

It was a slow night at the Holdenburg Diner, maybe because the special tonight featured a 'meat surprise' or maybe it was because the new Bacon Shack was still hosting its grand opening a block away. Only a handful of seats were filled, and of them, none of the customers seemed too enthused to be there, each of them fairly sleepy or lethargic. And who wouldn't be at 1am?

The waitress, a gruff pug of a woman, made her rounds offering coffee that no amount of sugar or cream could salvage. "N-no thanks" replied Addo, a purple snake sitting at the counter. He held a hand up and shook his head while the waitress grumbled to herself and moved along. He was picking slowly away at a plate of frenchfries that had long gone cold, stealing peeks at a gentleman in the corner. Addo had never been the type to be bold enough to express himself when he found an interest in someone, whether from the fear of rejection, or just the embarrassment in and of itself in the act of expressing it, he could never quite build the courage to initiate a conversation. Tonight was no different, and so he continued to glumly pick at his food, stalling for time and waiting for a bravery that refused to come. "Nah, I don't drink coffee" commented the man in the corner, Skeith, a black furred wolf with bold highlights of red at his extremities and a collection of softly glowing green hexagons along his front. "I could go for another slice of that peach crumble pie though, and another sandwich special." He chuckled to himself a little and patted his stomach as the waitress rolled her eyes.

"We're closing in 5. Come back tomorrow" she said flatly before retreating behind the counter. "Oh..." Skeith frowned to himself, and then shrugged. It was getting late anyways, and he would have to catch the bus soon, or else he'd be waiting hours for its next run. Working out of town was always a pain when he had to work the late shifts. "Alright, see y'all around" he lazily announced to the room before leaving a tip on the table, getting up and heading for the back door."

Addo bit his lip. There were only one or two other folks around, packing up to leave, but it just would have seemed so weird to reply to that. What would he say? "I hope so!" He shook his head. ...Too corny. Ugh. The other customers exited passed him out the front door, and he followed them out. They hopped into their respective cars and pulled away, and Addo readied himself for the long walk home. He heard the latch of a lock behind him, and spun to see the pug lady locking up. She gave him one last gruff look, and then dropped the shades. "Great people..." Addo sighed to himself, sliding down the small set of stairs. He didn't know why he bothered still coming here. Oh yeah- the food was cheap, and he didn't have to make it himself. He scoffed and flicked a stone with his tail before moving into the parking lot. But then something else caught his ear. What was that? Some kind of pound, a grunt or something? He raised one of his long ears up and curiously peeked around in the dark. A louder smash rang out; it was coming from behind the diner, probably in the side parking lot. "Not my business" Addo shook his head and slithered a step forward, and then froze. But, that guy he'd been watching... Didn't he leave out the back door? What... What if... Addo grimaced. This wasn't the first time he'd let his curiosity get the best of him, and he was sure it wouldn't be the last. Quietly, he slithered around to the corner of the diner, and peeked into the back area.

A surly pair of men stood in the dim glow under the side parkinglot's one flickering lightpost. The smaller of them, a doberman who was not small at all by any definition of the word, was snarling smugly, while the larger of the pair, a bear, held a man pinned and bloodied to the wall. "No..." Addo whispered to himself, blinking in disbelief. There he was, clear as day, the wolf he'd had his eyes on. Why would - no, it didn't matter why any of this was happening, what mattered was that the poor guy was getting beaten to death! "Hey...!" Addo ventured with an assertion that was riddled top to bottom with shaky nervousness. His voice evidently didn't carry well, because the doberman and the bear didn't seem to notice him at all though. The wolf, on the other hand, looked his way with a pleading urgency in his eyes. "Hey!" Addo said a bit more boldly, slithering fully around the corner, and approaching a few paces closer to the scene. This time he got their attention. The doberman turned at him and snarled, and

