



Billionaire Wolf Needs a Doctor (My Grumpy Werewolf Boss #8)

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Category: Fantasy

Description: Hes the grumpiest patient shes ever treated. Shes the dose of sunshine that might just heal his wounded heart.

Dr. Sabrina Wu's medical skills are legendary among wolf shifters, which is exactly why the reclusive Logan Song needs her.

When Dr. Sabrina Wu arrives in the isolated mountain town of Angel Spring, she expects to find sick patients. But what she gets is a six-foot-four wall of muscle and attitude named Logan Song.

Logan expected a doctor, not Sabrina Wu. The cheerful doctor and the gruff loner billionaire couldn't be more different. As they race against time to uncover the cause of the shifter sickness, the attraction between them becomes undeniable and her relentless optimism threatens to tear down the walls around his heart.

But when the illness takes a deadly turn, their fledgling romance faces its greatest test. Can Sabrina's healing touch reach the wounded alpha beneath the growls? And will Logan let down his walls before it's too late?

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SABrINA

The memory of the carnage after Dean Nightfang's battle with his brother still haunted me. The air had stunk of blood and torn flesh. That moment cemented my decision. I was done with the violence, the posturing, the endless cycle of dominance and submission.

When Gladys from Discreet Talent Connections called, her voice was like a hand reaching out to me with a lifeline.

"Angel Spring," she said. "Remote mountain town. They need a doctor."

"What's the catch?" My fingers tightened around the phone.

"No catch. Just a forgotten mining and timber town. And a man willing to pay handsomely for your services."

I didn't need to hear more. The city suffocated me, its streets choked with exhaust and constant chaos. Angel Spring sounded like a fresh start, somewhere I could breathe without city wolf pack politics crushing me.

But as I stepped onto the cracked pavement and the airport shuttle pulled out of town, I couldn't shake the feeling I'd traded one chaos for another. The mountain air was sharp and clean, but beneath it lingered something acrid and chemical. Unsettling, like ozone before a storm.

I adjusted my duffel bag strap and scanned the town.

Rustic didn't cover it. The buildings around the center of town stood weather-beaten, their sun-faded wooden walls flaking with chipped paint.

Wind kicked up dust clouds, and the boarded-up windows at the town's only gas station stared at me like empty eye sockets.

Even though it was midday, I was the only person outside.

A low rumble of an engine cut through the desolate quiet. A sleek black SUV with tinted windows rolled to a stop beside me. The driver, broad-shouldered in a tailored suit that screamed money, stepped out and opened the door with practiced precision.

"Dr. Wu? Mr. Song sent me to escort you to his estate."

I arched a brow but slid into the car. The plush seats hugged my body, and the scent of leather filled the space. It was worlds away from Angel Spring's dusty decay outside.

The door shut with a click. No turning back now.

The SUV drove out of town before it climbed a private road uphill.

I leaned forward, my breath catching as Logan's estate came into view.

The timber mansion sprawled across the ridge, a perfect blend of rugged wilderness with sleek modern design.

Floor-to-ceiling windows reflected the fading sunlight, and a wraparound deck hovered over the valley.

I imagined that the view of the valley from up there was breathtaking.

“Impressive,” I murmured to myself.

The driver grunted in agreement, but I barely noticed. My fingers dug into the seat edge as the house loomed closer, both inviting and intimidating. I opened the window a crack. The smell of pine and damp earth filled my nose.

“First time in the mountains?” the driver asked, eyes flicking to me in the rearview.

“First time in a place like this,” I admitted, gaze fixed on the estate. The structure screamed power, wealth, and isolation all at once.

Anticipation and unease coiled in my gut. This wasn’t just a house. It was a fortress, and I was about to step into the wolf’s den. The vehicle rolled to a stop at the entrance, and I stepped out onto the brick driveway. The place towered above me, more of a fortress than a home.

High-tech security cameras whirled, lenses tracking me. I squared my shoulders, refusing to show intimidation. The front door opened, revealing a dimly lit foyer that stretched forever.

The moment I stepped inside, the scent of cedar and leather wrapped around me. Silence greeted me, heavier than any noise in the city. I moved forward, each step on the gleaming wooden floor beneath me taking me further inside. Somewhere in the shadows, I felt him watching. Waiting.

The foyer blended raw wood and polished metal.

It screamed wilderness and the wealth it took to control it.

Elk antlers and other hunting trophies hung above me on the wall.

And there he stood, Logan Song, centered like he owned the mountains itself.

His height alone made me pause, but his eyes locked me in place.

Deep brown, almost black, with amber flecks.

They were sharp, cutting through the room and pinning me like prey.

“You’re the doctor?” His voice rumbled like a low growl. The hairs on my arms stood on end.

He moved like the woods had shaped him, fluid but deliberate.

Too silent. Too deadly. His presence filled the room, pressing against my skin and sending a rush of awareness through my body.

I’d met plenty of alphas, but something about this man felt different, wilder, more primal.

The air between us crackled with electricity, and even as a human, I fought the irrational urge to bare my neck.

Instead, I lifted my chin higher, refusing to be intimidated.

I took a step toward him. His nostrils flared, and his pupils definitely dilated.

I had too many years as a shifter physician to miss the obvious.

My new patron, the reason I’d come to Angel Spring, was a wolf shifter.

Great, just fucking great. I’d moved across the country to escape warring wolf packs,

and here I stood in the middle of nowhere, working for another wolf.

The irony stung. I'd left Huntington Harbor to escape the politics, the violence, the endless posturing of alphas who thought fangs and claws solved everything.

Yet here I was, staring into the eyes of a man who radiated dominant wolf energy.

Logan Song wasn't just a shifter. He was the kind of alpha who carried his pain like a weapon, sharp and unyielding. I'd spent years stitching up broken wolves, but this one? He wasn't just broken. He was a locked vault, and I doubted I had the tools to crack him open.

I straightened my shoulders, refusing to let him rattle me. "Sabrina Wu. And you must be the man who thinks he's too important to see a doctor in person."

His jaw clenched, irritation or maybe surprise flashed across his face. "I don't need a doctor."

"Funny," I shot back. Another step closer. "Because your stance tells me you're in pain. And if you hired me, I'm guessing it's bad enough you can't ignore it anymore."

His eyes narrowed as a low rumble escaped his chest. "Bold words for someone who just walked into my territory."

"And you're stubborn for someone clearly hurting. So, are we going to argue, or will you let me do my job?"

His glare should have sent me scrambling.

Instead, it made me more determined. Men like him, all growls and pride, were

exactly why I'd sworn off alpha types.

But the way his fingers gripped the doorframe?

That wasn't dominance. That was a man clinging to control by his fingernails. A predator afraid of showing weakness.

