



Vanessa had no idea how long she had walked or when she had lost her boots, turning her feet into an offer to the rough grass, sharp sticks and gritty ground. Her broken nails were mindlessly scratching her itchy neck, now an easy feast for the mosquitoes hunting any visible flesh and leaving huge swollen bites across her skin.

And somewhere in her mind she was sure the midday should be long gone now, but the strong sun still seemed to be directly under her head.

Swallowing her own saliva over and over was not doing anything to help her dry throat and lips, overflowing her mind with thoughts of trading her soul for a drop of water and erasing thoughts of Mirella, ladybugs and disfigured corpses. Perhaps, running away from that water stream would turn out to be a foolish decision, and possibly her very last one.

*"Dry..."*

There was no room for a single thought in her mind except the insidious, maddening, endless thirst.

*"... so fucking dry..."*

Every heavy step felt like an inescapable march towards a dire crashout, but suddenly the glimmer of a tiny star seemed to flicker among the bushes ahead, pulling a shred of her mind back from a hopeless fog.

Vanessa halted in disbelief, forcing herself to focus on the blurred sight despite her wobbly body, seeing the sparkle reappearing in the distance as a miraculous beacon.

Whatever it was an illusion of her dehydrated brain or not, the translucent liquid trickling in the distance fired up all her senses again. It looked like a blessed oasis in the shape of a flower, bearing a sliver of hope beyond the stiff hell.

Therefore, Vanessa walked in a beeline towards the miracle, uncaring about any possible peril. At this point, any price to alleviate her burning throat was worth paying.

Getting closer, the star of the oasis turned out to be not a flower, but a huge, bright green leaf with cristaline water pooling inside and delicate droplets hanging from its tip. Without questioning a single thing, Vanessa found herself crawling towards the leaf with bulged eyes, panting loud with cracking lips slightly open.

After what felt like an eternity, Vanessa confirmed the oasis was real with a generous lap of her tongue claiming all the water from the leaf, instantly refreshing her dry lips and mouth. Even the texture was pleasant and tickeling to her tongue.