

“For the last time, no!” Tiffany screamed as she slammed the door of her modest trailer. Her manager, Harry, just shook his head. He was used to such an outburst. Yet This time, he had to be more persistent. He had no desire to antagonize his biggest star, but she was being a bit too prudish this time, especially with what was at stake. He knew what they were up against far better than she did.

He knocked on her door a few times but she didn't answer. Harry figured as much. He spoke loudly and clearly, making sure there was no excuse that she couldn't hear him. He knew she wouldn't answer but that wasn't the point. She had to understand the importance of the situation, regardless of how long it took him to get that across.

“Look, baby, I know it's a strange role. But let's face facts here. You aren't getting any younger. You just don't have the accreditations for any big roles for women your age. And... I'm sorry, sweetheart, but you know how it is. They only go for the younger girls, even in this day and age. Dams the breaks!”

“I'm not saying you're sunk if you don't take this role. But, I gotta level with you. I don't have anything lined up for you other than this. And, well, if you take a break, you might not be able to get back in the game, you know what I'm saying?”

Harry paused for a moment, listening for any activity within the trailer. He didn't hear anything, unsurprisingly. However, it was a small trailer. There was no way she hadn't heard every word.

“Look, it's one fucked up role, I get that. But, if you take it, you'll get in with the SciFi crowd! It's really popular these days! You're guaranteed work!”

“I'll give you the night to think it over, K? I can buy you that much time. But let me know first thing in the morning, alright? You know I always got your best interests at heart.”

Still no reply. Harry sighed as he walked away from the trailer towards the parking lot. He got into his car and let out the breath he'd been holding the whole time. He knew it was a fucked-up contract that no sane actress should ever take. But, he'd been at least partially right about Tiffany's chances at getting another. Besides, he was tired of looking and would rather she start filming something to put a paycheck in his pocket!

Ever since the widespread availability of nanite technology, the film industry had been pressured to make ‘real’ monsters instead of using the usual Hollywood special effects. Naturally, there was an initial uproar over the loss of jobs, but their fears were quickly allayed.

Nanites could only do so much, after all. With their safety features in place, special effects were just as necessary as in traditional filmmaking.

In the early days, a variety of actors had volunteered to take the forms of classic film villains, from Xenomorphs to Predator to werewolves to swamp creatures. One even became a much smaller version of Godzilla, complete with a perfectly safe atomic breath effect.

As time went on, the pressure for film companies to push the boundaries of the technology's use became greater and greater. It was no longer acceptable to turn an actor into a bipedal, humanoid monster. In the spirit of competition, this particular film was to have the main actor 'dissolve' into a swarm of insects, and 'attack' the inhabitants of a small town in revenge for what they had done to her. It had never been done on film, though, in theory, it was perfectly safe for the transformed individual.

The transformative nanites would still be in contact with each other despite being divided into thousands of small bodies. Thus, the human consciousness within the nanites could control the entire swarm. Individual parts that were lost or killed could be regenerated or even replaced entirely, and any lost mass would be replaced when the individual was changed back.

The studio had been having difficulties securing an actress for the lead role of Beth, a tormented woman exposed to an 'accident' that turned her into a sentient swarm bent on revenge. The swarm would target and 'kill' its victims by draining them of their bodily fluids. Of course, such a thing was impossible due to the safety protocols within the nanites. But still, it would be a convincing effect if pulled off correctly.

Due to the bizarre nature of the required changes, no actress was willing to audition for the role. It was a relatively low-budget SciFi film whose box office success was projected to be entirely based on its usage of the nanites. So, the studio resorted to hiring lesser-known actors to get someone, *anyone* to take the leading role.

Tiffany lay in her trailer, unable to sleep with her racing thoughts. Her agent was a sexist pig, but as much as she loathed to admit it, he was right. She hadn't been first in line for any major roles in several years. Despite how far Hollywood had come, it was still filled with rampant sexism, particularly for 'older' women.

She found herself reflecting on the career path that had led her here. She had a relatively successful career as a soap opera star for 7 years before quitting to pursue film. The film industry had not been so kind. She hadn't had any major roles, and even the minor ones quickly dried up. She had been too stubborn to return to television roles at first but faced rejection even when she

had finally buckled down to audition for them once more. Though no one said it out loud, her age was a likely factor.

And so, here she was, faced with the extinction of her career unless she attempted the unthinkable. She thought it over a little further as she lay in her tiny bed, trying harder to not reject the idea on principle. She found herself wondering what it would be like, not only to change but to live as thousands of disjointed tiny versions of herself.