His scoff rumbled low and gravelly as he crossed his arms over his broad chest. The movement built a deliberate wall. His biceps flexed under his sleeves, corded muscle straining against fabric. "I don't need a doctor. You're here for the town, not me."

I tilted my head, a small smile playing on my lips. "Well, I'm here now. Might as well make the best of it."

Logan's eyes narrowed. He didn't speak, just gave a curt nod and gestured for me to follow with a flick of his hand. "Fine. But you better pull your weight. I'm not going to pick up your slack."

I matched his stride, the air between us filled with unspoken words and his resistance.

"Good," I shot back. "I've never backed down from a challenge."

He glanced at me, his jaw tightening, but I caught the faintest flicker in his gaze. Curiosity, maybe.

We passed by a study. I paused near the open doors and glanced at the bookshelves lined with expensive leather-bound and hardcover books. Pretentious or obsessive? Hard to tell.

Then I saw it. A massive map of the valley covered half the wall, dotted with green and red pins and scribbled notes. Some clustered near the creek, others by old mining

roads. The pins radiated out like a spreading infection. And at the center? The mountain where the Roberts Mine stood.

Logan's shadow fell across it before I could look closer. "Later," he growled, steering me away.

I memorized the pattern anyway. He wasn't the only one who knew how to hunt.

Logan pushed open the guest suite door, his broad shoulders blocking most of the doorway. I stepped inside, my boots sinking into plush carpet that smelled like lavender. Floor-to-ceiling windows framed snow-capped pines, while a fire crackled inside a stone fireplace.

"This is amazing," I gasped, taking in the room.

"Not much," he grumbled, shoving hands into his pockets.

I dropped my medical bag onto a loveseat next to the four-poster bed and ran a hand over the hand-stitched quilt. "You call this not much? My Huntington Harbor apartment could fit in here."

A muscle jumped in his cheek. "You'll want for nothing here."

Logan's shoulders stiffened as I stepped toward him. He smelled of leather and smoke, but most of all, flesh and blood from the unhealed wound he was hiding. His jaw worked, the silver streaks in his hair catching the dim light. "I don't need a babysitter."

I kept my voice steady, though my fingers itched for my stethoscope. "Good. Because I'm not here to babysit." The words hung sharp as mountain air. "This town needs a doctor. And from how you favor your left side, I'd say you do too."

His jaw ticked, but his sharp inhale told me this wasn't just an injury. It was something his body couldn't heal on its own. A wolf shifter's metabolism should have healed anything other than a fatal wound in days. Whatever festered beneath his shirt wasn't following nature's rules.

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My mind raced through the possibilities, wolfsbane poisoning, maybe a rogue witch's curse.

The medical professional in me cataloged symptoms and treatments, but something deeper responded to his suffering with unexpected protectiveness.

I wanted to help him, not just as his doctor, but as something I wasn't ready to name.

I pushed that feeling down, burying it beneath years of clinical detachment.

This was a job, nothing more. The last thing I needed was emotional entanglement with a broken wolf.

His glare could have iced over hell, but something flickered behind it.

"You don't know what you're getting into.

" He tossed something at me and I caught it with one hand.

It was a pair of keys. "For the house and the green truck. You can call Stuart to drive you, but I figure you'll need a way to get around on your own. "

Then he turned, boots heavy on hardwood. He closed the door behind him and left me with the echo of his warning.

I exhaled, rolling my shoulders as I unlatched my medical bag.

The suite felt too quiet, too pristine, like a stage set for a life Logan didn't actually live.

Outside the window, Angel Spring sprawled below, streets dotted with flickering porch lights.

A town forgotten by everyone but the man who'd built a fortress above it.

I pulled out my notebook and immediately filled the pages with observations, everything from the tremor in Logan's right hand, to the way his breath hitched when he thought I wasn't looking. And that map. Red pins clustered like bloodstains near the creek.

A muffled curse came from the next room. I snapped my head up. Logan's voice carried through the door. "Not your concern."

I was halfway to the door before stopping myself. Boundaries, Sabrina. But when I peeked into the hallway, he was gone. Sitting here was doing me no good. It was time to see the clinic that I was hired to run.

The clinic's door groaned as I shoved it open, the rusty hinges protested like they hadn't moved in decades, which was probably accurate. Dust particles swirled in slanted sunlight. I coughed, waving a hand, and stepped inside. The air hung thick with mildew and old paper, stale with neglect.

The reception desk was littered with abandoned equipment.

Underneath a thick layer of dust, there was a stethoscope, a cracked blood pressure cuff, and yellowed patient files spilling from a cardboard box.

Walls lined with shelves sagged under more files, the labels faded and peeling.

A phone sat on the desk, the coiled cord tangled, and beside it, an old ledger lay open, the water-stained pages filled with spidery handwriting.

The exam room fared no better. Counters were covered with outdated supplies, glass vials, rusted forceps, and a museum-worthy microscope. Crumpled papers and boxes littered the floor. Glass crunched under my boots. Like stepping into a forgotten world where time stopped and no one cleaned up.

My fingers twitched, phantom blood slick against my palms. I'd left Huntington Harbor to outrun memories, but this place opened a fresh wound. Another pack, another alpha hiding something. Only this time, I wouldn't let violence win.

Making my way back to the reception area, I moved a box of files, stirring up a cloud of dust. I let out a cough, and as I waved away the dust, a shadow filled the front doorway. I jumped.

The man standing there was broad-shouldered and solid, like he'd spent his life wrestling the land.

He wore a battered cowboy hat shading a sun-weathered face and a red plaid shirt rolled up to reveal muscle-corded forearms. His jeans were faded, boots scuffed, the scent of hay and livestock clinging to him.

"Heard we've got a new doc in town," he said with a low drawl that matched his easy grin. He stepped inside, boots thudding on creaky floorboards, and extended a calloused hand. "Marshall Boone."

I wiped my palm on my jeans before shaking his hand. His grip was firm but not crushing. "Dr. Sabrina Wu. Guess word travels fast here."

He let out a soft chest rumbling chuckle.

“Faster than a wildfire in August.” He leaned against the doorframe, his arms crossed as he surveyed the mess critically.

“You’ll need more than a broom and hope to fix this place.

” As he spoke, he rubbed his left forearm absentmindedly, but a quick glance at his skin showed angry red creeping under his sleeve.

When he caught me looking, he rolled his sleeve down with a shrug. “Allergies. Damned pine pollen.”

I grabbed a rag and started scrubbing the reception desk with excessive force. “Good thing I didn’t come for a vacation.”

Marshall’s grin faded. “Logan send you?”

