

Chapter 44

The Accident

Michael walked outside and approached Mr. Wiley. Mr. Wiley, who had heard the door open, turned toward Michael and noticed the way he was walking. It was the walk of someone who had been figuratively slapped square in the face and gut-punched at the same time.

When Michael reached him, Mr. Wiley said, “Are you leaving early, Mr. Thomson, and without Miss Fuchs?”

“Yes, sir, Mr. Wiley. She decided to stay and suggested I go ahead and leave.” Michael lied.

“I see, sir. Shall I have your automobile brought up, sir?”

Michael looked across the driveway and said, “That’s all right, Mr. Wiley. It’s the first car in the block right across from us.”

“As you wish, sir. Have a nice evening.”

Michael forced a smile onto his face and said, “I’ll do my best, Mr. Wiley.” However, he thought, “But I’ll fail miserably.”

Michael crossed the driveway, got into his car, cranked it, and drove away. He never gunned his engine, never raced down the driveway, and, most importantly, never looked back. If he had, he would’ve seen something that would’ve made him stop, turn around, and return to the Reynard mansion because, just as he reached the highway and before he turned onto it, Amanda walked out of the mansion and started looking around for him. But, because he never saw this, when he reached the highway, he turned right and headed toward his apartment.

As he drove along, he felt tears burning in his eyes as he thought, “I can’t believe this. I thought Amanda was different. She actually had me fooled into believing she really loved me. But, just like all the other girls I cared about, she was just using me.”

As he finished this thought, he heard a familiar voice inside his head saying, “I told you this would happen, didn’t I?”

“Shut up. Nobody rattled your cage.” Michael thought.

Michael heard a soft, friendly voice saying, “Why did you leave, Michael?”

“You know why. She was using me. I thought she was different from the other girls I used to know.”

“Michael, you know better than that. How many times did she tell you how much she loved you and how happy she was to be with you? Did she ever miss an opportunity to tell you that? Do you really believe that the first night in Jaguarville when she literally cried because she wanted to sleep with you was faked? Do you really believe that the happiness she expressed when you allowed her to sleep with you was faked? Do you really think she was lying to you all those times?”

Michael’s response was slow in coming as he realized he should have given Amanda a chance to explain. Slowly, he said, “I’ve lost count of how many times.”

“Exactly, Michael. Didn’t you see the look on her face when that Reginald guy asked to cut in? Did that look like the look of someone happy to be away from you and with someone else? Did it?”

“No,” Michael said, softly.

“You need to go back and see if she’ll forgive your actions and let you take her home.”

“You’re right. I’m a fool for getting upset so quickly and easily. I’ll go back and see if she’ll let me take her home. I’ll apologize profusely. Maybe she’ll forgive me.”

The first voice said, “She won’t. You know she won’t. You’ve managed to anger and upset her.”

The second voice said, “Keep out of this. All you’re doing is making him feel worse than he needs to feel.”

“Michael, I’m sure she’ll forgive you because she loves you. Now, get your butt into gear and get back there.”

After doing a mental salute, he said, “Yes, sir.”

Michael turned his car around and headed back to the Reynard Estate. He pulled into the driveway and headed straight toward the front door. When he arrived, he was greeted by Mr. Wiley. “Mr. Wiley,” he said, “Would it be all right if I leave my car here while I go and get Amanda?”

“It would be, if she was still here.”

“What do you mean?”

“The master called for his limousine and he took her home.”

“Damn.” Michael said, dejectedly. “How long ago?”

“About five minutes, sir.”

“Well, I guess I’m going to have to call her in the morning and beg her to forgive me for leaving her here.”

“I believe she will, sir.”

“I hope so.”

“Sir, you left too early. You missed the excitement.”

“What excitement?”

“I didn’t see it myself, but, Mr. Bruin, the Crier, said that, after announcing his engagement to Miss Fuchs, the Master grabbed her and forced a rather passionate kiss on her. After she managed to push him away, she wound up, hit him with a haymaker punch, and knocked him out. Everyone was so stunned that the only two people moving were Miss Fuchs and her mother.”

Michael noted a touch of glee in Mr. Wiley’s voice as he described the goings on. “Mr. Wiley,” he said, “You don’t seem to be too upset that Mr. Reynard got knocked out.”

