

# Secrets Of The Forbidden Planet

by [skin2279](#)

"SO WHERE IS THIS planet 'Sunev'?" Dania was looking at a photograph — a picture printed on paper.

"That's 'Venus' spelled backwards. I think she was an old-time goddess of love." Aster's chair was tilted backwards, her leg-hands up on the control console which, fortunately, was currently deactivated.

"I guessed that much. How do you tell where it is?"

"That picture gives us a clue."

"The view from Sunev? Shows a pretty nondescript Earth-type landscape ... blue sky, clouds, forest, ocean in the distance ... and that giant ringed planet in the sky."

"That ringed giant — that's the clue."

"So this Sunev is orbiting a star, and there's a ringed giant in the same stellar system, close by? Why isn't this picture in the data banks? Can't we bring it up on the monitor, instead of having to carry around this ..."

"Photograph. You saw what happens when you try to scan it in."

"Yeah, it says 'copyright violation' or 'terms of service infringement' or something. Why?"

"Because someone — in the Government or one of the Corporations or something — doesn't want that picture shared around. So the computer nets have that image on their forbidden list. That's why we can only keep an offline copy."

Dania sighed. "Anyway, you know that every star system that might harbour an Earth-type planet has been scoured out to a radius of a hundred light-years from Earth in every direction."

"Maybe they weren't looking right."

"How do you mean?"

"Look at that picture again. How close does that ringed giant have to be, to show up in the sky as big as that?"

"Close enough to — oh, I see; disrupt Sunev's orbit?"

Aster brought her chair upright and sat up. "Closer than that," she said.

“Closer than ...” Dania put her armfeet up in surrender. “I give up. What do you mean?”

“I mean our ‘planet’ Sunev is actually a moon that is *orbiting* that ringed planet.”



THE STARSHIP *Gopher-Keyhoe's Elf* approached the star system from perpendicular to the main planetary orbital plane, letting the on-board scanners take in a panoramic view of the main elements of the system.

Just like in the hundred or so systems they had been checking over the last six months, this star was yet another small, undistinguished white dwarf; a remnant of a much bigger star which had gone supernova in the dim, distant past, ejecting much of its mass in a gigantic explosion that would have been visible across the galaxy. This after expanding to a red giant and consuming those of its planets unfortunate enough to be in inner orbits. The ones that survived this engulfing would have any chance of life on their surfaces extinguished in the supernova explosion.

But in this system, that lethal cataclysm was long enough ago that the dynamics of the situation had changed a bit since then; gravitational interactions between three surviving outer giant planets had pushed one of them, over time, into a much closer orbit around the star. It was now in what was called the “Goldilocks Zone” — on average, not too hot or cold for Earth-type life.

But that was only an average. The giant world was what is called “tidally locked” to its star: so close, that the difference in gravitational attraction between the near and far sides kept it oriented with the same face always towards its sun. This side, in permanent daylight, baked in conditions too hot for life, while the opposite side, in permanent night, froze in an unrelenting chill.

And in what one might call the “temperate” zone, in the “terminator”, the narrow ring of perpetual twilight (or dawn, depending on how you look at it) surrounding the two hemispheres of extremes? Here the temperature might not be too extreme, but the winds were: hurricane-strength, they blew continually, from the night side towards the day side at lower altitudes down to ground level, while several kilometres higher up they went in the opposite direction, as the less-dense hot air on the day side rose and drew in cooler air, then itself was pushed to the night side where it cooled and sank, to repeat the endless cycle.

In short, not exactly a habitable world, as Earth-type humans understood it.

Dania pointed an armtoe at a tiny dot on the view screen. “Look,” she said, “a pale blue dot. Is that what we’re looking for?”

Aster gave her a look of admiration. “You have good eyes. It could be. What’s its mass?”

“Earth-size. Breathable atmosphere ... vegetation ... can’t tell much more from this distance. Of course we’ll need to get closer to check the microbiome.”

“You mean it’s not on the charts?”

“Nope. Some past survey did spot the star and record its coordinates, mass and spectra, but that was it — they didn’t even bother to give it a name. Just another nondescript dwarf star among ten thousand in four million cubic light-years of space, not worth a second look. Just think: a new, undiscovered, possibly habitable world. And not seventy light-years from Earth, well within the ‘explored’ zone.” It was Dania’s turn to give Aster an admiring look. “Looks like your theory panned out.”



THE WOMEN WERE “gen-ens” — “genetically engineered”. Instead of being born from a human womb, they were grown to order in a vat. Both were originally sex-pets: created with special body enhancements, designed to please the particular whims of their owner.

Normally, sex-pets are created with an extra pair of feet in place of their hands. This way, they can be identified as such even when clothing might conceal their other unusual features. Also it was a way of reinforcing their servitude.

Aster got her freedom when her owner died, and she also inherited his fortune. She spent a large part of that fortune replacing her feet (all four of them) with hands, including the ones she walked on. And she made them six-fingered hands as well, while she was at it. But she kept the four breasts she was created with.

Aster won Dania’s freedom from the latter’s owner in a gambling game. Let’s just say, when people are asked to pick random numbers, the numbers they pick tend not to be so random, and somebody astute enough to take advantage of this — as Aster was — can make a tidy profit.

Aster used much of the remainder of her fortune to buy the *Gopher Keyhoe’s Elf*. She had heard the story of this “Sunev” world, and proposed to Dania that they go look for it, in the hopes of discovering some advanced technological prize that would make them rich. Rich enough for Dania to replace her feet with hands, too. And do something about her six breasts, if she wanted.

“I understand the name you gave the ship,” said Dania. “And the call sign — NCC 6969 — I understand the ‘sixty-nine sixty-nine’ bit, but what does ‘NCC’ stand for?”

“It’s an old joke, from prehistory,” was all Aster would explain.



