

WHERE THE LAND GOES ON FOREVER

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THE SERENGETI, TANZANIA

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If the sounds close to his tent were any indication, he'd arrived in the Serengeti just in time for the water buffaloes to give birth to inordinately large and spiky alien offspring. Fantastic. It wasn't the constant guttural lowing that did him in, but the sudden piercing shrieks which were too back-alley-horror-movie to possibly sleep through.

Augie threw his arm over the side of the cot and fumbled for his iPod, satisfied he could track it down by sliding the headphone cord through his palm. His day pack was a snarl of cords—mini USB for his cell and Kindle, two solar chargers for his laptop and satellite phone, and headphones and ear buds (because they each had a distinct purpose). The sky was lightening, but it wasn't quite dawn yet. He squeezed his eyes shut and tried to force himself back to sleep, but the water buffalo bellowed again. He swore she was giving birth directly next to him in the tent. His patience—already frayed from jetlag and strained by disbelief that he'd actually made it onto the plane this time—snapped. "Fucking cows!"

He knew they weren't biologically related to any cow, but he took a perverse sense of pleasure in comparing them to the usual pump-and-chop beasts which were inhumane caged at his parents' meat factories in Montana. Ok, maybe he was starting to feel a little bad. Then he realized the water buffalo was no longer strangling itself and the land around his tent had gone unnaturally silent. Flames from the fire outside jumped into the air, crackled, and almost muffled a familiar chuckle. Almost. But there was no way Augie could mistake that sound.

He was officially awake.

He rolled off his cot and pulled on a pair of sweatpants and a fleece, leaving it purposefully unbuttoned. A gentle breeze ruffled through the tent windows and cut through the lingering humidity. When the Society had told him he would be staying in one of the park's tents, he had pictured sweltering his days away in a tiny vinyl structure held up by thin plastic poles that could easily be trampled by any animal larger than a cicada. If he'd been more awake last night when he arrived, the reality of his home for the next couple of months would have left him weeping in gratitude.

The tent, if it could even be called that, was almost the size of his apartment back in Santa Barbara. The walls were a thick canvas, supported by sturdy wood poles around the four corners and in the center. There were windows that rolled up, screened to keep out the malaria-infested mosquitoes. A small table and chairs sat at the front of the tent, and as if it

was the greatest invention since the breakfast burrito, there was (glory hallelujah!) a sink. He couldn't drink the water, but it would be enough to keep him cleaned up and sane on the hottest days.

And it was going to be a warm day. February in the African plains was rainy and hot. Although slightly cooler, Santa Barbara wasn't that much different this time of year. Where he'd grown up in Montana would still be covered in feet of snow.

He was flipping the tent flap open before he remembered he had wanted to make a dramatic entrance. At least he wanted to be less frantic than he felt—and probably looked—right now. But as soon as he was outside, he no longer cared about anything besides the man sitting back on his heels in front of the fire: six foot four, athletic, deceptively thin, and physically stronger than any other man he'd met. Smiling. Always that smile. He had an ear to ear grin that put shame to the phrase—that showcased his high, angular cheekbones and the sun-crinkled corners of his brown eyes. At twenty-five, his eyes looked wiser than they should have, yet they held no malice or sadness.

Shon was Maasai, of the tribe which still resided in Tanzania in the Serengeti National Park. One of their fabled warriors, Shon had visited and lived in many other places besides Africa. Augie had met him in Germany, and yet Augie couldn't imagine him anywhere else. Augie's heart thudded and then forgot to beat for one long minute. He couldn't have visualized a more perfect moment in the eight months building up to this. The sky tinged gold and pink, a fine mist on the hills, footprints in the red dust where lions had investigated his arrival, a cool breeze skating over his skin raising goose bumps, this beautiful man stoking the fire... and those screeching water buffalo. Augie sighed. It was close enough.

Shon wore the green uniform of the Serengeti park rangers, and the patch on his left shoulder identified him as a member of the elite Serengeti Rhino Protection Unit. Augie knew from a long-remembered touch that the uniform was cotton, but not the worn-in material he was used to. It was thicker, coarser, and the shade of green which said "authority figure" no matter where you were in the world. The lines of his pants were crisp, his shoes polished to a high shine, and his shirt was free of the red dust which seemed to cling to everything.