Conspiratorially, Mr. Wiley replied, “No one here likes him even a little bit, sir. He’s little more than a spoiled brat who’s used to getting what he wants and he doesn’t care who gets hurt. He’s so different from his parents you’d think that he was adopted. Mr. Reynard, II, acts nothing like his father. Mr. Reynard, II, is as nice as he can be while, Mr. Reynard, I, and Mr. Reynard, III, act alike.”

“Thank you, Mr. Wiley. I don’t know if I’ll ever see you again but, it was a pleasure meeting you.” Michael, who had never exited his car, offered Mr. Wiley his hand and, after shaking Mr. Wiley’s hand, drove off into the night.

Michael returned to the highway and headed home. As he neared his home, he noticed flashing lights about two miles up the road. It looked like they were between him and his

apartment complex. From the number of lights, he figured it was a pretty bad accident. Finally, about three blocks from the accident, he saw a police officer, a honey badger, with a flashlight motioning him to stop.

After stopping, Michael rolled down his window and asked, "What's wrong, Officer?"

"There's a very bad accident up there. You need to take the detour. Just follow the flashlights."

"How bad is the accident?"

"One dead, one severely injured, and two with relatively minor injuries."

"Thank you, Officer. Which way should I go?"

"Turn right. You'll see the flashlights. Stay in the left lane, if you need to return to this road. The officers will direct you where you need to turn."

"Thank you, ma'am."

As he drove along, Michael heard the voices again. The first voice said, "Well Michael, the accident I warned you about occurred. That animal that I warned you to not fall in love with had died. She would have continued living but you wouldn't listen to me."

The second voice spoke up and said, "Don't listen to that tripe, Michael. He knows as well as I do that we can't see the future any better than you can. The best we can do is postulate on a possible outcome as a result of events that happen within the boundaries of our knowledge. Yes, we told you about the accident but all we can do is guess what will happen as a result of the accident. The police officer told you that one person was killed in the accident, one was severely injured, and two had minor injuries but, that is all he said."

"Don't listen to that ray of sunshine, Michael. I know what I'm talking about."

Michael's fear, frustration, and anger could be felt when he said, "Shut up, both of you. That is the road Amanda and I used to go to the party and it's the road we would have taken to go home. I only hope that it wasn't her in the accident."

"You'll find out Monday when you arrive at work and you're told that your little bestiality partner won't ever arrive at work again."

"SHUT . . . THE . . . HELL . . . UP!" Both of the voices got quiet. "Both of you are nothing more than my conscience, bad and good. You aren't going to talk me into or out of doing or not doing anything. Both of you know I've already made up my mind about my relationship with Amanda. Unless, and until, I hear otherwise, Amanda is fine and will call me tomorrow morning and explain to me what's going on with this Reginald Reynard, III. So, until I hear something about her, I'm not going to worry. Got it!" Michael didn't hear a thing.

“Good.”

About fifteen minutes later, Michael returned to the road he was originally on and headed home. He arrived at home twenty minutes after that. He went to his bedroom and got ready for bed. As he sat down on his bed, his new roommates, two little balls of fluff, one solid black and one solid white, joined him (1), climbed into his lap, and started purring loud enough to drown out a freight train. Michael scratched both heads absentmindedly as he thought about the events of earlier in the evening. He was still saddened by the thought that another man claimed to be Amanda’s fiancé but, remembering the look on Ophelia’s face, he realized that the announcement had to be as much of a shock to Amanda as it was to him. He’d clear it up tomorrow when he called her. Finally, after thinking for about five minutes, he moved the kittens to their normal sleeping places, got into bed, and fell asleep.

About 30 minutes after falling asleep, the telephone rang and woke Michael up. Although he was half-asleep, his first thought was that Amanda was calling him to explain what was going on. “Hello Amanda.” He said after he picked up the receiver.

He heard a female voice that definitely wasn’t Amanda’s say, “Is this Michael Thomson?”

Now fully awake, Michael said, “Yes, ma’am.”

“Do you know an Amanda Fuchs?”

“Uh . . . yes. She’s my fian . . . co-worker.”

“Good. Sir, we need you to come to Piedmont Regional Medical Center as soon as possible.”

“Why?”

“We’ll explain when you arrive. When you arrive, ask for Dr. Macaca.”