In some respects, the form resembled a fly or beetle, four powerful insectoid wings, six legs, piercing mouthparts. But it was tiny, much more so than even midge flies she'd seen growing up in the countryside. Would she be aware of every individual part, every pair of waving legs and wings and antenna? Being an insect itself was a terrifying prospect, but she'd heard of some of her former coworkers doing similar work in the past. Most had been OK with the experience from what she had heard or read. But to be a thousand insects at once? The idea was impossible to comprehend.

The nanites would store her brain in a collective consciousness that could control all her parts no matter which ones were injured. In the film, however, they were designed to work as a collective, one that followed the command of a central 'queen.' Of course, in reality, there was no queen organism. During the film's climax, the surviving star would find and kill the 'queen' that was controlling the swarm, thus defeating her and saving the few remaining lives in the town. Tiffany lamented that a bit, how the other roles, minor though they were, had already been cast. She'd easily take the pay cut to remain human for the duration of the film.

The more she thought about it, the more she found the idea intoxicating. Not the actual thoughts of the change, of course, but the mere notion of becoming something that no one else had. Something that no one could prepare for. A truly new and unique experience. It awoke something within her, one of the reasons she had pursued acting in the first place. To take on a role that no one else had before and to make it her own.

Finally, the combination of curiosity and desperation made her come to the decision to sign the contract. She was terrified, of course, but she had no choice but to work hard and excel in the role. As much as she was disgusted by the thought of transforming, a part of her did want to try it. Besides, she could likely make as much money writing a book on the experience as she could from her check for acting in the film!

Harry arrived back on set early in the morning to see that Tiffany was ready to sign the necessary documents to begin filming. He quickly threw out the notes he had prepared to try and

convince her. She didn't need to know how desperate he was, after all. He was simply elated she'd signed the paperwork!

After that, Tiffany was taken to the studio to be briefed as best she could on the experience. She was given data on insect senses that had been collected from a variety of other humans who had used nanite technology. The information made her feel a little better, at least. Images and scents were foreign at first but with practice, people could teach themselves to interpret things in a way that made sense to their human brains.

As the nanite's transformation back and forth was relatively expensive, Tiffany would be expected to remain as a swarm for the duration of the filming, which was scheduled for four days. Her transformation would be filmed, using her actual reactions as footage for the film's final cut. Then she was to be recorded in a variety of locations, swarming around other actors while the scenes were completed. The effects of her draining the victim's fluids would be added afterward, of course.

Tiffany was left with some time to herself before the actual transformation. The directors wanted to film the change and subsequent scenes within the next couple of days, as they were integral to the plot. Naturally, as the director failed to inform her, her transformation and actions as the swarm were much more necessary than her human parts, which could easily be recast with a lookalike.

Tiffany spent the next few days eating, drinking, and indulging herself as best she could. She didn't think of it as her last experience as a human or anything of the sort. Everything she'd researched told her there would be minimal risk. She viewed it more like a celebration for landing the contract and a decent payday, depending on how the film did at the box office.

Later that week she found herself meeting with the director and special effects department to prepare her to change. It was one of the most important scenes to film, and the cornerstone for the rest of her experience as a swarm. She was instructed to act naturally if such a thing could be done in this situation. Her natural, human reactions to such a bizarre change would most likely be better footage than anything they could have instructed her to do. Her character in the film had no idea what was happening and since she, too, had so little information about the actual process, it only made sense.

She was given a quick briefing on her other scenes in the movie. She was informed that they could communicate with her via a nanite implant so that she could be given instructions for filming. One day would be allotted to adjust to her new body and further filming was scheduled to begin the following day. The duration of the change was to be five days.

Tiffany finally figured she was as ready as she would be. No further amount of preparation would be as effective as the actual experience. Her producer pulled out an injection needle and placed it against her neck to allow the nanites to enter. Tiffany took a deep breath and waited for the tingling that typically accompanied a nanite transformation. The change was painless but could result in some bizarre sensations, especially for more exotic forms. And what was more exotic than dissolving into thousands of tiny, free-moving insects?

The tingling sensations began in her arm, and Tiffany braced herself for the unknown. She could do this. It was going to be OK. As she stared at her arm, she was shocked to see that the tips of her fingers were beginning to dissolve away. Her nails, the fingertips, and even the digits themselves began to wither into dust that steadily spread down her digits and towards her palms.

She couldn't hold back a scream from the shock. The sensations didn't hurt, not exactly. It simply felt bizarre, watching her body dissolve in front of her eyes. There wasn't even any dysphoria from having lost her hand. It was still there, she knew. She could *feel* a connection to the dissociated body part. Yet, to her dismay, she couldn't of her own will move any of the slowly numbing areas that had dissolved.

