

As Setra slithered along, Sheebe tried to keep her hands moving to fight the creeping numbness, but there was only so much she could do. Zipping up the bag would have been pointless with all the melting ice cream in it, so the shiba woman decided to sort through it and see if there was anything worth keeping. *This is dumb*, she thought, but the bag was the one thing keeping her tethered to a world without carnivorous plants and giant snakes and magical healing places.

All the cartons were soggy, as were the wrapped cones and ice cream bars. Sheebe dug through the bag, tossing away any leaky container and any wrapper that felt like a water balloon. One popsicle had fared better: beneath a shallow layer of creamy sludge was an Ultra-Deluxe Caramel Vanilla Fudge-Bomb-Sicle Twist™, double sized for Sharing With Friends™. Its wrapper was thin but intact, shielding it from the other flavours swirling around at the bottom of the bag.

It had been the crown jewel of Sheebe's haul. A small smile crept onto the shiba's face. Maybe there was still some order left in the world. "So what is this healing place, anyway?" she called to the snake over her shoulder, closing the bag.

"A hot *sss*pring!" Setra called back as she cut through the thick jungle undergrowth like a neon line. "The water comes from deep in the mountains and forms a giant bath in the rock. It's absolutely wonderful for resting after a long day of hun— *rescuing*. A long day of rescuing." The snake was telling the truth: there *was* a hot spring nearby and the water *did* have healing properties, although where exactly they came from was anyone's guess.

Setra didn't care. She just knew that her meals tasted better if she doused them in its waters, and relaxing in the hot spring with a full belly was one of her favourite pleasures. The serpent licked her lips at the thought.

Sheebe had been looking forward to a hot tub at the resort, which definitely did not have healing properties. Some part of her found the irony funny enough to laugh. Setra looked back curiously but didn't say anything.

After a few more minutes, Setra pushed through a final wall of overgrown plants and slid to a stop. “Here we are,” she said, pulling Sheebe forward. The dog woman craned her neck, taking in the sight in front of her.

Setra rested on a sandy bank. It extended in front of her for a couple metres, sloping down to the top of a small lake full of blue, crystalline water that glowed where it reflected the sun’s light. Small steam clouds wafted over the water and curled smoky fingers down to the surface where they bounced back at the touch. Sheebe could feel the water’s raw heat even from where she was, and the pool was so clear she could see down to the bottom: maybe two metres at the deepest part in the middle, but comfortable wading depth everywhere else. The lakebed was smooth, pale sand.

Near the middle, a wide rock broke through the rippling water and made a nearly flat platform just above the waves. It looked ideal for sunbathing. A stone’s throw to the pair’s left was a steep wall of rock and earth. From its base came the gentle crash of a short waterfall, which spouted from a crack the rock face and plunged down into the lake. Opposite the waterfall, the spring funnelled into a narrow river which promptly disappeared into thick jungle.

“Wow,” said Sheebe.

“It’s beautiful, isn’t it?” said Setra. “That rock in particular is one of my favourite sunning spots. Come on in and I’ll show you.” She unspooled her body from Sheebe, delicately lowering her back to the ground.

Sheebe crouched gingerly and fumbled with the laces on her boots until she got them off. Her socks practically fell off her feet. “What do you eat, anyway?” she asked once she had stood back up.

Setra barely managed to keep her composure. “Um.” She glanced back at the jungle. There was a banana bunch hanging from a tree. “Fruit.”

“Aw.” Sheebe deflated but reached into her bag anyway. “Then you might not like what I have.”

“*Believe me,*” Setra said intensely as her mouth watered, “that won’t be a problem.”

“Great! Then will you split this with me?” Sheebe held up her prize and peeled off the wrapper to reveal a double-sticked popsicle. The chocolate ice cream was crisscrossed with streaks of caramel and vanilla, and the whole thing contained a frightening amount of sugar.

Setra neared it hesitantly. “What is it?” she asked.

“It’s an Ultra-Deluxe Caramel Vanilla Fudge-Bomb-Sicle Twist™,” grinned Sheebe.

“What.”

“An Ultra-Deluxe Caramel—”

“Yes, but what *is* it?”

