

Amongst Strangers

Chapter 1: Awakening

Larathe gave a quiet groan. His head felt like it was about to burst. As the wolf gradually became aware of his surroundings, he noticed a strange soft surface beneath him, almost as though he had been suspended mid-air. He opened his eyes, squinting up at the roof. He had expected to find the afternoon sky, not this strange wooden hut. His mind raced as he watched a lone spider crawl along the wooden slats of the ceiling.

The wolf frowned slightly as the memories came flooding back. He had been running from a human what felt like only moments ago. That's right! He had been running across that field when he had heard that terrifying BANG, then...nothing. He felt a sudden, searing pain in his side and let out a pained groan, moving to clamp his paws over the spot only to find himself restrained.

"Ah, so you're awake."

The wolf looked over to the speaker, giving the human an angry growl, his jaw clenched against the pain, struggling to get free of the metal bands clamped around his body.

"Whoa, take it easy! You'll open your wounds again if you struggle around like that." Lance said.

Larathe struggled against the restraints for a moment longer, eventually settling down.

"You're lucky we found you when we did...you'd be dead otherwise."

The wolf huffed irritably. "You want a thank you or something?" He snarled.

"You talk...?" Lance asked, surprised. "I didn't know you could talk!"

"Yes I talk you nimrod," Larathe growled. "The hell do you think I am?"

"Uh..."

"Go figure..." The wolf grumbled. "What do you want?"

"Well...I was hoping to examine you, personally..."

"Welp, you've seen me. Now let me go."

"Yeah, and you'll kill me soon as you're out."

"I intend on leaving but if you'd rather I kill you, I can do that too."

"Some thanks I get for saving your life." Lance grumbled.

"Better dead than here." Larathe huffed.

The man sighed. "I think we may be getting off on the wrong foot here." He said. "Or...paw, in your case."

"Phrase is still the same, human."

"Right," Lance said. "I'll make you a deal."

"Let me guess, you let me go and I stay around or you kill me?" The wolf asked, his voice dripping with sarcasm.

"What? No," Lance replied, sounding rather offended. "I'll let you go if you won't kill me, but yes...I would advise you to stay indoors for a while. At least until you heal fully. Otherwise, I'd rather keep you bound."

Larathe stared at the human for some time before sighing. "Not like I have much of a choice in the matter huh?" he asked, waiting for several moments for an answer. Receiving none, he sighed. "Fine, I won't kill you. Now let me go."

The man shrugged. "You go back on your word and you'll end up with a bullet in your skull, understood?" He asked.

"Yeah, I get it...", The wolf muttered.

"Stay put until I get you out...and no sudden moves," Lance said, moving to the side of the bed.

"It's not like I can move," Larathe shot back.

"Can you just wait until I say you can get up?" Lance asked, removing one of the cuffs, his hand resting on the pistol at his side. "Please?" He added.

"Yeah, yeah..."

It didn't take long for Lance to remove the cuffs, taking a step back from the bed as the wolf lay there, staring at him like some obedient pup. "Alright, you can get up," Lance said. "But carefully," he warned as the wolf made to sit upright. "I don't want to have to stitch you back up."

Larathe winced, clamping a paw over his side as he slid out of the bed and onto the ground. "Aghh, fucking hell..." He cried, dropping to a crouch.

"Easy, don't move too quickly," Lance said. "I've some painkillers if you want them," he offered.

"Pain what?" the wolf asked, gritting his teeth.

"Killers."

"Sounds dangerous."

"It's just some acetaminophen and codine."

Larathe simply stared at the man, giving him a blank look.

"Uh, they dull the pain. Make it so it doesn't hurt as much," he said, trying to explain it without all the medical jargon.

"So, it's kind of like St. Johns Wort?"

"Better," the man said. "It takes a while to work, but it does a better job. You'll be able to walk around a little easier if you want to take some."

"How do I know that you're not trying to poison me?"

The human sighed. "Fine," he grumbled. "Stay there, I'll be back in a bit."

The wolf set himself into a sitting position, keeping pressure over the stitches, his jaw clenched against the pain. He heard a door open, followed by some rattling noises. Shortly after, the human returned holding a tall cup of water and a white, cylindrical object in his hand.

"I'll take one and you can take one, okay? They won't hurt you unless you take more than four or five."

The wolf raised a brow but nodded. If this pain would stop, then maybe it would be worth it.

"I'll warn you now, the meds might make you a little drowsy," Lance said, setting the cup on the table and taking a pill out of the bottle. "Here."

"You first," the wolf replied.

"You really don't trust anyone, do you?" Lance asked, picking up the water.

"You almost killed me and you expect me to trust you?"

"Okay, first off that wasn't me. I didn't fire a single round today," He said, popping the pill into his mouth and taking a gulp of water. "Don't bite it, it's really bitter."

"Generally that's a sign to not ingest it...," the canine said, frowning.

"It's fine, it'll help." Lance said, placing a second pill in front of the wolf. "Besides, I don't have a gun that can shoot the kind of bullet I extracted from you."

The wolf frowned. "There's different bullets?" He asked, taking the cup in a paw. He tilted his head back, dropping the pill into his muzzle and brought the cup to his lips. The wolf sputtered slightly as the water splashed into his face and onto his lap. "What the hell?" he asked, after he had swallowed what little water he had managed to get into his muzzle.

Lance covered his mouth, trying to keep himself from laughing.

"What's so funny?" the wolf asked, brushing water from his fur. "How do you drink from this thing?"

The man snickered, smiling broadly as he spoke. "Hehe, don't you have cups?" He asked.

The wolf frowned. "What? I have a waterskin, not some...weirdly shaped bowl."

"Well as long as you got that pill down it'll do its job." Lance said.

The wolf stared at the cup for a moment before lapping at the water instead. "So what do I call you?" he asked.

"My name's Lance. Let me know if you need anything, okay?" he asked, standing up. "I've got a few things to take care of."

"Thanks...I'm called Larathe."

The wolf sat for some time drinking what he could reach, staring curiously at the water at the bottom. He slipped his muzzle into the cup to get at the liquid and frowned, the cup having secured itself over his nose. "The hell...?" he grumbled, his voice sounding rather hollow and muffled through the plastic.

Lance looked over and burst out laughing as the wolf glanced up, the cup secured to the front of his face. "We might need to find something that works better," the man said as the wolf glared at him.

Larathe pulled the cup from his muzzle, huffing at it irritably. "You humans are so strange..."

The man simply chuckled, returning his attention to the oven. This would be quite interesting indeed.