Her entire hand was starting to dissolve now, leaving in its wake a cloud of dust particles. She had no idea how the particles remained stationary in the air and not blown away by the fans. Was it the nanite's doing? The dust cloud that had once been her fingers began to increase in size as more and more of her hands dissolved and added their mass. She winced a little as the dissolving flesh crawled up towards her wrists, leaving her without her extremities. There was no blood or fluid leakage, thankfully. She wondered if she raised her arms, she could see bits of muscle or bone underneath. In retrospect, she figured it best not to find out firsthand.

The sensations moved up her arms as all the veins, muscles, and bones dissolved in tandem. It spread up towards her elbow, rapidly dissolving it away as it continued on up her arm. Yet, Tiffany only felt a strange numbness like her hands, fingers, and arms were all asleep. Soon, the dissolving flesh had spread up towards her shoulders, and she gasped, realizing she now completely lacked arms!

She could feel something tingling in her torso now, spreading out from her stomach through her chest and even down her legs. Tiffany took one final breath as the nanites began to dissolve her lungs. Her heart, her liver, and all her other internal organs evaporated into the same dust-like substance that was surrounding her. Yet, she felt no ill effects from the transformation, thankfully. Somehow, the nanites were keeping her cognitive functions and body alive during the

process. The process was so efficient, she did not see any parts of internal anatomy, thankfully. That would have been too much!

To her shock, she didn't fall over even though her toes were withering away and her legs no longer had any support. The disappearing flesh slowly moved up her legs and midsection, leaving only the dust cloud in its wake. She tried to scream once more as her neck began to fade away but she no longer had the vocal cords to do so. She could only gasp with her mouth wide open as her face began to break apart into nothing.

Tiffany wished she had the ability to scream as her senses all seemed to shut off at once. Her eyes, her nose, and mouth all withered away, leaving her world now dark, silent, and scentless as she screamed internally. All she could do was feel the numbing sensations of her dissolved body all around her, leaving her unable to move, speak, or interact. It was far worse than anything she could have ever imagined. Her mind almost went blank from the shock.

Though she was aware of every part of her body through the tingling, everything felt bland and uniform. Then, all of a sudden, every individual portion of her body felt separate and distinct, overwhelming her mind. She could feel every part of her body growing six pairs of legs all at once. She could move each of the millions of limbs in unison, the first semblance of control she had since the changes started. She could feel pairs of antennae sprouting from each particle, several pairs of wings taking shape to allow the individual segments to hover without the aid of the nanites.

All of a sudden, pairs of insectoid eyes opened up on each of the particles and she could see once more. However, the images were distorted by the millions of shattered frames and the massive difference in scale. Her antennae were far more useful, taking in a multitude of vibrations all around, though her mind could barely comprehend them. She had some sense of the room around her, where things were located, and their size and scents. Still, it was better than the deafening silence she had previously experienced!

At last, the changes were complete. Tiffany was barely aware of her surroundings, at least in human terms. How was she supposed to act and function like this? She took a moment to center herself, fighting off the panic that had entered her mind since the changes began.

First things first. She had to learn how her new body worked. She tried moving one of her insectoid legs, feeling disorientated as every limb on every part of her swam moved in unison. Gathering herself, she tried moving again, flapping her wings and causing every wing to move in sync. She tried moving in a single direction, and every segment of her body moved to the right. She experimented by moving around the room, controlling every portion of her body all at once.

It felt bizarre, being made up of thousands of parts yet feeling each of them move as though her body was whole.

“Are you alright Miss Nash?” A voice echoed in her head. Or heads, as was likely more accurate. A feature of the nanites allowed her to communicate with another user while in this form She recalled that she could respond via the nanites and her metal thoughts, focusing them on someone in the room with her, or everyone at once.

<I’m...it’s alright boss. I’m OK,> She said, more curious about her abilities than fearful from the horrific changes.

Tiffany tried concentrating on moving individual parts of a few of her bodies, and with some technique, she was eventually able to separate them from the whole. With a little more effort, she could have several of the separate bodies fly away from the main swarm, enough to move to the side of the room. It made her feel a little disoriented to have parts of her body far away from her. However, as the day went on she became more and more adept at controlling and separating parts of herself. It was akin to moving a detachable hand or finger. Moving individual segments was nearly impossible, but she was determined to practice as much as she could.