THE EARTH-LIKE moon that orbited the ringed giant was also tidally locked to its primary; but since that was not its main source of light and heat, the length of its “day” was actually governed by its orbital period. Since it went around the planet in about 3 Earth days, that meant

that each part of its surface got a day and a half of daylight, followed by a day and a half of night.

The two women brought the *Elf* into a low orbit about the world that they were pretty sure now was the legendary Sunev, and proceeded to do a detailed surface survey. They launched the photo-torpedons — autonomous robot probes, bristling with sensors, capable of low orbit, and even some degree of high-altitude atmospheric penetration, to get close-up details of the world below.

“That white dwarf is very hot,” pointed out Aster, after they had spent some days examining survey data. “It should be giving off a lot of ultraviolet light. Yet something seems to be blocking most of that from reaching the surface.”

“Some signs of subterranean structures, too,” added Dania. “They look very old. And not used in a long time.”

“At one time, there would have been surface structures to go with them? Long since decayed, fallen down and ground to dust.”

“Thousands of years ago, if not longer.”

On about the twentieth or thirtieth orbital pass, they picked up faint electromagnetic emissions. “There’s activity down there!” exclaimed Dania.

“Could be natural. Or a leftover derelict. Unusual, but it’s been known to happen.”

“Still worth taking a look?”

“Of course.”

“The proper procedure is for robot rovers, and just one crewmember to go down in the lander, to reduce risk.”

“Hang the proper procedure.”

“You want to take the whole ship down?”

“Mmmm ... maybe not. Just the lander, the *Gopher*, with both of us. With a panic button to summon the rescue robots and the *Elf* if we need them. I just feel safer if we’re together.”

“OK, let’s do it. Just one thought, though.”

“What’s that?”

“Should we take any weapons?”

“Weapons? What weapons? I couldn’t afford any.”

“OK, cross that off the checklist. Also, just an idea, should we put on some clothes?”

“You love playing with that clothing machine, don’t you —” Aster broke off. “Ah, I see what you mean. Normals can be a bit funny about going around bare-skinned.” She sighed. “Yes, I suppose we should get dressed up.”



IT WAS A HOUSE — a human-style house. And it was no ancient ruin; it looked to be in perfectly good condition: a two-storey structure (at least the part above ground), made up of two circular parts, joined side-by-side, of unequal sizes, large enough to have maybe half a dozen rooms. And inhabited.

It was built in a clearing in the forest, on top of a low hill. They landed the *Gopher* away from it, in another clearing on top of another low hill, within easy walking distance; this one almost seemed to be deliberately cleared for use as a landing spot.

Both Aster and Dania had put on simple, comfortable jumpsuits. Neither wore shoes; even when Aster had feet, she never bothered. Polypods don’t just use their front feet as hands; they are capable of holding and grasping things with their back feet, too, and the idea of boxing those up in constraining footwear was not considered appealing.

They stood at the exit hatch, and looked around a moment. It could almost have been some isolated wilderness forest on Earth, if it weren’t for the giant planet visible, a disk of darker blue low in the bright blue sky. The planet itself was twenty times the apparent diameter of the Moon seen from Earth, while the bright white ring system was twice that size.

Aster went down the short ramp onto the ground. Her leg-fingers sank slightly into the pliant ground. “Mmm ... a little crunchy,” she said. “Some grit coming up between my leg-fingers, but still soft and yielding.”

“The way you describe it, makes me wish I had fingers,” replied Dania, coming down behind. As her bare leg-feet touched the soil, she added, “I see what you mean about crunchy. And I can feel it is more gritty than clayey. That grass has some knobby roots — can you feel the harder spots?”

“Not really many plant species around, and nothing resembling animal life. How are your nipples?”

“I’ve got caps on them. This is another reason I don’t like clothes: all that friction drives me crazy. But I miss not being able to see in the infrared with them. How about you?”

“Four may be easier than six, but I’ve got caps on mine too, just in case. Normals get embarrassed about orgasms, I don’t know why.”

They made their way down the slope, continuing to trade observations on the experience of the heightened sensitivity in their hind extremities, as well as in their other senses.

In the shallow valley between the two hilltops was a lake. The women stepped through the trees, and came to the water's edge.

There was somebody in the water — a young woman. Her head turned towards the visitors. "Hello," she said, in a friendly way. "Where are you from?"

"I'm Dania, and this is Aster. We came from Earth, looking for a planet — a world, called Sunev. Is this Sunev?"

"Yes, that's what we called it. I'm Lunara." The young woman came closer to the shore, until she could get a purchase with her feet, stood up when the water was thigh-deep, and waded ashore.

She didn't have any clothes on, but that fact barely registered with the gen-en women. What they did notice first was that she had no arms.

"Hello, Lunara," said Aster. "I'd shake your hand, but you don't have any hands."

"You have quite a lot of hands," Lunara giggled. "And so many fingers! And you — Dania, is it? You don't have hands either. Do you use your feet as hands, like I do? Only you don't have to choose between walking and holding, do you? You have enough feet to do both at once."

There was a sudden stirring at the side of the clearing, and the sunlight glinted off metal as a man-sized mechanism emerged from partial concealment in the bushes and stirred into life. Aster and Dania looked around sharply.

"This is Boethius," explained Lunara. "He's my assistant robot. He helps me with things I find difficult to do myself."

The robot came forward smoothly on soft round wheels, extending a pair of multisegmented arms holding a large towel. Gently, it wrapped the garment around the wet girl's body and wiped her down. When most of the moisture had been removed, it withdrew the towel, and began to emit jets of hot air at various points, in which Lunara immersed herself and turned around several times to get completely dry.

"Come back to the house with me," Lunara invited. "Does Father know you're here? Come and meet him."

And so the three women continued to the house, the robot silently in tow.



WHEN ASTER AND DANIA got to the house, an intelligent-looking man, bearded, slightly greying, was standing at the entrance, watching them.

