

Prologue

It was a bitterly cold dreary night; all was not well as a young mother rushed her five year old son through the streets in a quiet suburban neighborhood. Both were soaking wet with blood stained on their clothes as well as bullet holes piercing through the little boy's shirt. The mother was average height with an athletic pear shaped build. She had dark brown shoulder length hair, and she only wore a pair of black pajama bottoms with howling wolf decals all over, and a plain white tank top that exposed her midriff due to her large bust size.

The boy was tall for his age with a fairly athletic build like his mother. His hair was brown with a shaggy cut, which he wore matching pajamas. They stepped up to a two story house with a dim porch light flickering erratically. The mother pressed the doorbell while squeezing her son's hand trying her best to console him as she tried to keep her composure. There was no way she could hide the angry mournful look in her brown eyes. Her son stared up into the porch light with his unique green with an inner band of brown circumventing around his iris. He was dazed and traumatized, but most of all he was hungry.

A large tall blonde haired man dressed in a dark blue t-shirt with a large white Washington County sheriff badge logo on the center of his chest and a tan shorts answered the door almost immediately after she knocked as if he was expecting company over. He looked down and narrowed his hazel eyes at the mother, while the son hid behind her leg intimidated from his large imposing stature. The mother collapsed forcing the man to catch her as the boy watched his mother held her hands to her face sobbing. The man rubbed her back looking over at the boy with great concern noting that the boy's father was nowhere to be seen. The man looked into the mother's eyes confused, "What happened, Lilian? Where's Steele?" he asked although already knowing the answer. Lilian looked up at him not finding any words to say as she could not even bring herself to acknowledge it.

The man's wife walked out from the kitchen and touched her husband's shoulder. She was tall with an athletic rectangle shaped build and a dark skin complexion. She had black jawline length hair, and brown eyes. She wore a black t-shirt with text that said, "Native Pride" overlaid on a wolf howling at the moon and starry sky. Her skirt was black and cut diagonally ending at her knees on her right side and a foot up from her knee on her left side. "Bernie, let's bring them inside they must be tired. They've been missing for two days" she said looking down at the boy whose tummy was growling ferociously. She feigned a smile leaning forth to be closer to his eye level. "Are you hungry? Let me go fix you something right up" she asked sweetly. The boy did not respond only to bury his face into his mother's pant leg.

Bernie's wife turned and looked behind her at the bottom of the stairway as her five year old daughter watching quietly. Her daughter was tall for her age with a slightly athletic build with black shoulder length hair kept in a ponytail. Her skin complexion was like her mother, but she had her father's eyes. She wore white pajamas bottoms that had small various wildlife figures all over and an oversized white t-shirt that had a Portland Trail Blazer logo on it.

She looked up at her mother confused as her mother approached her. "Go back to bed, Zoe" she said while nudging her shoulder. Zoe slowly walked back upstairs but continued to look back as her

mother walked with her holding her hand. "If you are going to be up, help me get the towels" she said as she opened a closet in the hallway.

Zoe whimpered. "What's going on? Who are they mommy?" she asked.

Her mother pulled out a basket of clothes and rummaged through them. "...just do what I ask" she said pulling out clothes. Zoe walked back to the stairway watching Lilian bring her son inside the home, and Bernard headed over to the garage with his hands shoved in his pockets. She quickly ran down the hall as her mother walked down stairs with a set of clean clothes.

Lilian sat down on the couch humming a soothing tune while running her fingers through her son's hair as he laid his head on her lap. Bernie's wife sat down the clothes on the coffee table as Zoe arrived with the towels. "Don't you worry, you can stay here for a while" she said.

Bernie reemerged from the garage with a bottle of Dead Guy Ale and ripped off the cap. His wife and Lilian looked at Bernard in shock. "Bernie! You know we can't drink that..." his wife yelled.

"I don't care! I'll go after those scumbags even sober! One drink is all I need, Yvonne!" Bernard snapped taking another swig. Someone tapped on the back window, and Bernard swung the door open. "What do ya want!?" he screamed.

The shaggy man glanced over at Lilian and Toby in the background. "So the rumors are true" he muttered.

"He's dead!!" Bernard slurred as fell forward.