“Piedmont Regional Medical Center is about 10 minutes away from here. It’ll take me about 10 minutes to get dressed. Give me 30 minutes and I’ll be there.”

“That’s fine, sir but, get here as soon as possible.”

“Yes, ma’am.”

Scaring the kittens, Michael bounded out of bed and quickly dressed. The whole time he was thinking, “Did that accident really involve Amanda somehow? How did they get my telephone number? Why did they call me and not her parents? God! I hope there’s nothing wrong.”

As Michael quickly dressed, the kittens overcame her initial fear and returned to the bed. They sat down and watched Michael’s every move. As Michael was putting on his shoes, the kittens rubbed themselves along Michael’s side trying to get his attention.

Michael stopped long enough to scratch their heads before saying, “I’m sorry, Me-You and Buddy but, daddy’s got to go somewhere. I’ll be back as soon as I can.”

About 10 minutes after leaving his apartment, Michael arrived at Piedmont Regional Medical Center. He parked outside of the Emergency Room entrance and rushed inside. He approached the triage desk. The occupant of the desk was a young black-footed ferret. As Michael approached, the ferret looked up and acknowledged Michael’s approach.

“May I help you, sir.”

“Yes, ma’am. I’m Michael Thomson. About half-an-hour ago, I received a telephone call saying I needed to come here and speak with Dr. Macaca.”

The receptionist typed on her keyboard and looked at the computer screen. “Thomson. Is that like . . .”

“The gazelle. Yes, ma’am.” Michael replied, smiling.

“I guess you’ve heard that question before.” He said as he continued to look at the computer screen.

“Yep. Once or twice.”

“Ah. Here it is. Mr. Thomson, if you’ll have a seat, I’ll call Dr. Macaca.”

“Thank you.”

The ferret dialed an extension number and, after a couple of seconds, spoke. “Dr. Macaca, Mr. Thomson’s here.” After a short wait, he said, “Yes, sir. I’ll tell him.”

Getting Michael’s attention, the ferret said, “Mr. Thomson, Dr. Macaca will be right out

to speak with you.”

“Thank you.”

About 30 seconds later, a Rhesus macaque entered the Emergency Room and walked to Michael. Michael stood and waited for him to arrive. “You must be Dr. Macaca.” Michael said.

“That I am.” Dr. Macaca replied, smiling as he led Michael to his office. “And you must be Michael Thomson.”

“Yes, sir.”

After arriving at Dr. Macaca’s office, the doctor offered Michael a seat and sat behind his desk. After sitting, Dr. Macaca said, “I won’t ask you the question I’m sure you’ve heard all your life.”

“Actually, I’ve only heard that question for about a year.”

“Really? Why is that?”

“That’s about how long I’ve been awake.”

“What?” Dr. Macaca asked, incredulously. He thought for a few seconds before he said, “Wait a minute. You’re that Michael Thomson?”

“That’s me, the oldest living thing on Earth.

“Dr. Macaca, I don’t understand why the hospital called me instead of Amanda’s parents.”

“When we searched her belongings, we found found her Emergency Contact card. Your name was the only one on it. So, we called you.”

“She doesn’t have her parents on her Emergency Contact form?”

“No sir. Do you know who her parents are?”

“Yes sir. Jacob and Ophelia Fuchs.”

Dr. Macaca paused for several seconds before he said, “The Jacob Fuchs?”

“I don’t know about the Jacob Fuchs; I just know that that’s her father’s name.”

“All right, Mr. Thomson. Do you know their telephone number?”

“No sir. I’ve only known Amanda since she’s been living on her own so I never had a

need to call their home. Besides, her mother doesn't just dislike me; she doesn't just hate me; she flat out despises me."

"Why?"

"Because of how humans treated certain animal species 20,000 years ago, especially foxes."

Dr. Macaca laughed quietly before saying, "We'll find their telephone number and inform them. Just a moment."

Dr. Macaca dialed an extension number, waited a few seconds before saying, "Yes, Gina, please see if you can find the telephone number for Jacob Fuchs."

Dr. Macaca listened for a couple of seconds before saying, "I'm not sure. Just check the telephone directory and call each Jacob Fuchs until you find one who has a daughter named Amanda."

He listened for a couple more seconds before hanging up the telephone. He turned toward Michael and said, "All right, Mr. Thomson, Gina will call every Jacob Fuchs until he gets the correct one."