Sheebe blinked. The ice cream was beginning to melt from all the ambient heat. “It’s a sweet treat from where I work,” she said. “‘Thick and tasty, guaranteed!’ like the rest of the menu. You’re being so nice to me that I thought you’d want to have a taste before it melts into mush.”

The serpent looked between Sheebe’s honest face and the brown-orange-white thing in her hand. “It’s *food*?” she asked.

“Well, maybe not real food – you couldn’t live off these. But it tastes great!” Sheebe pulled on the sticks, breaking the treat in two and holding one half out for Setra with a shaking hand. The snake flicked out her tongue. The thing smelled cold and sweet, but not in ways that Setra had words for. She licked it and decided it tasted good too. “Um—” was all Sheebe said before the snake’s giant mouth clamped down over both the popsicle and her hand.

Setra closed her eyes, savouring the flavour as she ran her tongue up and down her food. Her head writhed slowly around Sheebe’s hand, covering her digits and fur with saliva. The taste was exquisite: meaty, fatty, and tender. Not at all like the hardscrabble jungle animals she normally caught, and born from a life of luxury and too many sweets. Up and down and back and forth she went, eager to taste every detail.

Oh, and the popsicle was decent too. She swallowed it in a single mighty gulp, stick and all.

“S-Setra?” asked Sheebe, “Can I have my arm back?”

The serpent stopped. She opened her eyes. She slowly dragged her head back and released Sheebe's hand with a slippery pop. "Pardon me for getting carried away," she said as Sheebe looked at her now thoroughly damp arm.

". . . Tastes good, then?" the shiba asked absently. Her own popsicle had melted and fallen off the stick.

"Hmm? Oh, yes. Thick and tasty, just like you said." Setra shook her head to clear her thoughts. "No more time to stand around: in you go!"

Her tail flicked forward and poked Sheebe's butt. The shiba woman squeaked, but the prod got her to wobble forward into the water. Setra swooped in, coiling her neck around Sheebe's shoulders like a purple sash.

The water worked its magic as soon as it touched Sheebe's toes. Her feet had gone so numb she could barely stand, but as each swishing step took her deeper into the spring she could feel the poison flushing out of her system. Warm pulses of blood ran through her legs, clearing the fuzzy numbness and leaving liquid heat in its place. It felt good.

"*Ohhh*," Sheebe moaned as her eyes slid shut. The water was up to her waist now, lapping at the lower curve of her plump belly. She lowered her arms and let them sink into the spring where the blue currents swam around her fingers and palms, filling them with same heat as her legs. It felt *really* good. Her toes curled into the sand. "S-Setra . . ." she breathed, fumbling for words.

Setra slithered across Sheebe's collar in a half-loop. "It can feel better," she said in dulcet tones.

Sheebe half opened her eyes. "Better?" she asked as though she'd woken up from a nap.

"Oh, yesss." The snake nodded, sliding to her other ear. "Do you want me to help?"

Sheebe was so relaxed she'd have agreed to anything, especially with Setra's smooth scales sliding over the back of her neck and sending shivers down her spine. "Y-yes, please," she mumbled.

Setra had pulled the rest of her body behind Sheebe as she waded into the spring, and her purple coils sloshed through the water towards their target. The dog woman was about halfway to the sunning

rock in the middle of the lake. “Sssay no more,” the snake hissed softly. She slid a few coils around one of Sheebe’s arms and began to work her own flavour of magic.

Sheebe distantly felt Setra loop herself around one arm but she didn’t think anything of it until the snake *squeezed* and forced the bands of scaly muscle into Sheebe’s soft flesh. “Gh—!” Sheebe gasped softly. Her surprise quickly left as she realized what Setra was doing: this was a massage.

The snake’s coils cinched and rustled down Sheebe’s arms like supple leather, gently pressing into her fur and the skin underneath like a slow, implacable tide. The effect was entrancing, and it only got better when Setra loosened her grip and let Sheebe’s circulation return. The shooting warmth of her blood and the caressing warmth of the spring water flowed through and over the dog woman’s arm.

“*Mmm*,” Sheebe moaned.