Augie swallowed, very aware that how long he stayed in Tanzania depended on what happened right now. If Shon's smile was any indication, Augie was never going back to California. And yet they kept their distance, in matching guarded positions, studying each other. He knew seeing Shon for the first time since Germany would be complicated. There was no easy way to glaze over an eight month walk of shame. He had been ridden hard and was left bone-meltingly sated at the end of their summer fling, but afterwards there had been total radio silence. It was as if it was the 1800s and the Atlantic Ocean took months to cross instead of hours. He wished he'd had more time to prepare or at least more uninterrupted sleep so his sluggish brain had time to catch up.

Despite the awkwardness, Augie couldn't resist the smile plastered across Shon's face. Augie

grinned back and leaned against the tent pole, his hands in his pockets. He hoped he didn't look as teenage, high school crush as he felt. "Hey."

Shon smiled wider if that was possible. "Hey." He motioned to a pot over the fire which definitely had not been there when Augie went to bed. "Breakfast?"

Augie shook his head. There was an order to the morning, and he was nowhere near awake enough to eat. "Tea?"

Shon lifted a cup next to the fire, Augie's favorite kind of green tea already steeping.

"Of course." A blush crept up Augie's neck. It shocked him that Shon had remembered. They hadn't spoken since Germany when Shon had walked onto the plane bound for Tanzania with five black rhinos bred in captivity—the product of years of research and an ongoing partnership between the Society and the Serengeti National Park—making their way to their new home in the Tanzanian preserve. The number of black rhinos in Tanzania had fallen to dangerous levels. The repatriation project promised to turn the tide, their survival considered so important that the rhinos had their own security force. A security force now led by Shon. The pressure on Shon had to be unending and overwhelming. And yet he remembered Augie's favorite kind of tea.

Augie couldn't get his head to agree to move his feet. It couldn't be this easy. Could it? Seconds passed, but neither seemed willing to give up ground. Shon's smile didn't fade; he just set the cup down next to him and went back to tending the fire and checking on the contents of the pot. He didn't seem fazed by what most would have considered a brush off.

Steam lifted off the pot. Shon gave a subtle shudder as he spooned through the thick mixture, and Augie had to assume it was oatmeal. Shon blew on the spoon and took a careful bite. He hated oatmeal unless it was smothered in honey, dates, and almonds. It was the only way Augie could eat it now, too.

Shon finally turned a questioning eye. "Why didn't you tell me you were coming?"

His question was light, teasing, and it flustered Augie because he really should have had something better than an answer that was a total cop out. But he was stubbornly sticking to it. "I didn't know how to get a hold of you."

Shon made a *tsk tsk* noise and shook his head. "You are a dissertation away from your doctorate at the precocious age of twenty-four. You developed a psychological regiment to prepare black rhinos for repatriation to the wild—a ground breaking method which has brought you international attention. You traveled all the way to Tanzania, procured one of the SRPU's coveted Land Rovers," he motioned to the large vehicle which Augie hadn't bothered to unpack completely when exhaustion overtook him the night before, "remembered to bring a sat phone and a laptop with a solar charger. You probably spent the night watching movies on your iPad. But you couldn't figure out a way to get a hold of me?"

Augie knew Shon was teasing him and yet he felt the heat deepen in his cheeks. The realization that he was rapidly turning redder under Shon's scrutiny made him blush even more. He cursed that Shon's skin would never give him away like Augie's traitorous native Montana complexion did. He tried to look more casual and almost relaxed his way off the tent pole and onto the red dirt below. "Fair enough," he finally got out. At least he didn't sputter. "I didn't know if you'd want to hear from me. I mean it was only a week, less than that, really. Five days—"

"Six nights," Shon interjected.

