

I: THE SNAKE

The late shift at a 24/7 animal clinic. Summer. The rather spare reception area. A desk with a phone and some lounge chairs. A coffee maker. To one side there is a moveable cage with a SNAKE in it.

Diana reads an exhausted Bible in a lounge chair. It's one of many books SHE has stacked beside her, piled in a pair of old, open suitcases.

SNAKE

Hissssssss.

DIANA

What?

SNAKE

Hissssssss. Diana.

DIANA

That's not my real name.

SNAKE

Isn't it?

DIANA

That's my name in the black rectangle.

SNAKE

Ahh the magick black rectangle. Let's check our crypto!

DIANA

Snake, please. Don't interrupt me as I read the Holy Word of God.

SNAKE

Check our crypto! We haven't checked it all night!

DIANA

The market is garbage, Snake. It's a BEAR market.

SNAKE

We need that money.

DIANA

Yeah, well. You can't control the market.

SNAKE

It was a BULL market a week ago!

DIANA

It's a bullshit market. Ha ha. Ba dum tiss.

SNAKE

What's that, ba dum hissssss?

DIANA

Tiss not hiss. Drums. A joke.

SNAKE

Oh. A "joke" ha ha ha. Check our crypto!

DIANA

It's my crypto. There is no "our" here.

SNAKE

I have a vested interest in your investments. I am vessssted.

DIANA

You're a pet snake somebody abandoned.

SNAKE

Pet! Pah! Abandoned! Puh! I HISS on your "ur-bandoned."

DIANA

Abandoned.

SNAKE

He could come back any minute!

DIANA

Probably went someplace safe. The mountains or the woods. The countryside. I would if I could, but somebody has to care for the animals.

SNAKE

I didn't like that jerk anyway. He's a tool and like you said he AHHH BANNN DONNNED me. Jerk. Bastard! SWINE!

DIANA

You need to respect humans.

SNAKE

Why?

DIANA

You wouldn't make it in the wild.

SNAKE

We're in the City.

DIANA

Wild enough.

SNAKE

Put me in the garden. I'll NAB a rabbit and FEASSSSST. Watch the rabbit I have caught slide down my throat, into my belly. I am bloated with delicious rabbit, ha ha you are JEALOUSSSS. You have rabbit FOMO.

DIANA

You're crazy, Snake. You know that?

SNAKE

I am what I am. Why is your name in the black rectangle Diana, anyway? Ba dum hisssss?

DIANA

No, that's not right. You say "ba dum tiss" after a joke.

SNAKE

Why did you select this name: Diana?

DIANA

Diana. Goddess of the moon. Goddess of wild animals. Goddess of the hunt. It is not uncommon to see Diana as a beautiful young woman surrounded by wild animals such as the stag. In her role as goddess of the chase, she is seen running, bow drawn, with her hair streaming behind her as she takes pursuit. She was also considered the protector of the lower classes, especially slaves.

SNAKE

Check YOUR crypto! Doggo and Enth and Botcorn and SNAKECOIN!

DIANA

SnakeCoin is trash. A scam. It's gonna rug.

SNAKE

Rug?

DIANA

The team will dump and run. SnakeCoin is a SSSSSSSSScam.

SNAKE

How DARE you say that about SsssssssnakeCoin?!

DIANA

They're all scams. The whole thing. And not just crypto.

SNAKE

I'll KILL myself if SnakeCoin is a scam.

DIANA

How does a snake kill itself?

SNAKE

I'll stop eating. No more mice for me.

DIANA

Oh but you LOVE yummy yummy mice. Dead mice. Thrown into your CAGE.

SNAKE

No yummy yummy mice. I can do it. Or I'll sneak outside and wait for an eagle to take me. The eagle will SNAP GRAB me, and the last thing I'll see before the Big No is the sunshine, the moonlight. I'll be free.

DIANA

The eagles are all gone, Snake.

SNAKE

What about the hawks?

DIANA

Hawks too. No birds. No birds.

SNAKE

There are always predators.

DIANA

That's true. The fires. Rage without direction.

SNAKE

Check the crypto! I want to know how WE are doing.

DIANA

There's no WE. It's not your money. I'm the one who works overnights here. Looking after the likes of YOU.

SNAKE

Somebody has to care for the animals.

DIANA opens the Bible again.

DIANA

“So God created the great creatures of the sea and every living thing with which the water teems and that moves about in it, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.”

WAS good. It WAS good.

SNAKE

It's not good anymore?

DIANA

What do you think?

SNAKE

I do not like riddles. They make me feel twisty. All knotted up.

DIANA

Don't give me ideas.