The way he said the name, both warning and prayer, raised the hairs on the back of my neck. This town didn’t just respect Logan. They feared him. Or feared for him. I kept my tone casual. “In a roundabout way.”

He studied me, eyes sharp beneath the brim of his hat. “That man’s got more layers than a damn onion. And most of them sting.”

I tossed the rag aside, meeting his gaze directly. “Good thing I like challenges.”

A slow nod. Then he pushed off the frame, tipping his hat. “Well, Doc, you need supplies or muscle, you can find me at Boone Ranch.”

After Marshall left, I spent the afternoon cleaning up the clinic.

I was elbow-deep in dust, scrubbing with a rag more dirt than fabric, when the door

creaked again.

This time, it was an elderly woman, her silver hair braided into a thick plait over one shoulder.

She wore a flowing skirt and shawl embroidered with intricate patterns.

The scent of sage, pine, and smoky incense wafted in with her.

“You must be the new doctor,” she said. Her voice was warm but sharp with an edge that suggested she suffered no fools. She stepped inside gracefully despite her age and surveyed the clinic critically. “Juniper. I’m the town healer.”

“Dr.Sabrina Wu. Pleasure meeting you.” I began to take off my gloves to shake her hand, but Juniper waved dismissively.

Her gaze flicked to the discarded supplies, and she let out a soft tsk. “This place hasn’t seen a proper doctor in years. But I’ve kept the town alive with my knowledge.” She reached into her skirt pocket and pulled out dried herbs, offering them to me. “For the air. Clears dust and bad energy.”

Sage and rosemary filled my nose. “Thank you. I’ve always respected traditional remedies. They’ve saved lives where modern medicine failed.”

Juniper’s eyes softened. She nodded slightly. “You’re not like the others. Most doctors think they know everything. The land has its wisdom, if you’re willing to listen.”

I smiled, tucking the herbs into my pocket. “I’m here to learn as much as heal.”

She studied me, then turned to leave. “You’ll do fine, Doctor. But remember, this

town has secrets. Be careful what you unearth.”

Juniper’s words lingered even as she walked out. The door clicked shut, leaving me alone with the weight of what remained unsaid. Secrets. The kind festering in forgotten places, like the dust in this clinic.

I worked until my fingers ached, scrubbing away years of neglect. The sun dipped low, painting walls in gold and shadow, and again, the metallic odor sharpened. What was that?

When the last cabinet gleamed and the floor was spotlessly clean, I stepped outside into cool evening air. The clinic’s sign hung crooked, the black letters faded but legible Angel Spring Medical . I snapped a photo. Proof. A before picture.

I rolled my shoulders, feeling the familiar ache of hard physical labor.

This wasn’t my first rebuilt clinic. During the East Coast Pack Wars, I’d set up emergency stations in abandoned buildings, converting them to trauma centers within hours.

Dean once called me a medical miracle worker, but the truth was simpler.

I was stubborn as hell and refused to let patients down, regardless of circumstances.

My fingers traced my medical bag, the worn leather comforting after years of service.

Inside weren’t just standard tools but specialized instruments designed for shifter physiology.

I had silver-free sutures that wouldn’t burn wolf flesh, tinctures to temporarily slow shifter metabolism during delicate procedures, and painkillers strong enough to drop

a human instantly.

Years of research, trial and error, and quiet innovation had made me one of the few doctors truly equipped for shifter medicine.

As I drove back up the mountain toward Logan's estate, I couldn't help but think that somewhere in that fortress was an alpha who would rather suffer than admit that he needed help.

My phone buzzed. Dean checking in, no doubt. I ignored it, my gaze fixed on the mansion. Logan Song was hiding something. The frustration radiating from him when I mentioned his injury made that obvious.

A smile tugged at my lips. He was right about one thing. I was diving into troubled waters. But what he didn't know was that I'd been swimming with sharks my entire career. And unlike most doctors he'd encountered, I wasn't afraid to bare my own teeth.

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LOGAN

The ache in my ribs, sharp enough to steal my breath, woke me before dawn.

My fingers traced the ridged scar beneath my shirt.

It was a permanent reminder of my pack's betrayal.

Though the wound was years old, on some mornings it still felt fresh, like I'd just survived the ambush.

I forced myself upright, grimacing at sheets that reeked of wood smoke and dried blood.

The poison still lingered in my system, an unwelcome gift from my own family.

On bad days, my veins burned with acid instead of blood as the poison resisted every healing attempt.

Shifters weren't supposed to stay wounded.

Our bodies healed everything. Except this.

Victoria had made sure of that, using an ancient ingredient known only to Song pack elders.

She ensured that I would never forget what betrayal felt like.

Downstairs, pans clattered and Sabrina's steady breathing grated against my skull.

Less than a week after her arrival, she had already conquered my kitchen.

The worst part? My wolf perked up at the sound.

The beast prowled restlessly beneath my skin, suddenly alert to her presence.

This newfound interest in the doctor was unnerving.

My wolf had preferred isolation as much as I had since my pack turned on me.

This awareness of Sabrina was a warning sign I couldn't afford to ignore.

The rich aroma of coffee, butter, and grilled meats drifted upward, mingling with lingering smoke from my fireplace.

I dressed slowly, each movement deliberate, while my muscles protested.

The window reflected a hollow-eyed stranger with shadowed stubble.

A man who had spent too many nights fighting ghosts.

I found her at the stove, lifting a steak from a sizzling pan onto a plate.

The domesticity of it felt wrong. She shouldn't fit here.

But she did. Today, under a navy blue apron, she wore a pair of light tan slacks with a crisp white button-up shirt.

Her hair was pulled back into a slick ponytail, and the only jewelry she wore was a

single gold etched bangle.

“I didn’t hire you to fly across the country to become my chef.”

She slid a plate of steak and eggs over easy toward my usual seat at the kitchen counter. “Morning. Brenda had to go into town to pick up more supplies at the grocery store, since you conveniently forgot to tell her I was coming yesterday. Eggs are fresh from Marshall’s hens.”

I grunted, lowering myself carefully into the chair. My side throbbed, but I kept my expression neutral. Her gaze lingered on my stiff movements, sharp and unrelenting.

“You’re favoring your left side,” she observed.

The fork slipped from my fingers, falling to the plate with a clatter. I clenched my jaw as I forced myself to meet her eyes. “I’m fine.”

She leaned against the counter, arms crossed, and hip cocked against the granite. The lights caught her stubborn jawline. “Chronic pain worsens with stress. And you, Logan Song, are the walking definition of stressed.”

A growl built in my chest. “Drop it.”

She didn’t blink. “Or what? You’ll glare me to death?” She stepped forward until the scent of fresh soap and her unique sweet musk invaded my space. “Let me help.”