"Ok, six nights," Augie chuckled. He hoped that meant Shon had been thinking about him, too. Augie knew down to the exact second when Shon had boarded the plane in Germany with those five rhinos. They'd spent each of the six nights before then fucking in positions which proved gravity was just a suggestion. He had tasted every part of Shon at least once, sampling some of his favorite places again and again. The memory was enough to get him painfully hard if he spent too much time exploring it. Luckily, the ill-timed bleat of a water buffalo smothered the urge.

Shon didn't seem to notice. "What are you doing here?"

The question should have been straight forward, but Shon hadn't put an emphasis on any of the words. Did he mean, what are *you* doing here? Or what *are* you doing here? Or what are you doing *here*? Augie shrugged. "Finishing my dissertation."

Shon chuckled again. "Fair enough," he mimicked Augie's answer. He held out the tin cup of tea again.

"How did you know I was here?"

Shon stiffened. It was almost imperceptible. Augie wanted to kick himself for asking the question that way. Of course Shon would interpret it as an examination of his professionalism, even if it wasn't at all what Augie intended. Shon's answer was short, bristling, and a modicum of guilt was evident in his voice. "It's my business to know who comes and goes from the park."

It had only been a month since poachers had left one of the repatriated rhinos dehorned and too far gone to save. Augie's heart broke for Shon. The man in front of him looked stoic, but the tug of his teeth on his lower lip betrayed the wheels working away in his head. What Augie had heard from his friends at the Society had been many times worse than what the media reported. The loss of that rhino had been crushing for the entire staff, more so for the SRPU and the team tracking the rhino that day. Augie had been too afraid to ask if Shon was part of the team. Now he was sure of it. He crossed the six feet between them, took the tea from Shon's hand and sat down on the ground next to him, leaving only inches between them. "I saw the pictures."

Shon swallowed and looked back at the fire. "It was devastating."

"I'm so sorry, Shon."

He nodded. "Thank you. But it is I who should be apologizing. I failed my duty. I failed to protect those in my charge." He looked back at Augie, his eyes haunted with the surety of his guilt. "I failed you."

"It's not that simple."

"Ah, but it is. We let the poachers through."

"You make it sound as if you welcomed them in."

"The results are the same."

"Shon..."

"No, Augie. It's done." He waved his hand as if dismissing the thought. "It won't happen again."

Augie knew better. There was a good possibility it would happen again; but it only took a week with Shon to understand what he meant. Shon spoke those words not as a dismissal of the reality he faced, but as an oath.

"Ok." Augie sipped at the tea. It was bitter, much more so than the green tea back home, but Shon had cut the bitterness with what tasted like honey. He tilted his head toward the sound of water buffaloes in the distance. "So how long does that keep up?"

"The moaning or the screeching?"

"Both. Either. It's awful."

"Never been here in February?"

"Never been here before."

Shon looked surprised. "I assumed, since you've been working with the black rhinos for years..."

Augie shook his head. "I did my research in Germany at the Society in Frankfurt and my field studies in South Africa."

Shon sat back on his heels. "It feels as if I should know more about you when in reality it is so little."

"You know everything that matters, Shon."

"Hardly," he scoffed.

Shon took the pot off the fire and scooped oatmeal into two bowls which he drizzled with honey, dates, and almonds before passing it back to Augie. Augie accepted it with a smile. Shon seemed to be lost to his own world as they sat quietly and ate.

Not all of their time together in Germany had been an insane sex romp. There were quiet moments like this, ones which tugged at Augie and made him think of more than he wanted to consider. A dinner at the hotel bar, two stools set close together, pints in hand, soccer on the TV. A coffee run during a session break, arms full of cardboard cups steaming in the chilled spring air. Wandering the streets of Frankfurt after dark, their bodies close, shoulders grazing, the hum of Shon's low chuckle reverberating next to him. Those were stolen moments, the memories which should have propelled him to Tanzania and to Shon much earlier.

"So why are you *here*?" Augie finally got the courage to break the silence, making sure that he put an emphasis on *here* so Shon understood exactly what he was asking.

"I have been assigned as your personal liaison."

"That makes complete sense." Augie didn't bother to modulate his snarky response. "Because the captain of the SRPU, the leader of the new aerial task force, and all-around Maasai warrior badass is necessary for protecting a hot doctoral student from the States." Augie rolled his eyes to emphasize his sarcasm.