the bear raised an eyebrow his way. "Fuck off punk" the doberman barked. "This ain't your business." The bear smirked and scoffed. He slammed the Skeith hard against the wall and let him drop to the ground. "Nah, look at him" the bear gestured to Addo mockingly. "Let him step in if he wants. He can get the same treatment." The doberman snickered. Addo chewed his lip nervously, and peeked at the fallen wolf; he still seemed conscious, but... He couldn't just leave it at this. He took a deep breath. What was he getting himself into? Addo slithered forward another pace, flinching noticeably when the doberman let out a hostile bark followed by a long, low growl. Skeith too, let out a growl as the pair of brutes began stalking up to the purple snake. He tried to stand, but couldn't, and the snake looked to him painfully. Who was this guy? Skeith wondered. Sticking his neck out for a stranger, who even does that anymore? He hoped the snake wouldn't get hurt, but winced as he tested his leg again, and knew he wouldn't be any help in the matter. Addo raised a hand to his mouth and made a nervous sounding cough -which was easy, with how nervous he most definitely was- though the cough was a facade, and he discretely sneaked a drip of venom onto one of his claws. "Guys" he announced timidly, rubbing his arm uneasily. "Can't we just call it a night?" Addo looked from one aggressor to the other, panic and doubt on his face, but he held his ground all the same. The pair drew closer. This wouldn't end well. "Easy guys" Addo held up his hands, but before he could say more, the bear lunged in at him, moving much faster than he'd expected a bear to be able to move. The hulkish figure grabbed Addo's shoulder and pulled him into a powerful blow to the gut that knocked the wind from his lungs and dropped him keeled over to the ground. The doberman snickered again, and stepped up to Addo and landed a swift kick to the ribs. Addo coughed and tried to protect himself as the doberman kicked again. This time, Addo caught him by the ankle, and a slight touch of his envenomed claw brought the dog limp to the ground. "What...?" The bear scratched its head as it watched its partner drop. "Woah..." Skeith muttered to himself. "Wonder how he- oh uh-oh!" He watched helplessly as the bear's confusion quickly shifted to frustration, and lunged again at the snake. Addo rolled to the side, but not fast enough, for the bear found a firm grip on his waist and swung him hard, as to throw him into the wall. In his rage, however, he'd failed to notice Addo coil the tip of his tail around his thrower's ankle, and so as Addo was thrown, the bear deftly pulled his own legs out from under himself, and landed hard on his back. Skeith winced as Addo landed a few paces away, tumbling in a series of ungraceful flops to end up sliding to a stop beside him. He looked at the snake, trying so hard to intervene, and smiled slightly before the world around him faded dark. Skeith awoke to a sharp pain in his leg, and admittedly, sharp pains all over his body. His vision was blurry, and he blinked a few times until things came into focus. Where am I? Something smooth was under his head, something purple, something- Skeith jumped and sat up quickly and realized he'd been sleeping against the snake's shoulder. The snake was noticeably battered and bruised, covered in mud and dirt, and... What, was he blushing? He looked the snake over, and looked around. A taxi? "W-where am I?"

"I, uh, called a cab" Addo said in a casual, shy tone. Skeith gazed out the window. They must have been driving for a little while, because they were already passing into the slums at the edge of the city. "Um, did you save me?" he ventured, raising an eyebrow to the snake, who nodded back. Addo couldn't hide his blush that was coming in stronger now, and so he looked away. "You just looked like you needed some help maybe." "Thank you" Skeith smiled, nodding back. "Where are you taking me?" "I uh, didn't know where to take you, so we are on the way to my place" Addo admitted. "I uh, I was. I mean, now that you're awake I could ask the driver to drop you off wherever, if you want" "I-its ok im actually not from this town" Skeith paused and scratched his chin and thought about it for a second. Stranger Danger! -nah, this guy just saved my ass, what am I thinking, I'm sure it's fine. "So, if I'm not intruding I can stay." "Oh, you're not intruding!" Addo blurted out, his voice bearing much more enthusiasm than he had wanted to show. He coughed and blushed, and toned down the excitement by several notches. "I mean, I live alone, so it's not like anyone'll care if you take the couch or something. You look like you could use some rest." Skeith nodded. "Thank

you” he smiled kindly. “What’s your name, by the way?” “I uh.. it’s not a problem, really, and I’m Addo” Addo answered. He put on a shy smile and offered his hand before gasping and withdrawing it quickly. Skeith smiled, and reached over and took his hand anyways and shook it. “I’m Skeith.” “Oh careful careful, don’t!” Addo winced and eased his hand out of Skeith’s cautiously. He let out a timid meep and whimpered and looked at Skeith, then sighed deep in relief when the wolf remained conscious. “I uh, i’m not good to shake hands with right now” Addo admitted, looking at his venom-stained claw. “But, i’m glad you’re alright, Skeith.” Skeith’s tail wagged slowly and he smiled again. “Heh, I’m glad you came when you did Addo!” The taxi pulled to a stop and Skeith peered out the window. “Oh, this is my place!” Addo announced as he leaned up and paid the taxi driver his fair. He hopped out of the cab, and then slipped quickly to Skeith’s door to open it and help him out, lifting one of the wolf’s arms over his shoulders. The building before them was three stories tall, old and worn, and boasted the ugliest shade of peeling yellow paint the imagination would dare to contrive. A rusty, broken-in screen door creaked open loudly as they entered. “My flat is on the top floor” Addo grimaced, and looked Skeith over. “D- do you want me to, er, uh, I could carry you if you need. i’m stronger than i look.” Skeith smiled and tested his leg, trying to support himself without much luck. “Heh, if you can... I’m a bit on the heavy side.” “N-no you’re not” Addo lied through a thickening blush, and scooped Skeith up in his arms. He couldn’t help but to look at the wolf he was carrying. He was so adorable, and how could anyone have put him in such a battered condition? Addo suppressed a growl and for a moment he wished his venom had done more to those brutes than just knock them out. “J- just uh, hang onto my neck, uh, if you would” Addo said, shaking the thoughts away and focusing on the here and now, and the wounded wolf he was to care for. He slithered up the stairs, making sure to not bump Skeith’s head or feet into any of the railing banisters. The carpeting on the stairs was old, maybe even older than the building by the looks of it, and each step brought a new puff of dusty musty scent into the air. The railing didn’t look safe, and sections of the wood here and there were broken, or bug-eaten. A few minutes passed and they made it to the top floor where there was a hallway with three doors. “Mine’s at the end” Addo nodded his head towards his door and slithered down the hall. He unlocked the flat and pushed the door open, slithering in to place Skeith on the couch with an exhausted huff.