"Father, these ladies are from Earth," said Lunara.

"Hello," said the visitors together.

"Yes, Boethius alerted me to your presence," replied the man. "Greetings. I am Doctor Forigen. We have been out of contact with Earth for close to ten years. Please come in. You have come a long way." He turned to Lunara. "Daughter, would you like to go upstairs and put some clothes on?"

As Lunara and her robot companion disappeared and the others made themselves comfortable, another similar machine came forward, holding drinks in two tentacle arms.

"Does this robot have a name, too?" asked Dania.

"Yes," replied the Doctor. "This is Epitedius, our housekeeper robot." As the women took the drinks, he continued. "My apologies if my daughter offended you with her state of *déshabillée*. But you must understand, in our isolation, it has become habitual for her ..."

"That's quite all right," replied Aster. "We understand that normals can be embarrassed about such things."

The Doctor looked puzzled for a moment. "So you consider us 'normals'. That must make you ... I wondered about your ... obvious physical oddities. You are gen-ens?"

"That's right," replied Dania. "But we don't belong to anybody any more. Only ourselves."

The Doctor nodded. "I understand that is quite an achievement. You must tell me about it some other time. But you came here to find out what happened to our little expedition? And I, of course, am equally curious as to why we haven't heard from Earth all this while."

"I did some research into the expedition before coming here," replied Aster. "The reports were that the entire expedition perished here, on Sunev."

"Clearly that did not happen, at least to us two," said the Doctor, smiling gently. "There were four of us who landed here, including my daughter, a teenager at the time. We thought all habitable worlds this close to Earth had already been found, so it was through a stroke of luck that we came across this one. Even the star had no name, so as leader of the expedition, I, ah, named it 'Forigen's Folly'.

"We did some exploration of the three main planets. The one that Sunev orbits — the one you see in the sky outside there — is actually the smallest of them all, and the innermost — Forigen Prime. On this moon, we found the artifacts of a civilization that flourished about a hundred thousand years ago, and then mysteriously disappeared. A large collection of underground structures remained, some ruined and decayed, but others still, it appeared in working order. And still operating, after a fashion — enough to keep surface conditions habitable: getting power from some source we couldn't identify — not initially."

"Not nuclear power? Or subnuclear — gluonic perhaps?" asked Dania. "Though, keeping it stabilized for thousands of years ... wow."

Aster looked at her friend in surprise. "I didn't know you knew about that stuff," she said softly.

The Doctor shook his head. "Nothing like that. None of the tell-tale radiation patterns. In fact, there is no radiation shielding in the mechanisms at all — no need for it. It was something else." He paused, and smiled at Lunara as she reappeared in the room, clad in a short skirt, her feet still bare. "It is nearly time for our meal. Would you like to join us? I don't know if we can call it 'lunch'. As you know, the days are seventy-eight hours long here, and the time is currently seven hours past sunrise. We try to follow a twenty-six hour 'day' here, which gives us some synchrony with the local day-night cycle, but is still reasonably close to the natural Earth cycle our bodies are attuned to. All sounds very confusing, but no doubt you'll get used to it — if you intend to stay for very long."

They sat at a sizeable dining table with places to spare, and the two robots performed serving duties in their silent, efficient way. Lunara had both feet up on the table, efficiently holding a fork in one and a knife in the other, and using them to cut bite-sized morsels. She only needed to lean slightly forward to bring the fork up to her mouth.

Dania did her usual thing of bunching the toes of each of her front feet together to grip things between the big toe and the other toes. She looked at Lunara, and did a double-take. "Your feet can work so much like hands!" she exclaimed in wonder. "Your toes are so long and dexterous and fingerlike — even your big toes look like thumbs. And you can oppose them! How did you manage that?"

Lunara smiled modestly. "They just kind of developed that way, I guess."

"They did indeed," added her father. He frowned. "You know, it's odd. As a child, her feet were just like regular feet. Since we came to Sunev, and she has grown up, her body seems to have developed in such an unusual way." He shrugged. "We did some more detailed study of the power source, of course," the Doctor went on. "At that point, we decided we needed more help to make progress. And we had to get the news back to Earth. So the other two left in our ship, while my daughter and I stayed behind to continue the research. In spite of her ah, obvious disability" — he exchanged smiles with his daughter — "she has proved to be a most diligent assistant. But that was the last we heard from our colleagues."

"There was no news of their arrival anywhere within the domain of Earth." Aster thought for a moment. "Assuming your colleagues got to Earth alive, which seems most likely," she said, "that means that they were detained or isolated, or otherwise prevented from making themselves known."

The Doctor looked sombre. "Disappointing. But, given what we discovered, perhaps that was not too surprising."

"What was so dangerous, that it had to be suppressed?" Dania wondered.

“Perhaps the best way to answer that would be for me to explain to you exactly what we have found here, on Sunev.”



“THIS IS THE orgone machine?” Aster looked from one end to the other of the massive structure occupying the underground chamber. It seemed to stretch on in both directions without end.

“This goes on for twenty kilometres,” explained Doctor Forigen. “I have been trying to interface to it from my lab, with only partial success. Most of the control system remains a mystery to me.”

“Does it require an organic interface? Via a living individual?” Dania wanted to know.

“That much I have been able to establish. It is the details of the interface that give me trouble. My own nervous system doesn’t seem to be a suitable fit.”

“Can we see your lab?” asked Aster.

“Of course.” They got back on the light transport cart, which Lunara was driving, with one foot on the control joystick.

“Orgone power,” mused Dania, as they entered the connecting tunnel. “Isn’t that something to do with sex?”

“There was this guy a couple of centuries ago, from before human expansion into space, named Wilhelm Reich,” replied Aster. “He put forward the idea of sex as a power source. Bit of a nut case, really, but he turned out to be right, in principle. He just never learned the right way to activate the power.”