A smug smile crept onto Setra’s face. “There’s more where that came from.” The serpent shifted her body in the water, tossing small currents of water against Sheebe’s chubby lower body as she formed into a series of menacing purple loops under the surface. The loops curled lithely around Sheebe’s legs before cinching just as they had for her arm – slow, gentle, totally unstoppable. The same tender cycle of squeezes and warmth quickly covered Sheebe’s legs.

Sheebe couldn’t bring herself to moan this time. Just like her body sinking into the deepest part of the spring, her mind sank into an all-covering warmth that shaped itself to every contour of her body like lavish cloth. She panted slowly and hotly as the serpentine rhythm dominated each of her limbs, mumbling half-words and pleased noises. The shiba woman hadn’t even noticed herself come to lean against the sunning rock.

But Setra had. From her perch on her quarry’s neck, she had a firsthand view of Sheebe melting into putty in her thick coils. The serpent’s mouth curled into a predatory grin. Her tongue flicked out eagerly, taking in every part of the foggy, luscious heat rising from Sheebe’s body.

She would eat well tonight.

VI

Setra's serpentine rhythm continued its slow, grinding pace up and down Sheebe's body until her limbs had well and truly been wrung out. She blinked her eyes open even as the serpent continued to flex her coils with no sign of stopping. "Setra?" Sheebe asked, glancing down at herself.

"*Sssomething* the matter?" Setra's lovely voice came from right next to Sheebe's ear.

"I . . . I think I'm done. It doesn't hurt anymore." Sheebe looked over at the waterfall on one end of the spring. "Mind if I rinse off?"

Setra didn't say anything for a moment. Then, reluctantly: "Is this not to your liking?" She sounded hurt.

"No, no!" Sheebe waved her arms (or tried to – they were about thrice as heavy as usual). "I just want to clean myself off before I leave."

Setra knew leaving was the one thing her guest wouldn't be doing, but she didn't want to press the issue. She had tenderized her for long enough – let the dog have a bit of time to herself, why not. The snake's head leaned back from Sheebe's. "Of *coursse* – but do come back to see me once you're finished, won't you?" She began to uncurl herself slowly from Sheebe's body, slithering and dragging her supple scales through the shiba's fur.

Sheebe nodded even as her legs twitched under Setra's touch. "Oh, for sure!" Setra finished disentangling herself from Sheebe's limbs and slithered onto the sunning rock where she began to settle into a round pile.

Sheebe, feeling much lighter now, waded over to the waterfall. The water receded down to her knees as she crossed the distance, letting her breasts, belly, and ass sag slightly in their usual way. Sheebe stepped into the steamy stream of water.

For the first time since she had turned on the AC in the overheated ice cream truck, Sheebe felt peaceful. She was warm, much warmer than the truck had been, but the sloshing water running over her body felt like it was steaming the dust and dirt off her heart – a far cry from hotboxing in a stuffy

cab. She ran her hands through her straight hair, sighing as the heat cut through it like a liquid knife. Her fingers pressed into her scalp and rinsed out the last remnants of the pitcher plant's pink fog.

Sheebe looked down at herself and realized that she was still wearing her lacy lingerie. The poor fabric had stretched and slipped down her tits, scrunching against the bottom curve where they met her ribs. Her pale pink nipples sat on display like two tarts on a platter. The same was true of her panties: where they had sat enticingly high on her hips, they were now ragged and stretched out to the sides of her thighs, resting perilously low – almost low enough for someone to see her pussy peeking out from under them.

Sheebe blushed and glanced over her shoulder at Setra, but if the serpent was ogling her she didn't show it. The shiba woman turned back to the rock, chastising herself. *Of course she doesn't care – she's a wild animal, for goodness' sakes! And besides, that massage she gave you wouldn't have felt much different even if you'd been naked.*

The shiba gulped softly as her mind wandered. What *would* it have felt like? She shook her head. No time for that. She had a long, miserable hike ahead of her. Huxley had probably returned to the truck and found her note by now, which meant—

She froze. *Which means he probably thinks I made it to the resort ahead of him!*

Setra had just settled into a good sunning pose when frantic splashing caught her attention. She glanced at the waterfall and saw Sheebe tearing back towards her through the water. Her tits bounced wildly as she kicked up small waves.