The shaggy man looked up at Bernard and caught him. "Are you drunk?" he asked before he pushed Bernard back into the house. He closed the door behind him as Barnard backed into the fridge.

"He was the best...friend...I ever had..." Bernard slurred once more before he slid down the refrigerator door with his head slumped.

The shaggy man looked up at Toby and smiled. "It's a good thing Toby is still alive...it's a dick move attacking a defenseless pup like that" he said before he sat down in a dining room chair.

Lilian looked down at the table. "I can't raise him alone..." she said before Yvonne touched her arm.

"It's okay...It takes a pack to raise a pup. We're all here to help" she said before she looked up at the shaggy man. "What are sort of rumors you've heard?" she asked.

The shaggy man leaned into the chair. "All I know is that the Gammas found Steele, and they could smell Lilian and Toby's blood at the scene. The den was burned down...Whatever the humans were looking for was more than just the Alpha. It's a good thing that the records and crap is stored in the underground and not the Alpha's den" he said.

Someone poked Toby, which Toby lifted an arm to see a black haired little girl no older than he was. "Hi, I'm Zoe! What's your name?"

Toby growled at her. "Lass mich in Ruhe! (Leave me alone!)" He muttered while snarling at her.

Zoe growled at him back. "Meanie!!" she yelled.

Yvonne looked over at Zoe and sighed. "Zoe, what are you doing out of bed?" she asked.

Zoe pointed at Toby. "Mommy, that boy is mean!" she whined.

Yvonne walked up to Zoe and knelt next to her. "Zoe...look at me" she said before she turned Zoe's face towards her. "...That boy is our Alpha's son" she said before she inched up to her ear. "His daddy just died, honey...don't be poking him like that" she whispered.

Zoe gasped then looked back at Toby shocked before she jumped onto the couch and sat next to him looking worried. "Is he okay?" she asked her mother.

Yvonne was about to speak before she was paralyzed knowing the reality of what her daughter and she herself wanted to hear would be different than the truth. She frowned as she started to tear up as she lost her resolve. "Just keep him company" she said.

Several days later, a mass funeral was held at lake with a huge snowcapped mountain in the background. Snow was everywhere and occasionally a glob of snow slid off a branch of the fir branch and plopped onto the ground. There were thousands of people huddled next to each other surrounding the picture of Steele on top of a collapsible table with candles lit. Toby was holding onto his mother's hand while holding onto a paper boat as well as his mother. Everyone looked at him and his mother with sadness. A brown headed woman, who was Toby's aunt, walked up to them and forced a smile. "We're getting ready to launch the boats" she said with a thick German accent.

Toby watched everybody light candles and shove the candles into the holes. The woman knelt down. "Now, when we light the candles we make a wish and your father may grant one of our wishes" she said.

Toby's eyes watered up. "Er ist nicht tot! (He's not dead!)" He yelled before he dropped the boat into the snow as he ran off.

Lilian reached for the boat before another woman grabbed it. "I'll light it for him...Steele would most surely grant his own son's wish" she said.

Lilian winced. "I'm afraid that for what Toby wishes for could never be granted" she said.

Toby's aunt sighed. "Knowing him I think he'll find a way...he was always a stubborn wolf. That he was" she said as she looked back at the people already launching their boats. Lilian and Toby's Aunt launched three boats along with the other thousand boats. Lilian stood up and looked off as the boats started floating towards the mountain as it began to snow again.

Toby was up in a tree resting against the trunk staring at the charred remains of his home, and the spot where his father lay dead. He glanced down the hillside at the thousands of lights shining bright over the nearly flat water surface. "Es ist meine schuld, dass er tot ist (It's my fault he's gone)" he said before there was a great gust. It felt like someone was touching his shoulder. He looked back seeing no one, which he frowned. He heard footsteps approach the tree he was in, and he looked down seeing that his mom and aunt looking up at him.

"Toby! komm da sofort runter! (Toby! Come down from there!)" his aunt commanded him.

"Nein! (No!)" He shouted as he inched closer to the trunk.

“Bring mich nicht dazu, den baum zu fällen! (Don’t make me kick that tree down!)” His aunt threatened before his mother jumped into the tree.

“Toby...” Lilian muttered before she leaned her head into his. “I’m here” she finished.