“Seems the Sunevians did indeed discover the right way,” added the Doctor. The cart came to a stop at the entrance to his main lab. “But we have problems — physical ones — trying to follow their path.”

“I never know how to put this tactfully ... is there an ... embarrassment factor involved?” asked Aster.

The doctor looked down. “I have to admit ... there is,” he finally said. “I understand you gens are much more forthright about such things.”

“We are created to order, to satisfy our owners,” replied Dania. “And we have to enjoy what we do ourselves, too. Otherwise, we wouldn’t want to do it.”

“There is another factor,” added Aster. “Namely the male versus female factor. I take it you have tried feeding your own orgasm energy into the network?”

The Doctor looked a bit sheepish. Finally he said, “I have. I must admit, so far it has seemed insufficient.”

“I think you need to feed a sequence of orgasms,” said Aster. “As you may know, this is physically possible primarily for women, not for men. Has Lunara —”

“No,” said the Doctor immediately. “I have never let my daughter near the operation mechanism. I do not even allow her in here while I am in particular stages of my ... experiments.”

“I understand.” Aster looked at Dania, who returned her look. “Can we give it a try?”

“I suppose .. how much activation energy do you propose to —”

“I think we just try and get to grips with the neural interface, to begin with.”

“Yes, that sounds safe enough.” The Doctor picked up what looked like a nest of fine wires. “The sensors automatically attach themselves to various parts of your body.”

Aster looked again at Dania. “Time to get your clothes off.”

Dania gave a look of pure joy. “I thought you’d never ask!”

“Umm ... Lunara ...”

“Oh, Father! I *am* a grown woman now!” Her look was pleading. “I may have let a sheltered life, but I know stuff. You need someone to watch the auxiliary monitors for the new subject, anyway.”

“Oh, I suppose you should stay,” the Doctor said finally.

Dania had stripped off her jumpsuit, and was pulling off her nipple caps one by one. Lunara watched with undisguised curiosity.

“Lunara, it’s rude to stare at our guests,” her father said gently.

“Oh, we don’t mind,” replied Aster. “We’re built for this, remember. We enjoy looking at ourselves, too.”



DANIA LAY HERSELF down on a padded examination table. “Ah, it’s so good to be able to feel with my skin,” she said.

Lunara sat herself down at an adjacent control panel, and raised both her handlike feet up to the controls. She pressed a button with a fingertoe, and the displays came to life, showing the subject’s vital signs. Aster watched the Doctor place the sensor net over Dania, where it

automatically spread itself over her torso, positioning a great many of its sensor pads over corresponding junctions in her nervous system, including her many nipples and her genitals.

“Wow, how many of those sensor attachment points do you think the orgone-builders had?” Aster wondered.

“Even I don’t have that many,” replied Dania.

The Doctor moved to a larger console surrounded by control panels, but before he could touch a thing, multiple displays burst into life, accompanied by a low hum of power being generated.

Dania gave several deep sighs. Her back arched, and she groaned, breathing heavily. She put out an armfoot, which Aster took in her hand.

“She’s already activating the system!” exclaimed the Doctor.

“Heart rate increasing,” said Lunara. She pointed a fingertoe at some neural schematic displays, with flashes of light racing across them. “Is she — having an orgasm?”

“Yes,” replied Aster. She turned to the Doctor. “How’s the power control going?”

“It’s gone higher than it’s ever gone before! But it seems to be holding OK. No sign of instability.”

The background hum intensified, then subsided. Dania’s breathing slowed. “That was ... wonderful,” she said softly. Then shuddered and gasped.

“Another one starting,” said Aster, gripping Dania’s front foot more tightly.

Dania gasped even more intensely. Aster held her armfoot in both her own armhands, stroking it gently as the sequence of climaxes continued.

Finally, the power hum wound right down to near silence. Dania turned on her side, and the interface net fell off of its own accord.

“I counted six,” said Aster.

“Were you counting?” replied Dania, languidly. “I was too ... busy ... to count.” She made several half-hearted attempts to sit up. Aster finally helped her upright, and she slid down off the table and rose shakily to her legfeet.

“The system seems to have charged itself from Dania’s nervous activity,” said the Doctor. “I think these indicators, here and here, are level gauges. They were all way down before, but now this first one here is reading close to full.”

“What, all that, only to fill one tank?” half-whispered Dania, still a little unsteady on her legfeet, leaning on Aster. “Oh well, give me a moment to rest, I’m sure I can do some more.”

“Not right now, you won’t,” replied Aster. “Those were big orgasms. Not like the normal ones we experience with our own unaided bodies; there was some kind of feedback mechanism in the interface that was driving them up to even higher intensity level.”

“And very nice it was, too,” replied Dania. “Can you get drunk with sexual pleasure? This reminds me of the time I had my first come. I couldn’t believe such enjoyment could be real.”

Aster lay Dania down on a couch. “You just relax, darling. Want something to drink?”

A minute later, one of the robots — Epitedius, it was — appeared with a tray of cold drinks.



“WELL, THAT was a spectacular success, I would say.” Aster looked at Dania, who was slowly recovering her usual perkiness.

“That was terrific!” agreed Lunara. She was standing behind her father, who was still checking over the main console.

“Some of the energy is flowing through to other systems,” remarked the Doctor, as he flipped through various displays. “The levels have been depleted down to practically nothing after so many thousands of years, but even with this one cell filled and these other nineteen still empty, that is sufficient to activate some long-dormant processors.” He turned to the women. “The trouble is, I don’t know what they are.”

“Can you narrow down exactly where in the network the energy is going?” asked Aster.

“Some of it is going to these large arrays that look like antennas.” He pointed to the grids of rods at two opposite ends of the large laboratory chamber. “I think they might be transducers.”

“What does that mean?” asked Dania.