Shon's lip twitched. "You are an emissary."

Augie raised an eyebrow. "You didn't pull any strings to ensure you were the one with this detail?"

"Perhaps."

Augie chuckled, "You're going to follow me wherever I go?"

"No. You will be accompanying me."

"In the helicopter? You know that heights and I don't get along."

"We'll have plenty of time to work on that. I'll take you out on the plane. Then the jeep or on foot. We use many modes to track the rhinos. You will have access to them starting this morning. I made sure to pack up one of the trackers before I headed out. You've also been given permission to request staff time, including the conservation officers, our scientists, and security, for however long you need."

"I didn't come here just for my dissertation. Or for the Society." Augie kept his eyes locked on Shon. There he was again, stuck, too unsure to say the real reason out loud.

Shon appeared not to notice Augie's hesitation. "I hoped as much. We need you to document the progress of the rhinos. My team is working a new contingency plan. The poachers are getting smarter, faster—"

Augie set his hand on Shon's forearm, on his exposed dark skin, the sleeves of his uniform pushed to his elbows. The muscles in his arm tensed, stood out in relief against the unblemished, smooth skin. "That's not what I meant."

Shon looked down at Augie's hand. "I know."

Augie felt the heat of Shon at his fingertips, the coiled tension of his muscles in the palm of his hand. A shadow passed across Shon's face and hesitation gave way to a hitched breath before Shon met Augie's gaze. And yet Shon didn't move any closer. Augie wanted the look in Shon's eyes to be desire. Hoped that maybe the twenty-three hour plane ride hadn't been the most impetuous and asinine decision he'd ever made. In Germany, one touch like this, even as cordial and friendly as it appeared on the surface, had been enough for Shon to know that Augie's thoughts were straying south. Here in the Serengeti, it appeared to mean nothing.

"Huh." Augie removed his hand and sat back in the dirt with an audible huff.

Shon raised an eyebrow, his usual smile gone, lips drawn together in a line which tipped down enough at the edges to show he was displeased about something.

Augie faltered, trying to pick up the thread of their work discussion, responding to a question Shon hadn't asked out loud. "Nothing. Just thinking that maybe I should put a call into my contacts in South Africa. That's where the poachers came from, right? I'm sure you've already made some calls as has your boss and the director of the Society, but the bureaucracy and posturing of it all can be a detriment to moving quickly—"

Shon was on Augie before he knew what had happened. As soon as he accepted it was Shon's lips on his, Augie deepened the kiss. He slowed it, could have spent the rest of his life there—in front of a fire in the Serengeti, Shon's hand at the back of his neck pulling him closer, fingers tracing down his jaw line and along his collarbone. When they pulled apart, breathless, Shon rested his head against Augie's and spoke against Augie's lips, the tenor of his voice low, erotic, and soothing. "Do you really want to talk work, August? Please tell me I didn't call in favors for us to be coolly professional with each other." Shon kissed down Augie's jaw. He smelled of dust, the sweetness of savanna grass, and of morning. Who knew the scent of dew could be so similar halfway across the world? The cuffs of Shon's green uniform pants were still wet from the early morning rains. His hands were chilled, yet burning a path down Augie's skin. Shon cupped his chin and tipped his face up, studying, but not unsure. Augie wondered if Shon ever

second-guessed himself. The twitch of Shon's lips was playful. "I would be sorely disappointed if it is. Please, Augie. Please tell me you missed me."

Shon's mouth tipped up into just a crinkle of a smile and he bit his bottom lip. Right. As if Augie could deny anything when Shon looked at him like that. "I missed you, Shon."

Shon nodded, an acknowledgment that was almost military in its precision, but the wide smile which followed was all Shon. "We have two hours for me to brief you before we meet up with the team, and," he looked at his watch, "we have used nearly thirty minutes of that talking bullshit and drinking tea. Any preference for how to spend the remainder of our time?" He crooked an eyebrow. His expression was unguarded, sunshine before the sun had thought to rise.