Skeith looked around and leaned back on the couch. Inside the apartment, it looked like a different world. The scents here were much more pleasant, almost spring-like, and the walls had a pleasant coating of white paint. The furniture was nice, and completely un- insect-afflicted, and even the lights seemed cleaner. “Oh. Oh wow. This looks nice. A- and thanks for helping me out” he commented sleepily. His eyelids felt heavy, and before he could manage any further conversation, his mouth was already emitting little snoring sounds. Addo smiled down dopily at him, then shook his head. Not good to stare. He headed to the bathroom and washed his claw off thoroughly, then grabbed a bowl of water, a washcloth, and his firstaid kit and returned to the living room. Skeith’s shirt had many gashes over it, and through them, Addo could see that his cuts were looking bad, and that his fur was matted down with drying blood. Splatters of the same blood were cached onto his dimly glowing hexagons as well, causing a sickly brown glow everywhere the blood rested, so Addo carefully began work to clean him, trying his best not to wake the wolf. Addo dabbed a corner of the washcloth into the water and tenderly lifted Skeith’s shirt, gently rubbing the blood off the hexagons until they sparkled bright again. He then moved on to clear the blood pools matting down the wolf’s fur, and treated his cuts with a little bit of balm. When he finished he let out a tired sigh and smiled sleepily, pulling Skeith’s shirt back down and gazing at him, and then blushed deeply as he caught himself in the act of staring yet again. He put the dirty washcloth in the bowl with what was left of the water, and pushed the bowl and the firstaid kit aside.

Addo hadn’t bothered to tell Skeith that the couch was the only bed in the apartment. He preferred couches to beds, and he’d never had company over before. He grabbed the

blankets from the edge of the couch and pulled them over Skeith gently, and then sat on the floor and leaned back against the couch arm. He grinned bashfully as he too, tiredly drifted off to sleep.

After a few hours of sleeping Skeith grimaced and stirred awake. His body still hurt, but... Huh? He looked himself over, noticing that his wounds had been quite carefully tended to, and then noticed Addo sleeping on the floor. Did he stay up with me? He stared a bit at the snake and blushed a little. What a great guy, to care about a stranger like that... Skeith slowly got up, gently setting the blankets over Addo before quietly hobbling about look around the apartment and locate the bathroom. He slipped his shirt off to glance at himself in the mirror looking over his wounds. "God they did a hell of a lot more than I thought" he grimaced, poking lightly at one

of the balmed gashes in his shoulder. "But..." he examines his fur and his markings. "Addo, he musta worked hard cleaning me up... That guy..." Skeith dropped his pants and continued his examination, studying his deeply bruised and battered legs. In the living room, Addo stirred slightly when the blankets were put on him, but didn't wake until he heard the hobbling pawsteps on the carpet. Nothing catches one's attention better than footsteps in the dark when one is used to living alone. Addo lifted his head alarmed, and noticed the blankets, and Skeith missing from the couch. The light from the bathroom door was spilling out from the crack, and so he got up to check. Gently knocking on the bathroom door, Addo asked. "A-are you alright?"

Skeith slipped out a small meep of surprise and smiled to himself. Thought he was still sleeping. Damn, that boy cares, doesn't he? "Y-yes I'm ok. You can come in if you like" Skeith offered without thinking. At this point all he had on were his boxers. "I'm just looking at the damage."