“I think it means they can absorb and radiate orgone energy like the interface net you were wearing before,” replied Aster.

“Only they can handle larger amounts,” added the Doctor. “And they won’t require physical contact with the subject to operate.”

Realization hit Aster. “You mean ...”

“It can make contact with suitable subjects *en masse* and at a distance, without requiring the individual hookup we did with Dania,” replied the Doctor. “The system has just bootstrapped itself into the next phase of operation, where its power can grow to even higher levels.”

“But there’s nobody else for it to tap into,” pointed out Lunara. “Just us four humans.”

“Two of whom have special augmentations in their sexual power,” pointed out her father. “Would you say,” he asked Aster, “that one gen-en might be the equivalent of ten, ah, normals in orgone potency?”

“At least that, some might say closer to a hundred,” replied Aster. “We have a lot of stamina built-in, to cope with whatever the users may want.”

“So, the sexual equivalent of twenty to two hundred regular humans, just in the two of you alone.” The Doctor put a finger on his chin and contemplated his status displays. “I wonder what it could do, if you gave it such power...”

“Is it too late to isolate it?” asked Dania.

The Doctor shook his head. “There’s a network of those transducers covering the entire surface of this world. The system was clearly designed so that it could reach anywhere that the citizens of that civilization might want to avail themselves of its power.” He thought for a moment. “I propose we call an end to our experimentation for today,” he continued. “We can think about how to proceed later. There are still over thirty hours of daylight left, and I propose we make use of it with some outdoor relaxation. Or at least,” he looked at his daughter, “the three of you go and relax. I would like to run a few analyses on the data we’ve collected here today, to see if I can make some more sense of it.”

“Sounds good to me,” replied Dania. “That lake where we met you, Lunara, looks like a nice place to have a swim and a picnic and just lie around.”

“These clothes we landed with were quick renders from the clothing machine,” Aster pointed out. “They’re only good for two or three wearings before they fall apart. If we want more clothes, we’ll have to go back to the *Elf* to make them.”

“Our robots make clothing for us. They can whip up something for you, if you like,” offered Lunara.

“Ah, bother clothing,” retorted Dania. “I don’t want to wear clothes any more, for as long as we’re here.”

Aster shrugged. “Suit yourself.”

Lunara grinned. Her father glanced at her, a little doubtfully.



THE THREE WOMEN were walking to the lake, Boethius in tow with picnic supplies. Aster and Lunara had shed their clothes, as Dania had done earlier. Both gen-ens could not but notice Lunara continually sneaking glances at them.

“Do you like looking at us?” asked Dania.

Lunara blushed, just a little. "Yes, I do," she admitted. "You're both beautiful. And so many breasts ... do they work?"

"They're very sensitive," replied Dania. "So many nipples can be quite distracting sometimes, if you have clothes on."

"I don't have quite that many, but I feel the same," added Aster.

Lunara gave an embarrassed giggle. "No, I mean, do they give milk?"

"They can," replied Dania. "Lactation pills work for us just as they work for any normal woman. But let me tell you, having six lactating breasts isn't really much fun. It's just messy, and if you don't milk them regularly, they get swollen and painful. Fun for the owners, and for others watching the show, perhaps, but not for us sex-pets."

"We enjoy our breasts more when they don't leak." Both gen-ens tittered at that.

"Wow," Lunara breathed. "Are all sex-pets built like that, with multiple breasts?"

"We're designed to individual order, whatever the customer wants," replied Aster. "There are some with much more interesting extra appendages than us. And some with parts missing."

"You mean...?"

"You were born without arms as a random accident of Nature, were you not? There are some deliberately created like that, or disabled in other ways. Typically, though, they will have something extra added to compensate. Like the ability to use a sexual part in place of a limb, something like that."

"Sounds kinky."

"That *is* the idea."

"Some people are horrified by that," added Dania. "It's officially legal because, in principle, it's not some permanent, lifelong thing: we can get modified some other way, and even buy our freedom."

"If you can get enough money," said Aster.

"And the biocorps have a Government-granted monopoly on all the procedures, and can charge big bucks for them," Lunara said. "All in the cause of safety regulation, of course."

"You *do* know quite a bit about it, don't you?" asked Aster.

"Father brought educational records from Earth along with the expedition, so that I could learn as I was growing up. I've been doing that for much of my childhood. And I'm still doing it."

"He couldn't afford to fix you by giving you a pair of arms when you were little, could he?" said Dania.

Lunara nodded. "I don't feel bitter, really. I've never known what it's like to have hands or arms, so I guess I don't really feel the lack. I can do a lot of things with my feet, and for the things I can't quite do, there's Boethius" — she turned her head momentarily back towards the robot following them — "to help me out." She beamed at the other two women. "He helps me with some dressing, and on the toilet, but I don't need him to pleasure me. I figured out how to do that to myself with my feet."

The other two women smiled.

Lunara seemed disappointed at their reaction. "When I said that to Father, he was quite shocked," she went on. "I suppose you're used to that kind of thing, aren't you?"

"I pleasure myself with my feet, too," replied Dania. "All four of them."

"I used to use my feet, too, when I had them," added Aster. "Now I use all of my hands."

"Do you ..." Lunara hesitated. "Pleasure ... each other?"

"Of course," replied Aster. "Sometimes our owners like to watch. They bring us together to put on a show for them. Since we're both free women now, we do it with each other for fun."

Lunara's mouth was half-open.

"Does the thought of it arouse you, Lunara?" asked Aster.

"Maybe ... a little."

"Are you a Lesbian, Lunara?"

"I ... don't know ..."

"Don't be ashamed. Do you think women are more beautiful than men?"

"Yes. Yes I do."

"So do we."



"DO YOU HAVE a family name?" Lunara wanted to know. She was wading ankle-deep in the lake, kicking up an occasional splash.