Memory hardly did justice to the reality of the man in front of him. His dark chocolate skin had a golden cast. His brown eyes appeared to be lit internally by a fire which was all consuming, yet warm and inviting like a summer bonfire. Shon was a Maasai warrior, a skilled Tanzanian soldier, and yet there was nothing in his joyful presence or languid grace which betrayed the violence of which he was capable. In fact, that reality seemed anything but real the longer Augie knew him.

"Well, Silver Spoon?"

Augie chuffed. Shon had nicknamed him almost immediately after he arrived in Germany. Augie had been the only American on their team, and Shon, Westernized more than the others due to his years in boarding school in New England, had caught on to Augie's uncanny resemblance to Ricky Schroeder of '80s sitcom fame and not the more recent, and much cooler, NYPD Blue days.

Augie couldn't hold back his lopsided grin. The man had dimples Augie wanted to explore with his tongue. Shon was playing with him, teasing, as if it had been eight hours and not eight months since they last saw each other. Augie ran through his mental highlight reel of the nights they'd spent together in Frankfurt. "How about a remix of the Monte Carlo night?"

Shon burst into laughter, put his hands on either side of Augie's face, and pulled him in for a wet, hot kiss. "An hour and a half isn't enough time to repeat that performance properly."

Augie swallowed hard. "Fuck it. Just come with me."

They never had a problem getting started. When Augie—tired, annoyed, and jetlagged—first landed in Germany, Shon had been the first person to greet him as he pushed through immigration and customs. The Society sent the SRPU captain because a renowned security consultant was supposed to be arriving at the same time. As it was, Augie was the only one to show at the airport that day. The consultant had slept through his alarm and missed his flight. Augie and Shon had ended up in the shower at the hotel, then on the tiny, impractical couch,

then the bed, and finally, collapsed into unconsciousness together. Augie still wasn't quite clear on how it had happened so fast. All he knew was that Shon could convince him to do just about anything when he flashed that smile.

Augie stood and pulled Shon toward the tent, their fingers intertwined. Augie glanced over his shoulder at Shon and squeezed his hand. Shon raised the twist of their hands and kissed Augie's palm. There was something intoxicatingly beautiful about the play between Augie's subtle California surfer's tan and the deep blackness of Shon's Maasai heritage. Physically, they couldn't have been more different. Augie was short, rail thin, dark blond hair, blue eyes, a smattering of darker chest hair which Shon loved to coil his fingers into. Shon was well over six feet, lithe, muscled, brown eyes which were darkly aware but never foreboding. There was an ease and elegance to the way Shon moved. He was confident, well-trained, capable, yet affable. And smart. So wickedly smart. Augie had always considered himself intelligent, and he was the smartest man in the room most places he went. But Shon had an innate knowledge which allowed him to see strategies and connections where no one else could. It was why he was the new captain of the SRPU's aerial unit and one of the things Augie had discovered was the sexiest about his Maasai warrior.

His.

Fuck.

Augie smiled shyly and blushed, glad his back was to Shon. He couldn't imagine how Shon would take being possessed by anyone.

Before they were even through the tent flap, Augie felt himself being turned around, his arm pinned behind his back, and his chest pulled against the roughness of the SRPU's green uniform. Shon slid the unbuttoned shirt off Augie's shoulders, clasped Augie's wrists together, and pushed into the small of his back to thrust their groins together. Shon bent his head and kissed down Augie's neck. He gripped Augie's wrists tightly, skirting the edge of pain. Shon's eagerness made Augie ache, firm against the softness of the cotton sweat pants. Heat. Friction. Possession. This was Shon.

Dominant, but never domineering.

Shon continued to push Augie back toward the cot in the corner of the small space. There was a line of clothes, which Augie had shed in a sleepy haze the night before, leading to the bed. Shon chuckled as he maneuvered around the scattered piles. He bent his head and took Augie's nipple into his mouth, licking at the bud until Augie moaned. His heartbeat pulsed in his chest, in his dick, and in his wrists, which were still captured in Shon's rough, skilled hands.