In her new state of being, she did not need sleep, which was a strange predicament, to say the least. The next morning could not come quickly enough. She had spent the night practicing for her role, sending small pieces of herself into adjacent rooms, which was uncomfortable at first but became easier with experience. She was eager to get on with filming, worried about having too much time alone to think, leaving her in a sense of dysphoria from her current state of being. With the movie project to focus on, it gave her that much-needed sense of direction.

She did feel hunger, and her thousands of segments were very eager to devour her given meal of fluid sugar. Each fed individually, yet they all ate in unison. Each segment was nourished with a minute quality of fluid, yet their sheer number made quick work of the offered meal. Tiffany was just thankful that she didn’t need to drink fluids from real victims!

For the most part, filming was relatively easy. Tiffany would have a few of her segments enter a room, then follow with the rest of her body. All she had to do was to surround the ‘victim’, then leave the room, her swarm having ‘devoured’ her prey. She assumed they would add graphics in post-production of the unfortunate victim being killed by the tiny insects that made up her body. Naturally, she could not aid in the filming of these scenes.

As time went on, Tiffany found she was slowly learning to use her new senses to identify the world around her. At first, it was only shapes, locations, and scents, but as time went on, she

could distinguish things like the sex, size, and even mood of the other actors in the scene with her. She was even able to pick up on the emotions coming off people in waves. She was sure her co-stars were screaming as they were 'devoured' trying their best to act their parts. Yet, she was able to feel the waves of raw, real emotion, primarily fear as her thousands of parts swarmed over the film's intended victims. It provided her a sense of satisfaction, knowing that she truly terrified them. It was turning out to be the best role she could have gotten after all!

The final scene of the film involved her swarm attacking her co-star, only to have her 'queen' insect killed and thus her swarm killed. That effect would be added with special effects later, of course. Not one of the segments matched the description of a 'queen', nor would such a piece injure her or her segment.

But during the filming, the frightened actress did in fact swat and kill some of Tiffany's segments. Tiffany, however, felt no pain. It was more akin to a cut on her hand rather than the death of individual insects. Later that day, she could feel a few of her segments split in half, regenerating each part until she was left with the original number of insect bodies. Akin to healing a wound after a time, she reasoned.

Finally, after an eternity of existing as a swarm of multisegmented beings, though, in relatively, four days, it was time for her to change back. Her only indication it was time was when that now-familiar tingle entered each individual section of her swarm, making her feel disorientated in a way that surpassed even her initial transformation. She no longer had any control of the pieces of her swarm!

Tiffany struggled against the sensations as her swarm was pulled together towards a vaguely human shape, complete with arms, head, legs, and extremities. She felt off as all the wings and limbs disappeared from her thousands of body parts. How they still hovered in the air, she did not know. A tingling was preceded by each segment began fusing together, the neighboring ones at first, but then dozens, hundreds, forming the basis of her underlying structure. Her bones, muscles, veins, arteries, and organs all began to form first, like a display on the study of human anatomy. Tiffany was thankful that she could not see, even though her experiences in the last few days made her hyper-aware of the process.

At last, her skin began to form over the muscles of her internal anatomy, and in shock, she felt her eyes open up, her ears spring to life, and even her nose detecting the formerly familiar scents of a film set. She nearly passed out from the sensory overload!

Now fully changed, Tiffany stood motionless, feeling disoriented being back in her human body. Her director and some of the crew were at her side, helping her down and bringing



her some water. Yet she could not shake the feelings of dysphoria that accompanied the transition back. It was as though part of her actually *missed* the sensation of being a free-moving swarm of thousands of segments. It wasn't until later that evening, after eating dinner, having a bath, and resting in her bed did she finally begin to feel a sense of normalcy.

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Sometime later, Tiffany sat at home, ready to watch the test footage of her experience. She was grateful to have her body back, of course. But there was something a little dysphoric about being unable to control her entire body. Being aware of her entire body like that...

She watched the pivotal scene as she dissolved on the screen before her eyes, the expression on her face Oscar-worthy. She knew it was a relatively low-budget B movie, and that it was lucky to even be picked up for theaters. But still, it was nice seeing her face in something other than a TV soap opera. The film wasn't that bad, all things considered. Though perhaps she was a little biased given her involvement.

The more she thought of it, the more she wanted to experience the changes offered by nanites once more. She didn't necessarily want to be part of a swarm again, though it hadn't been so bad, or not as nearly as bad as she'd feared. There was a market for their recreational use, but they were expensive.

Still, there was another way. Tiffany picked up the phone and dialed her agent. After a few confused words, she asked Harry if any more nanite transformation roles required a late 30's woman as the subject. She sincerely hoped the answer was yes.