It was shallower on this side of the rock, so Sheebe was only up to her thighs when she reached it. "Setra!" she gasped, "You've got to help me find the road!"

Setra blinked. "Road?" That was definitely *not* in her plan.

"Yes, the road!" Sheebe told her about the note she had left for Huxley and what he had probably thought it meant. "He must think I'm at the resort, and he's probably driving there now!"

The serpent considered what Sheebe had told her. “So, he’s probably gone far away from where your truck stopped.”

“Yes!”

“And he might have trouble finding his way back to where it broke down.”

“Yes!”

A small shudder which Sheebe mistook for concern worked its way down Setra’s body. “So he wouldn’t know where to start looking for you.”

“Yes!”

“That is . . .” Setra flicked her tongue. “. . . *Quite* the set of circumstances.”

“Yes!” wailed Sheebe. She wavered back and forth, anxious to leave but with nowhere to go.

“Oh, he’ll be so worried about me! I’ve got to get back there as soon as I can!” She started around the rock in the direction of the shore.

“*Jussst* a moment, little doggy,” said Setra. Her tail reached out and wound around Sheebe’s wrist.

Sheebe was yanked to a halt. “Wh— Hey!” Her free hand shot to the snake’s tail and tried to unwind it. “Setra, I don’t have time for this.”

“I *disssagree*.” Setra leaned forward over the warm rock. “You are in no shape to be going anywhere, little doggy.”

Sheebe shot an annoyed glance at the snake. “You know my name, Setra.”

Setra’s tail crept further up Sheebe’s arm. “I do, but right now you’re acting like a scared little doggy. It’s true,” she said when Sheebe gave an indignant glare. “You’re angry and panicked and not thinking straight. Exactly the same problems you had that brought us together in the first place.” Setra’s head floated forward as her neck formed into a small loop. She perched atop Sheebe’s head despite the shiba’s squirming.

“I can’t just *stay* here,” Sheebe said. “And what are you doing?”

“Reminding you of some common sense: there’s no point in running if you can’t see where you’re going.” Setra’s slid snugly down over Sheebe’s eyes.

“Hey!” Sheebe protested, pawing at the blindfold with her free hand. Setra’s tail had imprisoned her other arm up to the shoulder.

“There’s *sssomething elssse* you should know, Sheebe,” the serpent gloated.

“And what’s that?” Sheebe’s patience was wearing thin.

“One way or another, the jungle provides – and today it provided me with *precccisssely* what I wanted.”

“And what’s *that*?” The shiba’s blindfold lifted, but not from her own power.

“*You*.” Setra’s head swung down in front of Sheebe’s face. The serpent’s amber eyes had been replaced by swirling colours: amber poured out from her pupil, quickly followed by bright red and bright blue before melting back into amber again. The dazzling display made each of Setra’s eyes look as though it had been divided in half.

“What d—” was all Sheebe managed before the colours pierced her meagre mental defences and commanded her attention. “Wh . . . Wh . . .”

“*That’sss* it. Just keep looking,” Setra hissed, rocking her head back and forth slowly as the colours spilled out in captivating waves. “My eyes are so pretty, don’t you think?”

“P- . . .” Sheebe formed the sound on imitation alone, pursing her lips blankly.

“Yesss, pretty,” said Setra. “Just relax and watch my eyes.” She began pushing and pulling Sheebe back towards the rock. Every tug she repeated her mantra: “Just relax, just relax.”

Sheebe kept trying to reach for words and say something to Setra, but there were a thousand little interruptions: the snake’s eyes pulsed to red, “Just relax,” tug back on her head, slither tighter, now to blue, “Just relax,” scales creeping up her arm and squeezing like they had squeezed before to make her feel good, pulse to amber, “Just relax,” hissing tones that swept around her ears like smoke, now to red, “Just relax,” Sheebe stepped back.

The loop repeated what felt like a dozen times but Sheebe couldn't count because she tried to reach for a number and it flew out of her brain like a candy wrapper. The shiba felt her heels trundle through the sand, nearly tripping over muscular thickness in the water around her feet. "S-S-Setra . . ." she mumbled in a weak voice even as the serpent's tail crept up from her shoulder and tapped her lips.