I shoved back so hard the chair scraped the floor. “I didn’t hire you to mother me.”

Her chin lifted, as defiance sparkled in those warm brown eyes. “No, you hired me to fix your town.” A challenge hung between us. “But you’re part of this town, whether you like it or not.”

The words cut like the knife beside my abandoned breakfast. My pulse roared in my ears, drowning everything else.

She didn't retreat. Didn't flinch. Just waited, knowing that I was going to break first.

The truth clawed at my chest. I turned toward the door, but the white-hot pain anchored me in place.

My nails dug into my palms, then her hand hovered near my elbow, the heat of her so close to me burned like a raging fire.

I could have shaken her off. Should have.

But for a heartbeat, I leaned into her touch.

Then Victoria's smirk flashed through my mind, her smug confidence before she gave the orders. The memory of my pack turning on me burned like the poison still coursing through my veins. I jerked away, sharp enough to make Sabrina flinch.

"Enough." The word came out raw. "I don't need your help."

Her brow furrowed. "You're hurt, Logan. Let me—"

"I said enough." My voice sliced through the room.

I couldn't risk letting anyone close enough to hurt me again.

The fortress I'd built stood for a reason, and I'd be damned if I let it crumble now.

Her hand fell, and I forced myself to walk away, each step a battle against the ache threatening to drag me down.

On the deck, I gulped in the icy morning air. The valley stretched below, bathed in dawn light. My valley. My failure. The wolf snarled as my nails dug into the railing. The wood splintered under my grip.

My ears caught the sound of skin across paper before I reached my office. Sabrina stood frozen by the map wall, fingertips hovering over the red pins clustered near the creek. Her brown eyes burned with suspicion.

I leaned against the doorframe and crossed my arms. Her scent clashed with the typical smoke and whiskey of my solitude. “Find something interesting, Doctor?”

She traced the creek’s path deliberately. “These markers. They’re all downstream from the mine.” Her nail tapped a pin near Marshall’s ranch. “Boone’s place is here. He’s sick, isn’t he?”

“You’re here to treat symptoms, not play detective.”

Sabrina turned, her ponytail swinging. “Symptoms have causes, Logan.” She gestured to the map. “And this looks like a pattern even a first-year med student could spot.”

My wolf snarled beneath my skin at what she’d uncovered.

Shame burned like acid. I’d tracked the illness for months, watching it spread downstream from the mine, paralyzed by memories of how powerless I’d been against Victoria.

The creek’s silver glint mocked me through the window.

One by one, shifter families fell sick after contacting the water.

It was my fault for not acting sooner. Would I fail this town, too?

“You knew,” she whispered. It was an indictment, not a question. “How long have you been mapping this?” She traced the red thread connecting pins. “These aren’t random cases. This is systematic poisoning.”

I caught her wrist before she touched another pin. Her pulse raced under my fingers. “Drop it.”

She didn’t flinch. “Or what? You’ll fire me?” She laughed without humor. “This town needs answers more than it needs your pride.”

The truth tasted like bitter medicine. I released her and turned toward the window.

“Roberts Mine has been dumping heavy metals for decades. Their corporate docs call it acceptable leakage.” My reflection showed hollow eyes and a tense jaw.

“According to the EPA, they’re legally compliant.

Whatever’s in the runoff affects shifters, not humans. ”

The words hung heavy. Behind me, Sabrina’s breath caught in her throat. I didn’t need to see her to feel the weight of her gaze piercing my back.

“I bought the land to stop it,” I continued, voice rough. “But the damage is done. The creek’s poisoned. The soil’s tainted. And every day, my kind are sick because of it.”

The room felt suffocating. I leaned forward against the windowsill, glass cold beneath my palms. Outside, the valley looked deceptively peaceful, sunlight glinting off the creek like something pure. But poison lurked beneath, silent and deadly.

Sabrina stepped closer until she was right behind me. “How long have you known?”

“Too long. I thought I could fix it. Contain it. But it’s spreading. Marshall’s sick. If he doesn’t get better, he’ll lose his cattle, his land. Everything.”

Her inhale sharpened. “You’ve been testing the water.”

I nodded toward the cabinet. “Results are in there. It’s useless without a medical expert to connect it to the illness.”

She moved instantly, yanking drawers open with single-minded focus. Papers were scattered across the desk. “We’ll need fresh samples. Bloodwork from every affected shifter. A proper epidemiological—”

“Sabrina.” Her name rasped from my throat. She looked up, dark strands escaping her ponytail, determination etched into her features despite the exhaustion shadowing her eyes. The clinic’s light flickered, casting her in harsh relief.

“This isn’t your fight.” My voice carried years of isolation and battle scars. My chest ached, the old wound throbbing with my pulse. Pain was familiar. Her stubbornness was not.

She didn’t back down. Lifting her chin, she crossed her arms over her chest. “Isn’t it? Because last I checked, I’m the doctor here. If something’s hurting these people, it’s my job to fix it.”

“You don’t know what you’re dealing with. This isn’t some flu or broken bone. It’s bigger than you, bigger than the clinic.”

Her lips pressed thin into a thin line. “Then tell me. Because all I see is a man too stubborn to ask for help and a town suffering because of it.”

Tension crackled between us. I clenched my scarred fists. “You think I don’t know

that? You think I haven't tried to fix this?"

"Trying isn't enough." Her voice softened without losing its steel. "Let me help you, Logan. You don't have to do this alone."

I turned away. Through the window, every house reminded me of lives I'd sworn to protect. But the cost wasn't hers to bear. "You don't know what you're asking," I said finally, as the fight drained out of me.

"Then tell me." Her hand brushed my arm. "Because I'm not going anywhere. Now are you going to help me save your town, or keep brooding in your mansion like some tragic romance hero?"

Something shifted between us, electric and unpredictable. My wolf, previously snarling at her intrusion, went quiet and on high alert. It recognized what my pride wouldn't admit. She was right.

This realization unsettled me more than any pain. I'd built walls to keep out the world, yet this stubborn doctor walked through them like a ghost. Worse, part of me welcomed it.

A harsh laugh escaped me. My wolf settled, recognizing her matching stubbornness. "You're a menace, Wu."

"And you're stuck with me." She tossed her hair, determination shining in her eyes. "So let me see that wound. The real one, not just the map."

The request hung between us like a gauntlet. Showing her my injury meant admitting weakness, crossing a line I'd drawn years ago. But as I met her steady gaze, I recognized the truth. She wasn't just talking about the physical scar.

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SAbrINA

The map was a mosaic of suffering, each pin marking a life disrupted, a family in pain.

I felt responsibility settle across my shoulders like a physical weight.