Augie leaned close and took Shon's earlobe into his mouth, rolling it against his front teeth, nipping at it while his ragged breath echoed in Shon's ear. It was Shon's weak spot, and Augie was happy to exploit it. Shon moaned and snaked his free hand around Augie's waist. "Don't do

that if you want this to last." It was a threat. A deep, growling, groin-tightening threat.

Augie cocked his head and studied Shon. "I don't want to last. I want you to taste me," he licked his own bottom lip and shivered as Shon's eyes traced the arc of his tongue, "as you come, hard, inside me."

Shon stared Augie down, all humor gone from his face. His eyes were hungry, dark with lust, like the internal fire had just raged out of control. Augie was pinned by Shon's stare more than by the hands still holding him captive. He saw the warrior, and a flare of danger went through Augie. Shon's face was calculating, unattached, shielded. Shon parted his lips to respond but instead exhaled long and slow and pulled his bottom lip between his teeth. Augie realized he was unconsciously mimicking the movement. Shon's eyes slid to Augie's mouth. "You are going to be trouble, August Slade," Shon growled.

Augie's dick went rock hard with the words. There was an unhinged desire in the shaking of Shon's voice, the tensing of his body around Augie's, and the tightening of his fingers around Augie's wrists. Shon was on the edge of losing control. Augie smiled slowly and pulled his shoulders back, exposing his neck, and pressed his cock against Shon's. He arched back until Shon was forced to move with him. He shifted his hips until the head of his straining cock pushed past his waistband and then closed his eyes and tilted his chin, offering himself. "I hope so."

Shon growled something in another language, let go of Augie's wrists, and pushed Augie's sweats to the floor. He grabbed Augie's ass and lifted him until his legs were around Shon's waist. He pushed Augie against the wide, wooden pole set in concrete which anchored the center of the tent. Augie was naked, the cool slide of the pole pressing into his spine. Shon kept one hand on Augie's ass, balancing him against the pole, and used his other hand to frantically undo the button on his pants and push his fatigues off his hips. They caught on Shon's muscled thighs, his legs spread wide. Shon's cock fell heavily into the crease between Augie's hip and thigh. Shon returned his other hand to Augie's ass and thrust against him, rutting together as Augie fumbled with the buttons of Shon's uniform shirt.

"Pocket," Shon ground out and tipped his head to the left breast of his shirt. Augie felt the telltale bulge through the thick cloth.

"This standard issue for the Tanzania military?"

"I'm private security now."

"I heard. My badass Maasai has gone corporate."

Shon laughed, lowered his head, and sucked at Augie's neck. Augie let out a low moan and rolled his head back against the pole. Shon's lips kissed under Augie's ear, pulling his earlobe into his mouth, his breath warm against the slight chill of the breeze. The glint in Shon's eyes

was mischievous. "I still fuck like a Maasai, like a lion. Agile. Powerful. A conqueror."

Augie rolled his eyes and laughed, trying to sputter out a reply equally awful, but he was distracted by the harsh snap of Shon's hips. He forced the two of them together, almost painfully. Augie popped the remaining buttons open and wrapped Shon in his arms, connecting them from groin to collarbone.

Shon hissed at the touch of skin. This had always been his favorite part of their nights together. The moment they were finally skin to skin, the dusting of dark blond hair on Augie's torso rubbing across Shon's bare chest. With nothing between them, their physical differences were striking, beautiful, electrifying.

Augie grabbed the lube and condom out of Shon's shirt pocket. He dripped the lube onto both of them, slicking Shon's thick length. Shon arched back, thrusting against Augie, pushing him back into the pole. Augie swept his thumb over the head of Shon's dick. Shon groaned, leaned in, and kissed at Augie's neck. He thrust into Augie's hand, wanting more, needing more of his smoothness and heat. With Augie's legs wrapped around Shon's waist, the word *dangerous* took on a whole new meaning. Shon could get lost in this man and had already fallen more than he knew Augie was ready to hear.