Addo cracked open the door and slipped in, and instantly noticed how underclothed Skeith was. "I uh-" Addo gulped hard, and felt a pressure build in his pants. "I patched you up best I could..." He explained, quickly looking away and turning to the side. "They did a number on you, for sure." Skeith blushed deeply, realizing just what he'd invited the snake in on, and covered himself up, turning around quickly. "Y-yes they did..." he stammered bashfully. "...But you saved me. How can I thank you?" "Y-you don't have to thank me" Addo stammered back, taking the opportunity when Skeith turned around to go ahead and quickly adjust himself. "We've still got hours till morning, why don't you chill out and rest up some more on the couch. You probably shouldn't be walking." "I think I'm fine for now" Skeith said as he pulled his pants back on and turned back around. He limped to head back to the couch, but quite inadvertently tripped, falling over and knocking Addo down with him. He saw the cute purple snake beneath him, and his face flushed red. "Oh my god I'm sorry!" "D-don't be" Addo reassured him then recognized, that with the wolf on top of him as he was, there was no way he wouldn't notice the situation poking into him. Addo gulped and choked a wry cough of embarrassment before slipping out from beneath Skeith and quickly helping him to his feet, throwing Skeith's arm over his shoulders so he could help him back to the couch. Skeith took his seat, and grinned a little thinking about what he'd just discovered, blushing as he began to feel a little hard as well. "U-um may I say something?" "S- uh, sure, and sorry" Addo apologized, and bit his lip a little as he nervously backed up a step. "Its ok" Skeith smiled reassuringly. "And I must say that you're kind of cute for someone who can beat up a bear and a doberman." And with that, Skeith blushed a bit deeper. "Oh I, oh uh, heh... what?" Was this real? Was this actually happening? Crushing on a guy, and getting to play the hero, ending up with him on his couch, and... and his crush calling him cute on top of all that? Addo blushed until you'd swear he was a red snake instead of a purple one. "It was nothing, I, was uh, just worried they were hurting you. I mean, I know they were, I uh-" Addo forced himself to fall silent as to stop tripping over his own words and thoughts. Skeith smiled and carefully stood and then pulled Addo into a warm hug. "You're my hero" he grinned, and looked Addo graciously in the eyes before sitting back on the couch. Addo, who only got more red from the hug, tentatively moved closer, and hesitantly

took a seat beside Skeith on his couch. "I am?" he smiled back shyly. "Uh, m-may I say something too?" Skeith looked at him with a welcome smile. "What is it?" "I uh, only stayed at the restaurant till closing so I could see you..." Addo blushed and looked down as he admitted the fact. "I was trying to work up the nerve to talk to you, but, but I couldn't really. I think you're really cute too..." Of course, he probably knows that already. Addo bit his lip, embarrassingly remembering that his member had been poking up against the wolf only a minute or two ago... Skeith blushed more and looked down as well. "Y-you did?" Addo nodded shyly, and looked back up at Skeith, scooching right up beside him. "I did" he affirmed. "Well then" Skeith smiled and threw an arm over Addo's shoulders, pulling him over into another hug. "Maybe, then, you'd like to share the couch?" Skeith let go of Addo with a coy smile, and Addo nodded with a happy silence. "Here, I'll just shuck this way, and..." Addo took the cue, and as Skeith moved himself tight against the back of the couch, Addo layed in front of him at the lip of the couch, resting an arm over Skeith's stomach." Skeith, in turn, rested his own arm over Addo's and gently rubbed his back. "Sorry about that" Skeith chuckled as Addo rubbed his belly. "Musta made it hard for you to carry me..." Addo shook his head happily and rubbed Skeith's belly a little more. "No, not at all. It, it kinda made it more fun to carry you" he giggled quietly. "I like this" he poked it lightly. "Do you now?" Skeith laughed, and kissed Addo's head. "Well then it's yours tonight." Addo looked up at Skeith and raised an eyebrow. "What do you mean?" Skeith smiled back down at him. "Well, you sure earned it, didn't ya?" Skeith laughed. He looked at Addo being all shy and couldn't help but think again about how cute the snake was, and so he rubbed Addo's back a little more, and Addo melted with his touch, clinging gently into him. "Thanks" a whisper came up from Addo, who had his face tucked into Skeith's chest. "You're thanking me?" Skeith boggled. Addo nodded into Skeith's chest and wrapped his arms gently over his midsection, while coiling his tail softly through his legs. "I needed, this. Something like this" Addo nuzzled against Skeith's glowing hexagons and rubbed them tenderly with his snout. "Someone like you, even just for a night. Being- being..." Skeith listened with a smile until Addo droned to a stop. "Go ahead, go on" Skeith pushed. "Being in your arms like this" Addo sniffed happily. "I needed this. I woulda fought of twenty guys if I knew it was gonna lead here..." "Twenty, eh?" Skeith grinned, and gave the snake a warm squeeze. "How about next time, we'll lead here free of charge, heh..." "Next time?" Addo looked up from Skeith's chest. Skeith shrugged and smiled. "If you want, I don't mind giving you a next time" Skeith said, then playfully kissed Addo on the snout. "I'd like that" Addo smiled and buried himself back into Skeith's chest so he could hide the happy tear that was starting to pool in his eye. It was too late, of course, because Skeith had already spotted it, and it only made him think higher of the snake who'd saved him. He gave Addo another fond kiss on the head, and another tender squeeze, and the both of them fell asleep happily in each other's arms. ^^^^