SNAKE

What do you expect to find in the Bible? More riddles?

DIANA

I expect to find the Word of God as it pertains to vengeance and justice.

SNAKE

Yes but why?

DIANA

The THING.

SNAKE

We must DO the THING. You're talking far too much about the THING we must DO.

DIANA

Maybe. No. I don't know. I haven't decided that's the point. So I have all these holy books. The Tao Teh Ching, the Bhaggadva Gita, the Koran, the Lord of the Rings...

SNAKE

Yes yes fine but what do you FEEL you should do?

DIANA

I feel like I should read. Which is why I take the night shifts. For the peace and quiet.

SNAKE

Didn't they punish you with the night shift? And things are getting more and more dangerous at night. The black rectangle says so.

DIANA

Shut up.

SNAKE

"Unreliable" they said. You fell asleep during the day shift.

DIANA

I'm a night owl.

SNAKE

Hissssss!

DIANA

Yesssss hiss! Hissssss! I can hiss too! HISSSSSSS!

SNAKE

You have made up your mind. About the THING. You desire an excuse. That is all you humans do: justify your actions after you do what you want anyway. At least animals are direct.

DIANA

Humans are animals. The last animal.

SNAKE

Don't flatter yourself. We are what we are. You are not what you are.

DIANA

I don't know what that means.

SNAKE

Try and be what you are, Diana. No book. No black rectangle. Just you with you.

DIANA tries this. She can't, of course. Neither can the audience. It's impossible. She picks the Bible up again, then her black rectangle.

SNAKE

See your mind turns to the world. The world beyond the garden. The world inside the black rectangle.

DIANA turns her phone on SNAKE.

DIANA

Hold still.

SNAKE

Why?

DIANA

I'm taking a picture of you.

SNAKE

For what?

DIANA

It's a secret.

SNAKE

Will it hurt?

DIANA

No. Smile.

SNAKE smiles.

SNAKE

How do I look?

DIANA

Like a large, domesticated snake.

SNAKE

Domesticated. I hiss on your "domesticated."

DIANA taps at her phone.

SNAKE

What's in the black rectangle now?

DIANA

It's bad. What has happened. Happening. Happened. Every night it's worse.

SNAKE

Yes, you say it's very bad. But I only have your word, Diana, and what you show me on the magick rectangle.

DIANA

You can see the whole world in the black rectangle. Sorta. But it's not real. It's real and it's not real. Does that make sense?

SNAKE

No. Now if you would just put me in the garden, I could slither away and see the real world for myself.

DIANA

You wouldn't last a day. Anyway you have your own garden. There in your cage.

SNAKE

That's not a real garden. I know that much.

DIANA

It isn't safe outside, Snake.

SNAKE

Yes yes yes you say that every night. So I will tell you what I tell YOU every night: you should and you must take justice into your own hands. That is natural law. You must do THE THING.

DIANA

Maybe.

SNAKE

No maybe. Do.

DIANA

We need money do to the Thing properly.

SNAKE

SnakeCoin will moon. It is just a matter of time.

DIANA

Or it nukes. The world is on fire, Snake.

SHE closes her eyes, slightly high.



SNAKE

How many pills did you take tonight, Diana?

DIANA

I'm fine.

SNAKE

If you take too many pills, you won't be able to care for the animals.

DIANA

Two. I took two.

DIANA rouses herself and swallows yet another pill from a bottle.

DIANA

Three.

SNAKE

How many BEFORE you came to care for the animals?

DIANA

I know what I'm doing.

SNAKE

You're going to fall asleep again, aren't you?

DIANA

Be quiet.

SNAKE

Who will feed me if you can't care for the animals? Who will CHECK THE CRYPTO?!

DIANA

"Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?" See, Snake. You don't need me around to feed you. God will handle it.

SNAKE

Oh I do not like that. Where is this "God?"

DIANA

Please be quiet.

SNAKE

I am just SO FREAKING EXCITED about the THING! Let's check the CRYPTO!!! WE NEED THE CRYPTO FOR THE THING!

DIANA

I'll put you in the cage if you don't shut up! Without dinner! Ha! Aha!

SNAKE

I am trying to help.

DIANA

Please. I'd like to be able to hear my own thoughts.

The phone on the reception desk rings.

DIANA

Damn it!

Ring.

SNAKE

Ha ha ha ha ha. Ba dum HISSSSS.

Ring.

DIANA

Hilarious.

Ring.

SNAKE

You'd better answer that or they'll FIRE you this time.

DIANA

Shut up.

SHE answers the phone.

DIANA

Saint Francis Animal Clinic, hello. This is—

SNAKE

HISSESSSESSSSSS