"*Husssh*," the serpent whispered with a flick and a trill of her tongue. Her eyes sped up. Blue.

Sheebe tried to struggle but ever new pulsing wave of colour pushed her back down. Amber. Gently, ever so gently, not hurting her but not letting her leave. She had wanted to leave because there was something red she had to go and get. Red? No, something else, something blue. Blue like the water – the water felt good. She had found it, but was it amber? No, no, it was supposed to be red. There was a hiss, soft and right in front of her under the colours. Gentle again. She listened to it and it told her to relax and be still and back up and please step up onto that rock wouldn't you and she obeyed because it was gentle just like the gentle weight that settled around her and it was warm like the spring water had been when Setra squeezed her (little fireworks and twitches because the squeeze had been *very good*) but the spring water and the old coils had flowed back and forth and tight and loose but this was different because it never stopped and the warmth just kept pouring down into her eyes and back over her mind and she couldn't think but that was okay because it was very warm just like the squeeze had been *very good* and she wanted more squeezes please could she have more the hiss said yes and she said thank you and the hiss kept hissing and Sheebe's thoughts melted into a slurry.

"You're welcome – *hsshsshss!*" Setra could barely contain her laughter. Were all outlanders this easy? She had barely been hypnotizing the fat little dog woman for a few minutes and her mind was already melting just the way her body had been. Speaking of which, the shiba's belly was proving just as pleasing to touch as her limbs had: soft, pliant meat that was deep enough for her coils to sink into. Setra's purple scales ran over Sheebe's form, squeezing oh so softly and lulling her deeper even as her eyes did their usual work.

The two were firmly on top of the sunning rock now: the serpent rested in the middle of it and her prey sat atop her coils like a living chair. Setra had raised her head to loom over Sheebe's as more coils circled up over her legs and onto her tummy. The shiba woman was twirled lazily like a handful of meat being wrapped on a counter, eyes locked upward onto the warmth and bliss that Setra poured down onto her.

The green in Sheebe's eyes had been eclipsed by Setra's amber, red, and blue, pushing out of her own pupils in buzzing rings. Her head felt warm. It was good. She smiled. "M-more . . ." she begged. She was almost too weak to speak.

Setra was happy to oblige. One of her coils slipped between Sheebe's legs and her scales slid against the shiba's pussy. Her next beg turned into a moan as she ground herself against the purple muscle between her legs. Her panties pulled, stretched, and snapped. The old Sheebe would have been mortified at being this nude, but the new Sheebe was a mindless pleasure doll who knew only Mistress Setra and the colours and the hiss that made her feel good from her toes to her nose.

The serpent finally decided to ease up. Her eyes strobed one final time before the colours slid out the edges. Her handiwork was clear: Sheebe was trapped up to her tits in snakeflesh, supple and smoky. Setra's lustrous scales pressed into the shiba around her legs and arms. She squeezed rhythmically, feeling the give in Sheebe's body as her sensitive belly scales pressed it *just so*: never too tight in any place but never enough for her meal to squirm. Not that she'd want to *escape* – Sheebe's eyes were glassy underneath the snake's colours, pulsing along as though she had never stopped. Pleasured whispers spilled out of the dog woman's mouth.

Almost perfect. Setra leaned down and bit Sheebe's bra, ripping it away. Perfect.

Sheebe looked down dumbly at her own tits as though she had never seen them before. Setra took the chance to do the same from a much closer perspective. She dove onto Sheebe's chest and shoved her mouth over an entire breast, suckling and straining her cheeks like a newborn.

Oh, it was *sublime*. Meaty, buttery, sweet undercurrent. Enough playing around.

Setra slowly withdrew her mouth from Sheebe's boob. The pink nipple was now stiff and she flicked it with her tongue greedily. Setra's head rose back up to be level with Sheebe, whose panting had grown hotter. "Doggy," she said, "can you hear me?" Sheebe's mouth pursed into a tame O. She nodded clumsily.

Setra smiled. "Good. I'm going to eat you in a moment, and when I do I want you to do something for me." Sheebe nodded again. "When I start, I want you to take a deep breath. Can you do that?"

