

Basil tried not to yawn.

It was hard for her to stay awake so long these days. In the past, all-nighters were a common occurrence for her. Taking late shifts, chugging down as much coffee as she could handle, and getting a headache over forms and paperwork was something she used to love.

But... doing so much of that takes its toll. Usually, she'd just have to knock out for a week or so - divert work to all her other employees as she took her allotted sick days off just sleeping in bed. As working through the night became more and more of a habit, however, she began to realize that she wasn't as good at it as before. She caught herself feeling groggy at her desk sometimes - even nodding off a little before snapping out of it. The day an employee actually walked in on her sleeping and drooling over important papers was the day she decided that she'd quit while she was ahead - only early morning meetings from now on, thank you.

When Hops suggested a stakeout... Basil had told her that she wasn't the best bun for that sort of thing. But Hops insisted that she couldn't do it alone, implying... well, that nobody else was up for the job.

The strange feeling she had whenever she saw Hops wasn't going away, either. The one that told her she had to help her - keep her safe, even. What did that even mean? She wasn't the type for silly bunny-love crushes. She was a grown businesswoman. She didn't have time for those.

It didn't stop her from feeling strange when Hops clenched her fists together, huffed, and announced with such seriousness that they were going to do this themselves, damn it. She figured that anyone would, though. It was extremely normal to feel this way around Hops, who was generally known for people enjoying her company.

...She had to focus.

Hops had already... well, hopped to it. She was currently burrowing beneath the camouflage covers - in her bun form, at that. Clever. Since that form's smaller than a

doll form, it would be easier to hide while in that state. Basil began to focus - summoning up her shapeshifting powers - and felt herself relax into that form as well.

“Okay, our plan is simple,” Hops whispered, holding up the makeshift, almost blanket fort-like camo tarp. “We stay here, watching for whatever it is— you keep ahold of the binoculars, and I’ll be in charge of the net. When you see it, nudge my arm, and I’ll run up there and get it!”

“...Could I make some suggestions?” Basil whispered, gritting her teeth only a little. As much as she liked Hops... that plan was pretty bare-bones.

“Yes, of course— why else would I have you here?” She asked, tilting her head. “I can’t think of anything wrong with my plan, though...”

“It’s just a little... simple?” Basil waved a hoof. “It doesn’t really think ahead too far aside from... ‘get whatever’s eating the plants.’”

“Right. Occam’s Razor.” Hops said, gesturing. “The simplest solution is the best one.”

“Not... how that works,” Basil said. Where would she even start with this? “I just think that it might put you in a lot of danger to leap out on your own. I think that we should both be involved in the plan of attack— maybe I could rush out at one angle to distract it, so you can catch up behind it?”

“Hmmm...” Hops nodded. It looked like she was deep in thought. “That might work... I’ll keep it in mind. But I still think my plan was already pretty good.”

“Right.” Basil sighed. It was probably best not to argue too much right now - Hops was clearly not fully coherent right now.

As they waited in silence, Basil couldn’t help but notice how... quiet it was here. Most buns would find it terrifying - the dark creep of nighttime as the casino’s lights turned off, and the glowing mushrooms began to dim. The way the soft breeze made the remaining hazeblooms sway in the wind. The eerie sound of nighttime imps - chiorps chittering, inkaps humming.

But to Basil... all it made her do was yawn. Uh-oh. She was getting tired.

“Hey, Hops...?”

“Hmm?”

Hops looked up from the plain dango she was chewing on. Basil tried not to think about how she wanted to reach over and wipe away a small bit that was stuck to her upper lip.

“I think... wouldn't it be best if we watched in shifts?” She stifled another yawn. “That way, we'll both be fully energized when we confront this thing, instead of... both sleepy...”

She tried her best to blink her eyes open. It was getting hard. But instead of the absolute refusal of rest she was expecting... Hops patted her as she helped her lay down.

“That's a good idea,” Hops whispered. “You get some sleep. I'll wake you up in an hour— or if we find that thing. Okay?”

Basil didn't have the mental energy to do anything besides melt. She curled up - the grass beneath them was so soft, she was worried it would have been prickly. And the camo tarp made a surprisingly good blanket... even Hops' gentle presence helped make her feel safe.

“Sounds good... mmn... g'night, Hops...” She mumbled, closing her eyes and leaving her companion in wait for the beast.