"I took my owner's family name," replied Aster, sitting side by side with Dania on a picnic cloth on the shore, one leg crossing over the other's leg, one's leg-hand lightly grasping the other's leg-foot. "'Wintermorn'."

“And you, Dania?”

“Since Aster freed me, I asked if I could take her family name, and she said yes.”

“So, does that make you sisters? Or ... wives?”

Dania laughed lightly. “We’re gen-ens. Sex-pets, remember. Sister, wife, is there a difference? We don’t know what it is.” She ran her free legfoot lightly over Aster’s thigh. “We’re not built to know.”

Lunara seemed slightly shocked at that. “I was always taught to think about relationships and love and stuff like that.”

“There are different kinds of love,” replied Aster. “You’re talking about romantic love, aren’t you?”

“Yes.”

“Now, what kind of romantic lover would keep a sex-pet?”

Lunara thought about that for a moment. “You’re somebody’s fantasy come true, aren’t you?” she finally said. “What do you fantasize about? When you’re having sex with your owner, or pleasuring yourself, I mean?”

Dania laughed lightly. “Another question normals ask us all the time. We don’t have sexual fantasies. We enjoy the pleasure, and the giving of pleasure, we don’t need to stimulate ourselves or distract ourselves by thinking about something else. We can think ourselves to arousal at any time. And when we climax, it totally consumes our attention.”

Lunara looked shocked again. “I never thought of it that way. You don’t need sexual fantasies because you *are* sexual fantasies, not just for your owners but for yourselves as well.”

“That about sums it up.”

Lunara came ashore and sat on the picnic cloth. She picked up a glass in her foot, and took a drink.

Aster observed her actions with interest. “Were your feet always so handlike?” she asked.

Lunara looked up. “No. They were mostly like regular feet, and I remember my toes were short, just like everybody else’s,” she replied. “Though of course I was more nimble and had more strength in them than other people, who weren’t used to holding things with their feet. Until about the time I started hitting adolescence, I think it was. “I —” She blushed.

“What was it?”

“The change didn’t happen immediately, but some odd things started to happen after I learned about ... sexual pleasure.”

The two gen-ens exchanged glances. "It's the orgone field, isn't it?" said Dania.

Aster nodded. "Looks like it. Even in its nearly-exhausted state, it was able to be roused to some activity by individuals like Lunara here. The effect would have been very slight, but still, after several years of exposure, the results would have built up. And look at her now."

"And now that we've given it a top-up charge, maybe even more will start to happen?" Dania looked thoughtfully at Aster. "We both need a sex-rub."

"Are you up to it? I thought you were pretty used up back there."

"I'm feeling quite ready to go again. You haven't come today, have you? You must be ready to burst. Also, I'm wondering what will happen with those transducer thingies."

Lunara hurriedly got to her feet. "Maybe I should go back," she said. "Talk to Father about what's been happening."

"Good idea," replied Aster. "Leave the picnic cloth, the rest you can mmm-mmm-mmm." The rest of her words became unintelligible as she and Dania became entwined in a hot kiss. Lunara and her companion robot were quickly gone.

Dania squatted on the picnic-cloth. Aster sat and cupped her armhands under Dania's sex. "Give me some of your sweet vaginal lube, my darling sister-wife," she said.

Dania obliged, producing a trickle of sexual secretion on demand from her gen-en body, complete with carefully-selected aromatic additives. Aster held the cupped puddle of lubricant up to her nose and sniffed deeply of the flowery odour. "Mmm, essence of Dania," she said, before rubbing the liquid over her breasts.

Then Dania lay down, and Aster squatted over her. "Returning the favour, coming up." And she emitted her own delicately scented secretions. Dania held her armfeet under the steady drip of honey-like fluid, rubbing them together to get them thoroughly wet. Then she rubbed them over her breasts, adding more fluid as Aster continued to supply it.

Once her front was well and truly, fragrantly wet, Aster lay down on top of her, and they did their regular breast-interleave trick, where Aster would place her two pairs of breasts in-between Dania's three pairs. That way, no point of maximum breast pleasure went unstimulated.

A peculiar thing happened this time: a distinct glow appeared in the air, that hung around each woman's nipples and crotch. They stopped their mutual stimulation and moved a little apart to take a closer look at this, but the arousal sensations continued to grow.

"Oh!" Aster found herself spontaneously climaxing. Dania came close to her edge, and tried to keep herself relaxed and going no further towards climax; she was in no hurry to repeat the experiences of earlier in the day, even as she inexorably slid closer to the onset of her own enjoyment.

The women lay side-by-side on the ground. Instinctively they reached for each other, holding armhand with armfoot, leghand with legfoot, moaning and sighing as the orgone charging process had its way with them. The glow intensified and sparkled around their pleasure parts, with occasional tendrils momentarily extending, like lightning-strikes, jumping from one woman to the other.

Finally, the episode wound its way down towards its end, leaving both of them feeling thoroughly drained and spent, and thoroughly contented, in their rich cloud of self-secreted flowery fragrance.

"Was ... that what it was like before?" asked Aster, weakly.

"Yup," said Dania. "Just like that."

"That was very nice."

"Yes. It was nice this time. And it was nice the first time." Dania giggled. "I have had it nice twice today." And she gave an extremely long and languorous sigh.

A long pause. "We should get up and go see what Lunara and her father are up to."

Another pause. "Yup ... we should."

Neither woman moved.



THE DOCTOR CAME OUT of the house almost at a run as the two women drew near. "About an hour ago," he explained, "the status displays went crazy, and didn't let up for half an hour. We now have two more of the energy cells showing full, making a total of three."

Aster and Dania glanced at each other. "That might have been us," explained Aster.

"You were out in the woods? And, um, ..."

Aster nodded.

"So the transducer system is working! It can interface to human orgone energy at a distance." He sniffed the air. "That's a nice perfume, by the way. Roses, is it?"