Dr. Macaca smiled and then got serious. "Michael, when we called you, you said you knew Miss Fuchs."

"Yes, sir. She's a co-worker."

"Mr. Thomson, she may be a co-worker but, I believe she's more than that to you."

"What do you mean?"

"I believe you two are engaged."

Laughing nervously, Michael said, "What? Why do you say that?"

Dr. Macaca pointed to Michael's wrist and said, "That's an engagement bracelet. Miss Fuchs is wearing its twin. That would explain why you're her Emergency Contact. When my wife and I became engaged we put each other on our Contact forms."

"I should do that, too."

"What can you tell me about Amanda?"

"Since you're her Emergency Contact, I can tell you anything you want to know."

"What happened to her?"

After glancing at at a clock on the wall, Dr. Macaca said, “About an hour before the hospital called you, a limousine in which Miss Fuchs was a passenger was struck by another vehicle operated by someone who was inebriated. This vehicle was traveling at an extremely high rate of speed and struck the limousine on the side in which Miss Fuchs was sitting.”

Michael’s heart sank and a look of shocked fear crossed his face. Fearfully, he said, “And?”

“The inebriated driver died at the scene.” Michael’s fear subsided somewhat and Dr. Macaca continued. “Miss Fuchs received severe injuries due to the fact that the offending vehicle struck the door she was sitting beside. The other two passengers, Mr. Reginald Reynard, III, and his chauffeur, received relatively minor injuries.”

Michael breathed a guarded sigh of relief. “How serious are her injuries?”

“Her tibia, fibula, femur, radius, ulna, humerus, clavicle, and all of the ribs on her right side were broken. Her fractured clavicle is a compound fracture. Two of her ribs punctured her right lung and one rib punctured her diaphragm, and lacerated her stomach and liver. She also has a fractured jaw but, there’s something odd about her fractured jaw.”

“What’s odd about it?”

“The injury that caused her fractured jaw occurred on the left side of her jaw. We can’t figure out how this happened.”

“Perhaps she was jostled about in the accident and struck her jaw on something.”

“That isn’t likely as she was wearing her safety harness when she was removed from the limousine.”

About this time, both men heard a loud female voice in the triage area. “Where’s my daughter!?”

Then, a calmer male voice said, “Ophelia, please calm down. This is a hospital. Please keep your voice down.”

“Jacob, I told you this would happen! I told you the dream warned me it would happen! It warned me that she would die in an automobile accident! But, you let her continue seeing that human!”

“Ophelia, her seeing Michael had nothing to do with this.”

Smiling slightly, Dr. Macaca looked at Michael and said, “I guess they got the correct Jacob Fuchs.”

Michael smiled and said, “How did you ever guess? I need a place to hide until I can get passed her.”

Dr. Macaca said, “Follow me.” He led Michael to an office directly across the hall from his and ushered Michael inside. “When you hear my office door close after I take them inside, you’ll be free to come out and go home. I’ll have you called as soon as the Fuchses leave. Mr. Fuchs is friendly toward you, right?”

“Yes, sir.”

“I’ll let him know that you’re the reason they know. Hopefully, he’ll convince his wife to accept it.”

“Is my face turning blue?”

Surprised at this question, Dr. Macaca could only smile before saying, “No. Why?”

“Then, I ain’t holding my breath.”

Dr. Macaca laughed, shook his head, and said, “Give me a couple of minutes before leaving.”

Dr. Macaca entered the triage area and Michael heard him say, “All right. Calm down. What’s wrong?”

Ophelia started to speak, “Where’s my . . .”

Jacob said, “Ophelia, please.” She calmed down and Jacob continued, “We received a telephone call asking us if we have a daughter named Amanda. When I said, ‘Yes’, I was told she had been involved in an automobile accident and we should come here immediately. What’s going on?”

“Come with me to my office and I’ll explain.”

1 – It may seem strange that Humanimals would have their feral cousins as pets but, not all animals alive back during the creation of the Humanimal race were used as donors for DNA to create the Humanimals. As a result, the descendants of these animals were still popular as pets and companions for humans and Humanimals alike. Pet stores are commonplace with the

descendants of ferals being bred specifically for the purpose of being pets and companions. Michael had been feeling a need of companionship at Amanda's suggestion, they went to a pet store and found the two that Michael adopted.