mice seem a bit tricky to influence in that regard."

"Well, sir, there we do intend to use Drone. As the change is temporary, it should be acceptable and Drone, as we know, is very easily influenced."

"Yes, I see. However, please keep the changes to limbs and not Hemmings' preferred changes."

"What does that..."

"Yes, sir."

"Good. I trust you on this, Ms Henriquez. Let me know your results."

"Yes, sir."

"Ms James, you are unusually quiet."

"What? Oh, just...thinking, Doc. That's what we're supposed to do here, right?"

"Yes, don't take it too far."

"As if Loretta will ever think too..."

Loretta starts to rise.

"Enough. Clearly this meeting has gone on long enough and you all need to burn off energy in the lab, not here. I expect to see research plans, timetables and notes on following up with your... volunteer as soon as possible." he claps his hands, "To work, people. We have knowledge to gain."