Logan came back into the house. The cool air that followed him in raised goosebumps along my arms, but it wasn't the temperature making me shiver.

It was the methodical pattern of the markers, too deliberate to be random.

Someone or something was targeting these people.

My finger traced the clusters of red markers. "These are all shifter households, aren't they?" My voice remained steady despite the unease coiling in my gut.

Logan leaned against the wall. He'd shifted his weight to his left side again, holding the right side of his body stiffly. I catalogued the details automatically, the pause in his breath when he adjusted his stance, the tightness around his eyes.

I fought the urge to reach for him, to demand he let me treat his pain. The set of his jaw warned me off. Logan Song would rather chew glass than admit weakness.

"Red pins are shifters. Green pins are human," he confirmed, voice low and gravelly. "They're all downstream from the Roberts Mine, but only the shifters are getting sick."

I turned to him, brow furrowed. “Do you think it’s targeting non-humans directly?”

Before he could answer, his phone rang, cutting through the air. Logan’s brows furrowed. “Marshall, what’s wrong?” His face darkened, his jaw tightening. “We’ll be there,” he said before hanging up. “A kid’s collapsed near the valley’s edge. We need to go.”

We moved quickly. Logan’s truck was a sleek black beast with heated seats and custom off-road modifications.

I climbed in, my boots leaving muddy marks on the pristine floor.

Logan growled something about city doctors as he slammed the accelerator.

The engine roared to life, and we bounced through winding mountain dirt roads.

Thick, heavy clouds loomed overhead, signaling a heavy storm coming our way.

His presence overwhelmed the small cab. The leather seats creaked beneath me as we lurched over another bump.

His scent filled the confined space, smoke from the fireplace, pine, leather, and something uniquely wild that made me stir restlessly.

I found myself breathing shallowly, as if taking too much of him in would shatter whatever fragile professional boundary I desperately clung to.

“You’re staring,” he growled, though his eyes remained fixed on the road.

I quickly looked away, as heat blossomed up my neck. “I’m assessing. That’s what doctors do.”

His low huff might have been amusement or irritation, with Logan Song, it was impossible to tell.

He gripped the gearshift, muscles and tendons standing stark beneath his tanned skin.

I bit my tongue against asking him to slow down, not because I feared the reckless speed, but because I recognized the fury driving it.

This wasn't just about the boy. It was personal.

The Roberts Mine had hurt his people, and Logan Song wasn't one to forgive.

When we arrived, the scene hit me like a punch to the gut.

Dense pine trees towered around us. A boy no older than ten lay sprawled on the forest ground, his skin pale and slick with sweat.

His chest rose and fell in shallow, uneven gasps.

The air smelled faintly metallic, an acrid scent that turned my stomach.

I dropped to my knees beside him, my hands already moving and checking pulse, temperature, and pupil dilation. His skin was clammy, and his heartbeat was weak.

The boy's family gathered around, their eyes darting between me and Logan. Their fear and anger at us outsiders warred with their desire to save their child. The mother clutched a tattered shawl, whispering prayers under her breath.

My fingers shook as I unlatched my medical bag. One by one, I catalogued his symptoms and ticked off possibilities. This wasn't just an illness. It was an attack, a slow poison coursing through his veins.

“He’s in the late stages,” I muttered, more to myself than to anyone there. The vial I pulled out glinted in the dim light.

“What’s that gonna do?” asked the boy’s mother, her eyes wide with desperation.

I stayed focused on the boy’s labored breaths.

The weight of their hope crushed down on me.

“Stabilize him. Maybe.” The word tasted bitter.

I hated maybes, but this was all I had. “It’ll buy us time.

” But even as I said it, I knew it wasn’t enough.

Time was running out for him, for the shifters in this area.

I unsheathed a fresh needle and stuck it into the vial. “You’re not dying on my watch.”

As the needle penetrated his skin, the crowd fell silent. The boy whimpered, then his chest rose and fell in an unsteady rhythm, but it was there. He murmured, a mix of relief and fear, but I didn’t join them. My gaze stayed fixed on my patient, watching for any sign of improvement.

“We need to get him to the clinic. Now.” My voice cut through the noise, sharp and urgent. The boy’s life depended on it.

“Let’s go,” Logan muttered.

As we loaded the boy into the truck, the storm broke, rain pouring down in sheets.

The roads quickly flooded, forcing us to seek higher ground away from the main road. Logan cursed before turning onto a hidden dirt road. “I have a cabin nearby.”

The cabin, rustic outside, was anything but inside. The floors were heated, and the warmth radiated upward. A fully stocked gourmet kitchen gleamed, and a wine cellar rivaled a five-star restaurant. I raised an eyebrow. “Roughing it, huh?”

Logan carried the unconscious boy in his arms. “I like my comforts,” he grumbled as he laid the boy down on the only bed in the cabin.

A flicker crossed his eyes, daring me to judge him.

I didn’t. Instead, I took in the leather sofa by the fireplace, the bookshelf stacked with well-thumbed paperbacks, the woodsmoke lingering in the air.

This wasn’t just a cabin but a refuge from prying eyes.

For a moment, I felt like an intruder in his private space.

While Logan built a fire, I tended to the boy, my hands steady despite the chaos. I administered medicine to break his fever, whispering reassurances to the feverish child as I worked.

Once the boy was settled and asleep, Logan and I faced our situation. The cabin felt small, the crackling fire casting flickering shadows on the walls. “You take the couch,” he said gruffly, gesturing to the plush sofa.

I shook my head. “I’m not leaving you to sleep on the floor. We’ll figure something out.” My voice softened. “Besides, I’m not exactly a helpless princess who’s going to complain about a pea.”

Logan glared, but I met his gaze without flinching.

After a tense silence, he relented with a grunt.

We arranged ourselves on opposite sides of the couch, the popping of the flames the only sound between us.

The space between us felt charged with a current that had nothing to do with the storm outside.

Unable to sleep, I broke the silence. “You mentioned Reeve earlier. He’s the only Song who stood by you?”

Logan’s shoulders tensed, but after a moment, he spoke. “My cousin has always been different. He saw through Victoria’s games. When she turned the pack against me, he was the only one who spoke up. It cost him.” His hands clenched. “Exile was the price for both of us.”

Tears prickled my eyes at the raw pain in his voice. I shifted closer, as if my presence could ease his burden. “You didn’t deserve that.”

Logan let out a bitter laugh. “Maybe not. But I couldn’t stay. And now,” he gestured toward the bed. “Now this sickness is spreading, and I can’t stop it.”

I reached out instinctively, my hand brushing his arm. His skin was warm, but his muscles were coiled like a spring. “It’s not your fault, Logan. You’re trying to fix it.”