Sheebe didn't nod this time. Setra cupped the top of her head with her tail, nodding for her. "Yes. Yes, you can."

"Y-yes," Sheebe mumbled.

"Good. Now after you take that deep breath, there's just one more thing you need to do: you're going to cum. Do you want to cum?" She slid her scales against Sheebe's pussy for emphasis.

Sheebe remembered how to nod. "Yes," she said.

"And when you *ssstart* cumming," Setra continued in a lilting voice, "you aren't going to *ssstop* until the end of your days." The snake glanced at the sky. "Or sundown. Same thing," she snickered.

"Mmm-hmm," Sheebe droned again.

"Now tell me what I'm going to do."

"Gonna eat me."

"Yes, because you make very good snake food. What next?"

"D-. . . Deep breath."

"And the *lassst* thing you'll ever do?"

"Cum." Sheebe would never have uttered such vulgarity before meeting Setra.

Setra's eyes twinkled. "*Exssselent*."

VII

Setra moved to hover directly over Sheebe's head. "Sssay goodbye, doggy."

"Goodbye, do—" Sheebe said before the snake's maw pressed onto her head. She reacted immediately as her entire body stiffened into an iron bar and raw, molten pleasure shot through her. The water and the flashing colours had been nothing compared to this roiling heat. She moaned into the wet crush of Setra's throat, writhing and shaking in her scaly bonds.

Setra got halfway to Sheebe's neck before she had to slow down, but that just gave her more time to savour the taste. As the serpent's purple skin expanded to cover Sheebe, she slid down one inch at a time until her nose was pressed against the dog woman's shoulders. Setra *stretched* her jaw as snakes do and felt it adjust painlessly. She continued to press down, moving from neck to collarbone to chest.

Sheebe's head had been an appetizer – a light taste, a bit sweet – but her torso was the real prize. Setra's eyes rolled back in her head when her neck scales first bulged and strained to get around the shiba's big breasts. The meat was supple and warm from her time in the spring, but with a bit of the wonderful firmness the snake only got from live prey that wriggled in her jaws.

And wriggle Sheebe did. Her face had pressed into Setra's throat by now and a mewling, panting imprint worked its way towards Setra's tail with every inch the serpent took in.

Setra gummed and gnawed at the mouthful – the *throatful* of warm flesh passing over her tongue. Every pinch and cinch of Setra's vast, muscular body made her prey jolt, which jiggled her boobs deliciously now that Setra had gotten them both into her mouth. She took a moment to gulp down the damp, meaty ball that Sheebe had become.

The gulp brought Setra to her prey's large belly, which was even larger than her boobs – but that just meant more meat. The snake descended with gluttonous abandon as her jaws worked their way down to Sheebe's belly and then ever so slowly over it. She had to walk her head downwards, pushing one corner of her jaw forward at a time. Back in the serpent's bulging throat, the dog woman writhed under a tight layer of snakeskin.

Setra had never been this full before. Her eyes glazed over, unfocusing as her taste buds revelled in the mindless carnivorous pleasure. This was bliss. This was what she lived for.

But slowly the snake's senses returned to her, and she continued gulping down her victim, who was now reduced to a giant ass and a pair of quivering legs. Setra reared back on the rock, lifting the dog woman's heavy butt up. The snake's tail rose as well. She drew it back, then whipped Sheebe's ass hard enough to send a jiggle rocking across both wide cheeks.

"Mnnph!" came a muffled, manic scream from somewhere beneath Setra's jaw. Another slap, another scream. On the third strike, Sheebe's scream turned into a moan, and it got deeper on the fourth. The fifth slap sent a fresh wave of ragged, toe-curling orgasm ripping through her. Setra took the cue and changed from slapping to fucking.

Her tail slid into Sheebe's pussy, piercing the quivering womanhood like it belonged nowhere else. Setra could feel her meal's pleasure very clearly now, and she had made good on her promise to cum. The snake slid her tail back and forth into Sheebe, fucking her gently in rhythm with her gulps.

With gravity helping, every snaky thrust drove the shiba deeper and deeper into her doom. One smidgen at a time, Setra's lips slowly crept over Sheebe's ass (just as filling, but creamy instead of buttery – interesting!) and covered yet more of her in smoky purple. The only things left poking out of the serpent's mouth were a pair of thick thighs and two canine feet that swayed like their owner was entranced.