Augie continued to tease at Shon's slit, sliding his thumb around the head, running his hand from base to tip. Augie's hands were softer than Shon's—desk job, academics, hours of piano—and the last eight months had been torture every time Shon touched himself with his overly calloused hands. He would lie in bed and imagine the silken, sensual slide of Augie's palm against his flesh. Now that it was real, Shon's entire body responded to that hand. The curl of long, practiced fingers teased at his dick, a slow, agonizing build. The desire to prolong sex with Augie was so different than every other fast, hard fuck men expected a Maasai warrior to desire. No, with Augie it was more and had been from the first time.

He basked in the burn of his thighs, deliciously working to hold Augie against the pole, to balance his weight. Shon had dominance, but whether the other man knew it or not, Augie was the one with all the power. His hands, the twist of his wrist, his tongue flicking over Shon's nipple, his thighs squeezing tightly, possessively around Shon's waist. Shon was hyperaware of the way Augie moved his body, neither hesitant nor awkward like he was most of the time. Augie was unhinged, lost to bliss. His movements unintentional, uninhibited.

Shon had never seen anyone more beautiful.

Augie moaned, his arm around Shon's shoulders tightening, his head against Shon's chest as he watched his hand slide rhythmically up and down and bring them both to the edge. Shon shifted, balancing Augie on his thigh and intertwined their fingers. "Fuck," Augie hissed as Shon tightened his grip, fisting their cocks and hands together. Shon threw back his head and cried

out. He could feel his orgasm close. Too close, too fast.

"Stop," he ordered, moaning the word into Augie's ear. Shon struggled to hold himself back. He pulled Augie's hand away and put it over his other shoulder. He kissed at Augie's jaw, softly shifting him until they were face to face again, Augie's legs still wrapped tightly around his hips. Shon traced the lines of Augie's forehead, eyes—so blue and unnatural in this place—and thin, heart-shaped lips. He would never get enough of that face, of the humor, intelligence, and innocence in those eyes. He wanted to protect, savor, and worship it. Worship him. Shon locked eyes with Augie and smiled. He gave his cock one more twist before he rolled the condom on.

"Get ready."

Augie shivered.

Shon shifted their weight again and slid his hand under Augie and pressed his slicked fingers against Augie's hole. Augie closed his eyes and rolled his head back as he inhaled sharply.

"No. Look at me."

Augie immediately obeyed. He bit at his bottom lip, but he didn't flinch. Augie's ability to match Shon's intensity beat for beat had been unexpected; but it was so fucking hot. Shon worked one finger inside Augie and felt a spasm of pleasure as Augie arched into his touch.

"You should have called me," Shon chastised, pressing a second finger in.

Augie pushed back, trembled, but didn't look away. "I know. Next time I will." Augie's hands caressed the back of Shon's head, reassuring him.

Shon pushed in a third finger and brushed against Augie's prostate. Augie shouted and arched back against the pole, tightening his legs around Shon's waist.

Shon withdrew his fingers, lifted Augie by the ass, and positioned himself at his lover's entrance. Augie watched, flush with desire.

"No next time. I won't be apart from you again." Shon growled as he pushed inside Augie, fast and hard. Augie pulled Shon's mouth to his in a brutal clash of lips, teeth, and tongue.

Augie twisted Shon's nipples with deft fingers and pushed back into Shon. Intensity met intensity, rough and raw. Augie leaned back against the pole, using it as leverage to bury Shon even deeper inside him. He grabbed at Shon's hips and spurred him forward. Shon grit his teeth and angled up until he knew Augie could feel every inch of his harsh slide. They were breathless and sweating, the gleam of their skin intensified by the humid air in the tent.

Shon leaned back, close to gone, always so close when it was Augie. He drove inside Augie

harder and faster. He felt his balls tighten and knew it couldn't be much longer.

"Touch yourself," Shon ground out. Those smooth hands on his cock were one thing. Watching Augie touch himself was sinful.

Augie took his cock into his own hand, and his eyes fluttered closed, his own pleasure building out of control. Shon leaned further back, increasing the angle, and pulled Augie down the pole. Augie kept one hand on his cock working it with that maddening slow, soft slide as Shon drove into him. Augie reached back and wrapped his arm around the pole, bracing himself against Shon's powerful thrusts.