He turned to look at me, his dark eyes searching mine. For the first time, there was no anger, just exhaustion. Despite his grumpy exterior, he cared deeply, even if he’d never admit it out loud.

We fell into silence again. The storm raged outside without signs of stopping.

Eventually, exhaustion overtook us both.

I woke hours later, curled against Logan's side, with my head resting on his shoulder.

How did I end up here? After my middle-of-the-night bathroom trip, I must have settled on the wrong side of the couch.

I froze, expecting him to pull away, but he didn't.

His breathing was steady, and his body warm and solid against mine.

Taking a deep breath, his scent filled my senses.

For a moment, I allowed myself to linger.

The weight of his arm draped loosely over my waist kept me pinned in place.

I could feel his fingers against the edge of my shirt.

My heart thudded with a mix of panic and something softer I wasn't ready to name.

Carefully, I shifted to look at him. In sleep, his features softened, erasing the usual scowl he wore.

Firelight danced across his face, highlighting his sharp jaw and the faint scar along his cheekbone.

My fingers itched to trace it, to smooth away the pain it represented.

Instead, I closed my eyes again, allowing myself this small moment of closeness.

I recognized something in him. A kindred spirit beneath all that gruffness and growling. Someone who understood what it meant to be an outsider.

This is a job, I reminded myself sternly. Just a job. Don't get attached.

But even as I thought it, I knew it was too late. Angel Spring was working under my skin, and so was its brooding protector.

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When I opened my eyes, Logan was already awake, with his back to me as he tended the fire.

The storm had passed, and birds were chirping outside.

Despite the light filling the windows, Logan's silhouette stayed stubbornly shadowed.

He'd rebuilt the fire with military precision, each log placed like a soldier in rank.

The boy's steady breathing filled the silence between us.

It was a hard-won but fragile victory. I flexed my stiff fingers, still smelling medicine and fevered sweat beneath the smoke.

The boy stirred in the bed. I sat up, stretching sore muscles.

"He's better," I said, nodding toward the boy.

Logan glanced over. His expression was unreadable except for a flicker of relief.

"Good," he muttered, his voice still rough with sleep.

Turning back to the fire, he poked at the embers.

The silence between us felt different now, charged but not uncomfortable, as if the storm had washed away some barriers between us.

He didn't turn when I stood. "You didn't have to," he said abruptly.

"Have to what?"

"Pretend." His shoulders tensed. "Last night. You could've moved."

The embers might as well have been my pride, crumbling to ash. So he had been awake. I forced a shrug. "Would you have?"

His silence was answer enough.

I brushed dust from my coat. "We should get him back to town. His parents will be worried."

Finished with the fire, he got up and turned around. "Last night..." He trailed off.

I forced a small smile onto my face. "We had to stay warm. It was a matter of survival." My tone was light, but my heart wasn't. The memory of his warmth, how his body felt against mine, lingered.

Logan exhaled sharply, then nodded once. "Yeah." Something in his eyes made my breath catch. For a moment, he might have said more, but then he turned away.

The boy opened his eyes, his small frame trembling as he looked around the unfamiliar surroundings before finding me. He sucked in a breath, and I could sense the fear rising in him like a tide.

"Hey there," I said softly, keeping my voice warm and steady. I knelt beside the bed to reach his level. Up close, I saw faint freckles scattered across his pale cheeks. Sandy blond hair stuck to his forehead with sweat. He looked so young, so fragile. My heart ached for him.

“It’s okay.” I offered a gentle smile. “You’re safe.

I’m Sabrina, a doctor, and I’m here to help you.

” I reached out slowly, letting him see my hand before placing it on his forehead.

His skin was cooler now, fever broken, but he still flinched.

I kept my hand in place. “You’ve been through a lot, huh?

” I teased gently, as if sharing a secret.

“But you’re one tough kid. Fighting off that nasty fever like a superhero. ”

His brow furrowed, but curiosity flickered in his eyes. “I’m not a superhero,” he mumbled hoarsely.

“Oh, I don’t know,” I said, pretending to consider. “High fever, nasty chills, and here you are, sitting up and talking. Sounds pretty super to me.” I winked, and his mouth twitched.

“My mom,” he started, voice wavering.

“She’s fine,” I assured him. “Waiting for you at home. We’ll take you to her soon, but first, let’s make sure you’re better. Want some water? You must be thirsty.”

I held the glass to his lips, supporting his head as he sipped. His hands shook, so I kept mine steady. “There you go. You’re doing great.”

When he finished, I brushed hair from his face. His eyes looked trusting now. “You know, you must feel cooped up. Want to sit by the fire? It’s warm, and I’ll tell you a

story. Dragons? Space pirates? Something magical?”

He hesitated, then nodded shyly. “Dragons.”

“Perfect.” I grinned. “I know a great dragon story.” I helped him sit up, then wrapped a blanket around his shoulders and guided him to the couch. Logan silently handed me another blanket, which I draped over the boy’s lap.

I settled beside him and began, “Once upon a time, there was a brave little dragon named Frost. He was the smallest in his clan, but had the biggest heart.”

The boy watched, wide-eyed and captivated. Tension left his body bit by bit. By the time Frost saved his village from a fire giant, the boy smiled faintly, fear replaced by quiet wonder.

I caught Logan’s gaze.

He leaned against the wall with his arms crossed, but the usual scowl on his face was absent.

Instead, something softer filled his expression.

For a moment, I glimpsed the man beneath the rough armor, someone who cared deeply but had learned to hide behind layers of sarcasm.

His eyes, usually hard as flint, had softened.

Something warm and dangerous unfurled in my chest. This wasn’t just physical attraction anymore but something far more perilous, a connection forming despite my professional boundaries. Then he looked away, jaw clenching, and the moment vanished.

As I turned back to the boy, warmth spread through me. I might not have been a superhero, but I felt like I'd done something right.

Back in the truck, my phone buzzed. Dean's name flashed on screen. I picked up the call. "Mountain man giving you trouble?" I rolled my eyes at his teasing.

Logan scowled, but I caught a faint smirk when I retorted, "Dr.Nosy, I can handle myself." My voice was light, but my cheeks burned. I felt Logan watching me, as if trying to figure me out.

His smirk vanished when my call ended. He stared straight ahead, grip on the wheel too tight, too controlled. Jealousy? Territorial irritation? Either way, the air was thick with unspoken tension.

In town, Juniper met us outside the clinic. "Heard you two had quite the adventure."

Logan grunted, but I grinned, adrenaline still humming in my veins. "Just another day in Angel Spring," I teased. This town, these people, were starting to feel like mine. I wasn't going to let them down.

Logan brushed past me to unload the boy. His whispered words caught me off guard. "You handle me just fine, Doc."