"You know, about that, Doctor," began Dania, "having any kind of sexual activity on this world is now getting a little bit, um, tricky. At least for us gen-ens. We get aroused, and wham, the orgone mechanism kicks in and drives us up to maximum climax and right out of our minds. And it doesn't let up until we just about can't handle any more." She ran her tongue around her lips. "Not that we're unhappy about it, of course."

“We normally have twenty to fifty orgasms a day, just to keep ourselves satisfied,” explained Aster. “But this orgone charging system — wow. We’ve never had anything that uses us up so thoroughly.”

“It’s not just us two feeling the effects,” added Dania.

“What do you mean?”

“Your daughter, Lunara —” Aster began.

Just then, Lunara appeared at the doorway.

“Did you know your daughter has been tapping into the orgone field all these years, without your knowing, and in spite of your prohibitions? She was doing it unknowingly, not deliberately, but weak as it was, it has been influencing the development of her body in the ways that you see.”

“No! How could it be? Lunara, is this true?”

“I didn’t know before what was happening, Father, but now I think it *is* true. I’m sorry, Father.”

The Doctor sighed. “Don’t be, my beloved daughter. All these years, it has been happening right in front of my eyes, and I never noticed.” He shook his head. “Well, it seems like it has enhanced you in positive ways, and not brought you to harm as I feared.”

“It’s like a genie, granting a wish,” remarked Dania. “We need to take this back to Earth!”

“Somebody on Earth already knows about it, remember,” replied Aster. “And they would rather it stayed hushed up.”

“You have to admit, it would be pretty embarrassing to have a powerful body-resaping technology that was driven by, you know, sex.” Lunara giggled.

“Embarrassment.” Aster held her head. “Shame. You see why it’s so hard for us to think about such things. Would they — normals — see this sort of power as ... somehow morally wrong?”

“I would say so,” Lunara agreed. “It makes me blush a bit just to think about it.”

“There is also the economic aspect,” Dania pointed out. “It would totally smash the existing biocorp monopoly.” She brightened. “I could have my hands!”



THE NEXT “DAY” was actually night. But the sky was not completely dark: Forigen Prime hung forever fixed in its place in the sky, not far from the eastern horizon, and its daylight face, and the accompanying bright rings, cast a soft twilight-like glow across the land, brighter than any full Moon as seen from Earth.

They would occasionally go for walks in the night, when it was “day” according to their Earth-attuned body clocks.

“Listen,” said Lunara. They paused.

“Is that the sound of crickets chirping?” Dania asked.

“I’ve never heard that sound here on Sunev before,” replied Lunara.

Dania turned to face some bushes. “Something moving in the underbrush.”

Aster turned to face the same way. “I see it too. Can you tell how big it is?”

Lunara strained her eyes in the same direction. “I can’t see anything!”

Aster pointed to her and Dania’s breasts. “Infrared-sensitive nipples. No substitute for eyes, but it does let us spot some things in the dark.”

Lunara’s eyes widened, and her jaw dropped.

“Cat-sized,” pronounced Dania. “OK, it’s gone now.”

“More sensors, more resolution,” explained Aster. “This is one time I wished I had her six instead of my four.”

Dania leaned back, orienting her ample chest appendages towards the sky. “Some things flying around up there, too,” she said. “Not very big. More than that, I can’t say.”

“Are new species of life appearing, fed by the orgone energy?” wondered Aster. “Could it be, the whole life-support system on this world has been dormant, until we charged it up again, and now it is resuming its full power?”

“I hope there’s nothing dangerous out there.” Lunara shivered.

“Somehow I don’t think so. Remember, it’s a completely artificial ecology, so it can be purpose-built to suit the designers’ needs, and not be harmful to them.”

“Ah, but harmless to *them* might not necessarily mean harmless to *us*,” pointed out Dania. “We still have very little idea what the original orgone-builders were like. Other than the sexual-energy part, of course.”

“There is that,” agreed Aster. “But remember, we have our hands on the orgone controls now, so I’m sure we can do our own tweaks to the system, if we need to.”

The “day” after that, they went out at sunrise, and noticed that the sky seemed bluer than before. Delicate shapes drifted high in the sky, occasionally languidly making flapping motions like wings.

“Are those birds?” asked Lunara.

“They don’t look quite like them,” replied her father. “But they are flying creatures of some sort, nonetheless. They look very fragile, like little more than living tissue-paper, floating on the breeze.”



LUNARA WAS SITTING on the floor in front of one of the machines in the lab — the one that a sensory net was plugged into. She got a firm toe-grip on the base of the cable, and eased it out. “Look, it detaches,” she said. She grabbed two sides with both feet, and tried to spread it out.

Dania came closer to see. “It is rather large, isn’t it?” she observed.

Forigen nodded. “The obvious conclusion is that the orgone builders were larger than us. But obvious does not mean correct.”

Being unable to carry the detached net any other way, Lunara draped it over her shoulders and got up. “Seems it doesn’t do anything unless it’s connected to a power source.”

Dania held out an armfoot to touch the net, and flinched at a sudden movement. “Did you see that?” she exclaimed.

“Bring your foot near again,” suggested Lunara.

“Careful, Lunara!” warned the Doctor.

“Oh, Father! What could happen — oh, look, it moved again!”

The net had indeed moved, extending part of itself towards Dania’s extended armfoot. Little sparks flew between the net and her foot. “I think it’s getting power from me,” she said. As she withdrew her foot, the net fell lifeless again.

“I felt a tingle that time!” exclaimed Lunara.

“But what’s it connecting to?” wondered Aster.

Dania extended her armfoot again, this time touching the net.

“I can feel it! I can feel it!” exclaimed Lunara.

“What do you feel?” asked the Doctor.

“It was like seeing double. Or *feeling* double. I was here, and I was also there.” She nodded her head at Dania. “I think, for a moment, I *became* Dania.”