Setra fucked Sheebe deeper into herself until the dog woman's pussy vanished into her throat. She withdrew her slick tail, pressed her tongue against it and found the taste *very* satisfying. She gave a slow, luxuriant gulp and enjoyed the feeling of such a large meal sinking down her gullet. Then only her meal's calves were left. Not exactly the main attraction, but far from bitter. *Gulp*. Feet only. *Gulp*. No more Sheebe.

The snake gulped one final time and looked down at herself, swollen with the kind of meal she'd need a week to sleep off. Lucky for her, she had her favourite sunning spot to do exactly that. "Thank

you, doggy,” Setra said as her meal softly writhed in her purple veil of death. “I will always remember your taste and your kindness.”

Setra arranged her coils into a circle around the edge of the rock, basking in the sunlight with her new bulge in the centre and her head resting comfortably on top of it. She didn’t plan to fall asleep just yet – after all, watching the slow, gurgling descent her meals made was half the fun. Sheebe’s face was still visible against the pale, stretched purple of her belly.

She was so focused on her recent victory that she didn’t hear the soft swishing sound of a man quietly moving through water until he was right on top of her. The serpent jerked her head around, in no condition to fight.

White-hot fury bristled on Huxley’s skin. He gripped a heavy wrench in one hand. “You have *ten* seconds,” he said.

Setra swallowed – nervously, for a change – and glanced around. “Y-you must b—”

Huxley’s free hand snapped to her throat. “*Nine.*”

VIII

Sheebe woke up slowly, but before she had opened her eyes she recognized the hum and sway of the ice cream truck. She blinked sleepily as she watched the vivid green jungle scroll past the windshield. She was wrapped in a blanket and slouched in the passenger seat. She looked over to the driver seat where Huxley was carefully navigating the truck through the final stretch to the resort.

“Huxley?”

He looked at her with a smile. “Sheebe! I’m so glad you’re awake.”

“What—” she coughed. Her throat was so dry. There was a water bottle in the drink holder. She took it and drank. “What happened?”

Huxley’s smile strained a bit as he looked back at the road. “What’s the last thing you remember?”

Sheebe took another sip of water. “Um, there was a hot spring, and this big snake, and she . . .” her voice withered. “She tried to . . . well . . .”

“It’s okay, babe. You don’t need to tell me about it. I saw what happened.”

Her eyes widened. “You did? How?” She put her head in her hands. “Oh, forget it – I’m so sorry for being stupid and wandering off the road like that. You told me to wait and I just got so fed up with the *heat* and the *engine problems* and—”

Huxley stopped the truck. He gently pulled her hands away and looked her in the eye. “Sheebe, you’re safe now. That’s all that matters. Don’t worry about it.”

Sheebe sniffed. “Y-you’re right. Thank you.” She managed a weak grin.

Huxley nuzzled his nose against hers, then turned back to the road and put the truck in gear. “As for *how* I found you, that was pretty simple – you took a bunch of ice cream treats with you, right?”

Sheebe nodded. “Well, you must have dropped a few of them. There were these giant clouds of bugs that I could see from the road when I got back to the truck.”

“Oh. But what about the note? How’d you know I had wandered into the jungle instead of walking to the resort?”

He raised an eyebrow. “What note?”

Sheebe leaned forward in her seat, looking around. “Aha!” She reached down and picked up the note from its place on the floor. “This one. I left it to tell you I’d gone to the hotel.”

Huxley chuckled. “Good thing I didn’t find it, then.”

“I’ll say.” Sheebe crumpled the note up and tossed it under her seat before turning to the side window. The late afternoon sun hung in the sky above the trees, golden and merciless. Sheebe furrowed her brow as she looked at it. It reminded her of something, but she couldn’t place it.

(“Or sundown. Same thing.”)

A bolt of pleasure rocked up from her womanhood. Sheebe felt her legs clench. She gasped.

“Something the matter, hon?” asked Huxley.

“H-Hux. How long until sundown?”

“By my watch . . . four or five hours. Why?”

Sheebe whined.