

Ssssseventh Heaven

The mission had been a smashing success, all things considered.

“Did you see that? Our boy here was like possessed, downright fighting for us all as he slashed that big robot like nobody's business!” Wedge went on to say, riding the train and not minding if anyone else was listening, something that Biggs was a touch more wary of. It was still night in Midgar, though even with lesser traffic in public transportation were tensions high for most everyone from Avalanche...all except Barret Wallace.

“Soldier boy here did good. I suppose Tuki vouching for him was not just sentimentality,” the large man said, softly lowering his shades to look at the one who had come in a few days ago, out of absolutely nowhere. Someone who had been trained as a Shinra Soldier, a tough-cookie by all means yet who looked more like a boys band reject. Barret seemed larger, taller and meaner than him and yet there was no denying that he had done the job admirably, blowing up that reactor along with them. “I suppose you'll want your pay, uh?”

“No, keep it for you and Marlene,” Cloud Strife said, indeed a resurging figure from Tuki's past as the blonde young man wielding a sword almost as tall as him, nearly as thick too, leaned against one of the pole in the middle of the subway wagon. Not a man of many words, focused on the task at hand most usually, was Cloud not prone to boisterous responses or reactions, this time not being an exception.

“Woah there, he can talk!” Jessie said, approaching the rather comely mercenary as one could easily see that she was crushing on him and hard. Invading his personal space did he roll his eyes subtly for one moment, letting her get her fix yet not swatting her away nor reacting to this sudden exuberance. “You still earned a lil' something, though. How about...yes, a pizza. One-on-one with me. Sounds nice, doesn't it?”

“Sure,” Cloud responded, not bothering to answer negatively as something in him told that he shouldn't be too harsh, that he should open more. It had indeed been a long time since he had seen his childhood friend and as they arrived in Sector 7 did they go to Avalanche's headquarters: Seventh Heaven. To many it was just a watering hole, a place to drink and forget their long, tedious shift. For Barret, Jessie, Biggs and Wedge was it their headquarters as the owner did give them the basement in which to hide

and plan. Even though Cloud knew not what had come over him to refuse payment for a job he had indeed given his all to, what mattered the most though was seeing her again as he approached the counter.

“Sssssomething to drink, handsssssome?” Tuki said, full name Tuki Lockhart as even now did she hide her extremely long tail within that pot of hers. Green and beige, spots around though with the same deep pink hair as the tough-as-heck snake girl was still as soft-hearted yet business-savvy. Barret's little girl, Marlene, was playing with that appendage looping around various furniture and assets within the bar, Tuki not paying her any mind and letting her ride it as if it were a chocobo. “He did as well as I promised, Barret?”

The large, stoic man with a literal gun for a hand changed his sour disposition to a much more wholesome one the moment he saw Marlene. A tender moment, an embrace and then riding daddy's shoulder as Cloud watched, sitting on a stool next to Tuki. “Marlene, my baby girl! You been good? Didn't get into any trouble?” he asked, dodging the question momentarily if only to give some much needed focus upon the most important person in his life. A few nods from Marlene and then from Tuki gave him the answer he sought as he then looked at his serpentine benefactor with a slightly more serious expression. “All that you promised and more. Dunno where you found him, but if he wants more jobs or to downright join Avalanche...then you can be my guest, Soldier boy.”

“The name is Cloud,” the mercenary whose conversation revolved around responded, accepting a drink from his friend as the serpentine bartender gave him a freebie for a job well done. “I think this was a one-and-done. No offense, but I'm looking for something a little less...intense.”

Some slight tension in the room, uncertainty as eventually did Tuki get to Cloud once more, approaching him. “Mind if I talk to you for a minute? Won't be too long. I actually want to...*reward* you for that job~” she offered, something about the way she worded him making Cloud feel a little flustered. As he recalled, he never was one to refuse her anything as while he did develop a crush on that surprisingly pretty serpent girl, she had turned into a bombshell of a snake woman now. She had been full of curves before, for sure, but now they were in the best of places and though he didn't try to show it Cloud found her exceptionally beautiful.

“Sure,” he responded, hiding his emotions as most ever, a skill he had developed during times of

conflict and in his training. His body language did betray an eagerness that Tuki caught up upon as she guided him towards the backroom, where most of the beer kegs, bottles and some of the food were stored. As soon as the door was closed, minus the hole to allow her tail to slid in, Cloud looked at her and she seemed radiant, downright colorful as her eyes were drawing him in like a magnet.

“You sure you want to get away from me? You've always been a shy boy, secluded...but you could belong here, along with your very favorite girl~” Tuki said, her wide hips swaying as each cumulation of this pendulum motion seemed to make reality reverberate around her. Cloud had been trained to identify and even fight against magic, all sorts of beasts and monsters, yet what Tuki was doing felt somewhat bizarre yet irrepressibly charming. The colors, the swirls, those eyes, that body...all of it made him drop his defenses somehow. “Don't be sssssilly...sssstay~”

Those hisses, that playfulness, that confidence, all of it made memories half-hidden, partially altered pop back up when Tuki did practice her own hypnotic skills on the poor boy back when they lived in Nibelheim. Making him forget the number 7 for a few minutes, making him cluck like a chicken, many were the things that she put him up to when placing him under a trance and the moment she started to learn baladi from that traveling dancer...well her efficiency was only multiplied from there. Triggers and slight instructions had been laying dormant there and Tuki had indeed gambled on them being still there. A bet she had won given that he had agreed not only to the Avalanche job prior but also to gifting his pay for Marlene's future.

“It'sssss been sssso long...and you've grown into a fine young man, sssssoldier boy~” Tuki continued, her hisses only ever emphasizing the euphoria he felt, her forked tongue darting the air as her hips continued swaying, then went to slow rotations. Her tail began to coil around him, more like an embrace than an attempt to crush her childhood friend. Close contact and delightful dizziness only served to further entrance him as he swayed along with her, his eyes swirling while a thin smile popped on his usual neutral expression. “You alwaysssss like thisssss...to be hypnotized by me~”

A slow nod, automatism rather than restraints as he was helpless, overwhelmed by his pretty friend and the intimacy they shared right now. She got closer, her towering over him, his face close to her stomach only fueling a certain desire which supplanted everything else, dominating his priorities. Feelings from prior blossomed even further, the euphoria of love and mindless bliss as she stroked his cheek gently.

“You'll accept a few more jobs for Barret and then we'll see where we go from there. This'll give us time to...*catch up*~” Tuki said, her words charged with meaning and double-entendre as she uncoiled her tail, liberating him from her physical embrace if not the mental one. “We have so much to say to each other...so much to share...yesssss?”

Her eyes were all-encompassing, depths of alluring abyss as eventually Cloud was lost, nowhere in body and mind until eventually...

SNAP!

“I'm very happy you changed your mind, Cloud. Have another drink and some wings on me while Barret comes up with a few jobs for a well-trained, tough-as-nails Soldier like you~” Tuki said, moving away as she opened the door back to the counter. As Cloud wondered what happened and why he felt so flush, he shook his head and just went back there. Couldn't lose his cool and perhaps indeed miss a chance to build his rep. Though the real reason why he agreed in the end, near-unknown to him yet very much obvious to his childhood friend was extremely simple.

He never could say no to Tuki Lockhart.