The deep, rough timbre of his voice sent a shiver through my body. Half challenge, half something darker that curled hotly in my stomach. My pulse jumped like a startled rabbit, and for a heartbeat, I forgot how to breathe.

Then he was walking toward the clinic doors like he hadn't just set my nerves ablaze.

I swallowed hard, my fingers tightening around my medical bag strap.

Handle him? If only he knew. One murmured sentence, and I was already unraveling.

The worst part? I wanted him to do it again.

The realization hit suddenly. I wasn't just attracted to Logan Song.

I was drawn to him in a way that defied logic or self-preservation.

I took a steadying breath, letting cool mountain air clear my head. I was here to solve a medical mystery and help this town, not fall for its brooding billionaire protector. No matter how his voice made my skin tingle or how safe I'd felt curled against him in the darkness.

Professional. I needed to stay professional.

But watching him walk away, all power and barely contained energy, I wondered if that was even possible anymore.

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LOGAN

The scent of rubbing alcohol and the smoky scent of Juniper's herbal incense hit me when I stepped into the clinic.

The place was unrecognizable. Gone was the dust and decay.

Now, mopped linoleum floors gleamed under bright overhead lights.

The air was thick with the aromas of sage, rosemary, and something woody and medicinal.

Juniper stood behind the reception counter, silver braid draped over one shoulder, hands busy assembling bundles of dried herbs.

A small burner hissed on the countertop, on top of the flame was a glass beaker bubbling with dark, viscous liquid.

Her movements were precise and unhurried.

She looked like a witch brewing a potion in a high school chemistry lab.

The waiting room buzzed with activity. Patients I recognized from around town sat in mismatched chairs, flipping through dog-eared magazines or chatting quietly.

A man with a bandaged hand, a woman cradling a sniffling toddler, and an older gentleman with a cane.

None of them were shifters, just ordinary humans with ordinary ailments.

A strange sight I hadn't expected. Angel Spring's clinic hadn't been a place for humans in years, not since the last doctor left.

But here they were, their presence a quiet testament to Sabrina's impact already.

She hadn't just reopened the clinic; she'd made it a place for everyone.

My gaze swept the space. Water-damaged wallpaper peeled in pieces from the walls, and despite Sabrina and Juniper's efforts, it was impossible to hide the duct tape on the edge of the reception desk.

The vinyl of the waiting room chairs was split, with yellowed foam bulging through the cracks.

My fingers twitched with the urge to pull out my phone and order everything new.

Renovate the building with modern stainless steel and glass, fill the exam rooms with state-of-the-art monitors, an endless supply of sterilized instruments, and one of those ridiculous massage tables for her break room.

The town deserved better. She deserved better.

I mentally cataloged the upgrades I could make.

"Logan Song," Juniper said without looking up, her voice carrying the weight of someone who'd seen too much and said too little. "You're not here for tea, are you?"

I grunted, my boots scuffing against the floor as I stepped further inside. "Not unless it's spiked."

Her lips twitched, but her hands didn't stop moving. "You're in luck. This batch has a kick." She held up a small vial of the dark liquid, the contents swirling like ink. "For the pain. If you're brave enough to try it."

I eyed the vial, my wolf stirring uneasily. Juniper's remedies were legendary in Angel Spring, but they came with a price. "What's the catch?"

"No catch," she said, tone deceptively light. "Just a reminder that healing isn't always pretty." She set the vial down and finally looked at me, her gaze sharp enough to cut through steel. "You've been carrying that wound long enough. Time to let someone help you."

My fists bunched, old defensiveness rising like a wall. "I'm fine."

She snorted, the sound dry and unimpressed.

"Fine men don't limp into my clinic looking like they've been wrestling bears."

Her eyes flicked to my side, where the scar throbbed beneath my shirt.

The familiar burning sensation radiated outward like acid eating through my flesh, each pulse matching my heartbeat.

I'd grown so accustomed to living with it that sometimes I forgot what it was like not to hurt.

But today was worse. It was a deep, gnawing ache that made my muscles clench involuntarily and cold sweat bead at my temples. "And they don't smell like pain."

I didn't respond, just crossed my arms over my chest and glared at the floor. Juniper had a way of cutting through bullshit like a hot knife through butter, and I wasn't in

the mood for her brand of honesty.

She sighed, her hands stilling for the first time since I'd walked in. "You're not the only one who's been hurt, Logan. But you're the only one who's too stubborn to admit it."

Before I could retort, Sabrina's voice cut through the tension. "Logan. Exam room."

I turned to see her standing in the doorway, white coat buttoned neatly, stethoscope slung around her neck. She didn't bother looking up, just gestured for me to follow her with a flick of her hand. "Now."

Juniper's chuckle followed me as I walked past her. "Good luck, Doctor. You'll need it."

I hesitated, my boots scuffing against the floor as I followed her into the exam room. Her tone brooked no argument, but my pride dug in its heels. "I don't need—"

"Let me see the injury properly," she interrupted, voice firm but not unkind. She closed the door behind her and was moved toward me, hands efficient as she prepped supplies on a tray. The glint in her eyes dared me to refuse.

My jaw tightened, but I complied, lowering myself onto the exam table with more stiffness than I'd admit.

As her fingers brushed the hem of my shirt, I flinched.

Her touch was warm and steady, a stark contrast to the cold, clinical hands of most doctors.

It had been years since anyone had touched me without an agenda, without the weight

of expectation or judgment.

My wolf growled, restless, but not in the way it usually did when someone got too close.

This was different. Softer. Safer. I hated how much I wanted to lean into it.

“It’s fine,” I muttered, words reflexively defensive.

She didn’t dignify that with a response, just tugged my shirt up, exposing the jagged scar across my ribs.

Her breath hitched audibly, fingers tracing the edges of the wound with a gentleness that belied her no-nonsense demeanor.

“This wasn’t treated right,” she murmured, brow furrowing.

“There’s scar tissue around an abscess. Something is keeping this wound from healing. ”

She snapped on gloves with practiced efficiency. The crinkle of sterile packaging followed as she laid out gauze and a syringe, her movements precise as a surgeon’s. The sharp bite of alcohol cut through the herbal musk as she swabbed the area, her touch clinical now, all business.

Her words cut deeper than the wound itself.

I’d carried this scar like a badge of shame, a reminder of the pack I’d left behind and the family that had turned on me.

But the way she said it, like it wasn’t my fault, like it was something that could be

fixed, made my chest ache.

For a moment, I imagined what it would be like to let someone else carry the weight for once.

But the thought was dangerous. Kindness was a trap, a lure that always ended in pain.

I'd learned that lesson the hard way, and I wasn't about to forget it.

