

Stephanie and the Scientists

by Steven John Horay

The research facility is located at the bottom of a steep and jagged valley, far away from Heaven, and the anguished eye of The Almighty. In the evenings especially the amphibious orchestra howling through the open windows can strike right across the landscape. Earlier this morning Stephanie Wilson, airy and beautiful, disembarked her mother's little Ford with an easy smile. Her mother thought she was entering this strange new building to sample secret new products. Stephanie had lied to her mother, but, most importantly, she had not lied in her response to the exhaustive online ad uploaded by the researchers.

Yes she *was* open minded, yes she *had observed the progress* the company had been making, and *yes*, above all else, she was *prepared to make physical contact*.

The introductory part of the morning had been a glowing success. Stephanie had managed to stifle her gasps upon seeing the ghastly creature live in the pale amphibious flesh, and she was able to look at the cavernous mouth hole without wanting to immediately look away again. She was still nervous about the main experiment, but that was natural. Thank God she didn't have a boyfriend!

After maneuvering the creature onto the plastic park bench on which Stephanie was sat, the researchers were finally satisfied with the physical aspects of the situation. Fake trees loomed above them, and fake grass lay underfoot. Birdsong, chirpy and uplifting, emanated from the painted blue walls. It was just like a perfect Spring morning! As they slowly removed the creatures' sight blockers, Stephanie watched. Now it was squinting through at her, like a disastrously ugly new born baby. The researchers then loosened the electronic ropes on the creatures' arms (not the legs) and quickly steeped out of the room. Stephanie's blonde hair

glistened in the plastic light. She was pleasant to smell and beautiful to look at. As expected, the creature, who was closely watching her, began to salivate from its mouth hole. Also, it omitted a needy whining sound and its underside was vibrating steadily. Stephanie tried to observe the creature romantically. That was the idea. Now for the real test; Will the creature understand, will it respond appropriately to the love and kindness of an attractive human being? Absorbing her sensitive gaze, the creature's croaky-whine began to slow down. Behind the glass, the scientists exchanged smiles. Then, after several seconds of intimate eye contact, the creature stopped whining altogether. It was growing calmer and more self-aware. That was obvious. Now for the kiss! Feeling slightly nauseous but brave, a true visionary, wanting a better existence for all life on this earth, both human and inhuman, Stephanie Wilson leaned towards the cavernous mouth hole and, without hesitating for a second, engaged her beautiful kiss.

Absorbing Stephanie's plump tongue upon its mouth hole, the amphibious creature grows warm, its eyes open out, and its throat steadily glows.

Once it was over —as instructed, the kiss lasted the full five seconds- Stephanie stumbled from the room, almost vomiting into her hands. With sinking eyes, the creature watched her leave. But it did not understand why. Everything had been going so well.