“I felt that too!” replied Dania. “It was like there was a connection between us, and I became you, too.”

"A communication channel between nervous systems — of course it would have that capability," mused the Doctor. "But only if it can tap into an independent power source. I suspect Lunara does not have that capability on her own, but Dania, with her special bodily enhancements, does." He turned to look at Aster. "And no doubt you could manage it, too."

The two women-without-hands moved closer together, and the net wrapped itself around both of them.

"It hasn't wrapped us completely together," observed Dania. "It's attached, but loose. We still have room to move."

"I can feel Dania!" exclaimed Lunara. She raised a foot up to one shoulder. "Every time she uses her arms, I can feel something here. Something attached there. It's like feeling my normal legs and feet and toes, but somehow — moved there."

"The parts of the brain that would have been used to feel and operate arms and hands and fingers were, in your case, repurposed to give extra dexterity to your legs and feet and toes," remarked the Doctor. "Now, for the first time in your life, you are experiencing the separation of function and sensation between upper and lower limbs."



THE DOCTOR HAD one of the sensor nets spread out on an examination bench, and was tapping it carefully at various points with instrument probes.

"What do you think, Doctor?" asked Aster, behind him.

"These wires have an interesting structure," the Doctor replied. "As fine and delicate as they are, they have a complex internal structure. And then of course there are the sensor pads."

"Of course," echoed Aster. "Ummm, have you ever tried one yourself?"

"I did some tentative experiments, back when the energy cells were at their much lower level, naturally, but —"

"I meant the way Lunara and Dania did it," interrupted Aster. "You and me, together. With me providing the power."

"Why, I — that is to say, the thought never —"

"Come on, live a little, Doctor — do you have another name I can call you? 'Doctor Forigen' is so formal." She moved a little closer.

"My given name is, uh, Solarno."

"Solarno," Aster breathed. "I like it." She raised a leg-hand, reaching past the Doctor to touch her fingers to the sensor net. As the Doctor turned to look, a few sparks rose from the contact.

“You seem very dexterous with your feet — uh, hands — on your legs, I mean,” he said nervously. “Are they very useful?”

“Oh yes,” replied Aster. “Would you like to see them in action?”

Somehow, the two of them found themselves on the floor, and the sensor net fell on them.



LUNARA AND DANIA came back from wherever they had gone on their walk, taking one of the sensor nets with them.

Aster was the first to notice the change. She went up to Lunara and touched one of the new foot-shaped appendages she had on each shoulder. “What’s that?”

“I imagined having them, with Dania’s help,” explained Lunara. “What they felt like, and how they looked. And Dania gave me the power. And they formed.”

“All I know is feet,” Dania said apologetically. “I should learn about the body shape of hands from you, then I can teach Lunara.”

“Then she kind of fed hints into my brain, for how to work them. I can sort of basically wiggle them around,” explained Lunara, demonstrating as she spoke. “We still need to practise some more. I don’t know how to do anything else, like use the toes yet. I’ve never had muscles in those places before.”

“They seem to be shrinking,” remarked the Doctor.

“What, are they disappearing *already*?” wailed Lunara. She turned to Dania. “We need to make them again.”

“Is this a limitation of the orgone field?” wondered Aster. “That body modifications are not permanent, but need to be continuously maintained?”

“Unless there is some additional fixing mechanism, that we haven’t discovered yet,” suggested the Doctor.

“In the meantime,” said Dania, “let’s Lunara and I go and do some more of what we were doing before, and do a bit more of it this time.” And putting her arm around Lunara’s shoulders, the two of them disappeared again.



“WE NEED TO get word of this back to Earth,” began Aster.

“And we don’t want to get caught and disappeared, like the Doctor’s teammates,” added Dania.

"We need to spread the word suddenly and widely, so that it can't be covered up," Aster pointed out.

"Send out info packs," suggested Dania. "Fill each photo-torpedon with a full set of data tapes, explaining what we have here and telling them how to contact us, launch them towards different points in Known Space, and from there they start broadcasting."

"Good idea," agreed Aster. "We set up a contact buoy out somewhere far from here, and tell them to get in touch with that. It will relay communications back to us, so we can verify their bona-fides before telling them how to actually come here."

"A swarm of contact buoys, well spaced out, sending out a spread-spectrum signal we know how to decode, so they can't just follow a single directional beam from there to here."

"Of course."

"Advertising a body-modification service based on entirely new, purely biological principles, completely different from the ones controlled by the existing biocorp monopoly."

"And at a lower price."

"Proceeds to be divided among all partners in the Forigen Corporation, said partners being all those assembled here. At least to start with."

"We should invite some of our gen-en friends to join in."

"Investing funds or providing orgones?"

"Both, of course. What do you think will happen if we fill more of those energy cells? Doctor?"

"There are hints of some additional capabilities beyond the biological-targeted body-modification ones," replied the Doctor. "At higher energies, various kinds of manipulations of inorganic matter should become possible. What those manipulations actually do, I don't know."

"Only one way to find out!"



"YOU REALIZE," the Doctor said, "that the civilization that created the orgone system could not have originated here? In fact, without artificial assistance from the orgone system, this world would be unsuitable for life?"

"So they must have come from somewhere else," replied Dania.

"Exactly. And they must have already had the orgone system and brought it with them, else they could not have created the conditions for life here."

"So if they've gone from here ..." Aster wondered.

“It doesn’t necessarily mean they’ve disappeared completely,” finished the Doctor. “If they inhabited some other world, or worlds, before, it’s possible they’re still there. And possibly spread elsewhere, as well. Particularly with such technological capabilities.”

“If they had developed something as advanced as orgone power a hundred thousand years ago, I wonder what they might have now,” added Lunara.

“Maybe,” said her father, “one day we’ll actually meet them, and find out.”