"Fuck. I'm close," Augie groaned.

Shon gripped Augie's ass mercilessly, thrusting their bodies together. Shon waited for the clench of Augie's body and watched hungrily as Augie's come shot across his chest in thick ropes. Augie threw back his head with a strangled cry. The come dripped down Augie's stomach and onto Shon's cock as he pounded inside, so close.

Augie's hand moved from his softening cock. He dipped a finger into his come and put it to Shon's lips. Shon licked at Augie's finger, sucking it in, twisting his tongue until it was clean. The taste of Augie sliding down his throat was all he needed to push himself over the edge. He thrust one more time and came hard, a guttural growl echoing off the tent walls.

Augie leaned against the pole, his body spent, his mind blank of everything besides Shon. His Shon. He couldn't remember why he'd worried if Shon would want him. Every time with Shon had been this bone-melting, this soul scorching. It didn't matter if it was the first time or the thousandth, this kind of intensity didn't happen by chance. He'd been with enough men to know as much.

Shon's skin glistened; his muscles shook and strained under Augie's body. Augie held on tight to the pole, holding off some of his weight. Shon was grinning—wide, open, flushed, excited—like a fucking god of debauchery. Augie grinned back. Shon lifted him, slipped out, and tossed the condom with one hand. He pulled Augie into a bear hug and tumbled them onto the cot.

"Tell me that you missed me." The plea came out as almost a whisper, Shon's shoulders still heaving as he caught his breath.

"I really fucking missed you, Shon."

Shon chuckled and snuggled against Augie's side. "You need to get cleaned up, or we're going to get stuck together."

Augie's eyes gleamed. "Too late!" He rolled over and lay on top of Shon smearing his come between the two of them. Shon laughed and playfully tried to push Augie away.

"Alright, alright. Let me clean us up."

Shon slipped out of bed gracefully, every movement fluid. He wet a cloth under the sink and came back over to Augie's side. Shon took his time, trailing kisses after each swipe of the cool cloth. Every nerve in Augie's body was over stimulated and tuned to respond to Shon's touch. He grabbed Shon's face and brought him down for a sloppy kiss, "I can't believe I'm here."

"In the Serengeti or with me?"

Augie's eyebrows shot up in mock surprise. "We're in the Serengeti?"

Shon swatted at Augie's shoulder, threw the cloth back into the sink, and rolled back onto the cot, curling into Augie. Shon played lazily with Augie's chest hair as they drifted in and out of sleep.

"How long before they come looking for us?"

"Could be awhile. The Serengeti is a big place."

"Where the land goes on forever."

Shon nodded. "In Maasai, yes, that's what Serengeti means."

In the distance Augie heard more of the lowing which had woken him that morning. This time the call was quieter, almost a question or a test.

"Shon? I think we scared the water buffaloes."

Shon snickered and draped his leg over Augie. Augie kissed the top of Shon's head, closed his eyes—sated and happy for the first time in months—and fell asleep.

THE END

DEDICATION

To my ladies. For being unexpected, brash, vulgar, and the kindest women I know.

ABOUT S.A. MCAULEY

Sam sleeps little, reads a lot. Happiest in a foreign country. Twitchy when not mentally in motion. Send her a picture and a song, and she's bound to write a story about it. And yes, that's an invitation.

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MM ROMANCE GROUP "LOVE IS ALWAYS WRITE" AUTHOR PROMPT

Dear Author,

I'd dreamed of the Serengeti for years, the wind in the trees, the smell of the dust, the quiet. A place where animals still belong, and we are the visitors. I had a Jeep full of food, water purification gear and a solar charger for my laptop. Six months, and I'd have the data for my dissertation. And then I'd have to go back.

First night in camp, I heard the lions prowling around, investigating the tires on the Jeep. Next morning, he was there, cooking a small pot of stew over a fire, dark skin warm as cocoa against the forest green of his uniform.



genre: contemporary

tags: college, scientist, hot Maasai warrior, security/guard, gravity defying sex, interracial, reunited, coworker, conservation is sexy

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S.A. McAuley
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