I glared at the ceiling, refusing to meet her gaze.

"Pack justice," I growled, words bitter on my tongue. "Victoria's idea of discipline."

Her fingers stilled, and I felt the shift in the air, her anger sharpening like a blade. "This isn't justice. It's cruelty."

Her anger crashed over me like a wave. I wanted to tell her she was wrong, that I'd earned this, that I'd been the one to challenge Victoria, to walk away.

But the words stuck in my throat. Because for the first time, someone was angry for me, not at me.

It was a foreign feeling I didn't know how to process.

She reached for the syringe, movements precise as she prepped the area with a local anesthetic. The metallic gleam of the needle set my nerves on edge. "I need to drain the fluid buildup. It'll hurt."

I scoffed, the sound harsh in the quiet room. "I've had worse."

As the needle pierced my skin, my vision blurred, reality fracturing around me.

Suddenly, I was back in that forest clearing, surrounded by towering trees with faint glimpses of the moon through the canopy.

The circle of wolves closed in, their eyes gleaming with hunger and anticipation.

The metallic scent of blood filled my nostrils, my blood, as Victoria's claws ripped through my side.

I felt again that horrific moment when she twisted, injecting something that burned worse than the wound itself.

Her voice cut through the memory, cold and venomous.

"You challenge me, you pay the price." Pack justice, she'd called it.

I called it what it was. Torture. My side burned now as if her fangs were sinking into me all over again, the poison reawakening with each heartbeat.

I clenched my eyes shut, trying to block out the memory. The betrayal, the pain, the way Victoria's voice had sliced through the chaos like a blade. I'd been alone then, and I'd been alone ever since. But Sabrina's hand on my shoulder pulled me back to the present.

"Breathe." Her voice was steady, calm, like she'd done this a hundred times before. And maybe she had. But it didn't feel routine. It felt personal.

I realized I gripped the exam table so hard that the steel deflected beneath my fingers.

I forced my fingers to unclench, the tension in my muscles easing under her touch.

She held up a vial of murky fluid, her expression darkening as she examined it.

“This isn’t a normal infection. There’s an unknown compound here, almost like silver, but not quite.

” Her eyes met mine, sharp and unyielding. “They poisoned you.”

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Her words hung in the air, heavy with implications.

I'd always known it wasn't just a wound.

It was a message, a reminder that I'd never truly be free of the pack.

But hearing her say it out loud made it real in a way I hadn't let myself acknowledge.

The old anger simmered just beneath the surface.

But her fingers were still on my skin, warm and steady, and for the first time, I didn't feel like I was drowning in it.

My laugh was bitter, the sound hollow in the clinic's sterile air. "Of course they did."

I started to pull my shirt down, but her hand stopped me. "Not yet. Juniper's poultice needs to sit for twenty minutes."

She reached for a clay jar, the earthy scent of comfrey and yarrow filling the room. The warm paste stung as she spread it over the scar, but the pain quickly dulled to a soothing warmth. Her fingers worked in slow circles, her touch unexpectedly careful.

"Why'd you really hire me?" she asked quietly.

Her hands were small but strong, her movements deliberate.

I'd spent so long avoiding touch, avoiding connection, that the intimacy caught me

off guard.

My wolf came to life again, and I let out a low rumble in my chest, but it wasn't a warning.

It was something else. Something I hadn't felt in years.

I clenched my fists, fighting the urge to pull away.

Because as much as I hated to admit it, I didn't want her to stop.

Her gentle touch was doing something to me, something I wasn't prepared for.

Every brush of her fingertips against my skin sent warmth spreading through my chest, thawing something I'd thought permanently frozen.

The scent of her, clean soap, antiseptic, and underneath it all, something sweet and distinctly her, filled my lungs with each breath.

My wolf practically purred, the sensation so foreign I almost didn't recognize it as pleasure.

It had been so long since I'd allowed myself to feel anything but anger and pain that this, whatever this was, terrified me more than any physical threat ever could.

I hesitated, the question catching me off guard.

The truth was, I hadn't expected her to be like this.

I'd expected another jaded city doctor, someone who would take my money and keep their distance.

But Sabrina wasn't like that. She was relentless, compassionate, and unapologetically herself.

And that scared me more than I cared to admit.

"You're persistent," I muttered, words rough but honest. "And the town needed someone who wouldn't scare easily. "

She snorted, the sound amused but not unkind. "Mission accomplished."

Her touch lingered, and for a moment, neither of us moved. The air between us charged, heavy with something I couldn't name. Neither of us pulled away, the silence stretching between us like a quiet acknowledgment of something unspoken.

After a moment, I broke the silence. "It flares when the wind shifts from the east."

Her fingers stilled against my ribs. "The mine's that way, isn't it?"

The mine wasn't just a scar on the land.

It was a wound in the town's soul, festering and poisoning everything it touched.

And now, it was spreading. I clenched my jaw, the wound throbbing back to life like a second pulse.

The last time it burned this badly, Victoria had proposed an alliance with the Roberts pack.

Coincidence didn't exist in our world. Just consequences wearing different masks.

I nodded stiffly. "Like my body realizes before my brain does."

Her fingers resumed their work, voice softer now, almost gentle. “I get that. After my parents died, I’d wake up reaching for my phone to call them. Muscle memory doesn’t forget.”

Her words jolted me. I’d spent so long burying my pain, my grief, that I’d forgotten what it felt like to share it with someone. And here she was, offering me a piece of herself without asking for anything in return. It was too much. Not enough. I didn’t know what to do with it.

What was her angle? Everyone had one. Victoria taught me that lesson with blood and pain.

Trust was a luxury I couldn’t afford. And yet, something about Sabrina’s straightforward compassion made me want to believe she was different.

She didn’t seem to want anything from me except for me to heal.

The concept was so foreign that it was almost laughable.

People didn’t just help each other without expecting something in return.

That wasn’t how the world worked. At least, not my world.

I found myself wanting to tell her more. About my aunt’s betrayal. About the pack I’d left behind. About the nightmares that still woke me every night in a cold sweat. The urge to unburden myself was so strong it frightened me.

I studied her. Really studied her for the first time.

Dark circles rimmed her eyes, and strands of hair escaped from her ponytail.

The signs of her fatigue made me bristle.

An instinct older than reason urged me to drag her to the nearest flat surface, wrap her in furs, and stand guard while she slept until the shadows under her eyes faded.

My fingers curled into a fist, my nails biting into my palms. Mine to protect.

The thought hit like a sucker punch. I shoved it down.

“You patch everyone but yourself,” I realized aloud, words slipping out before I could stop them.

She froze, fingers stilling on my skin. Her smile was forced, the kind that didn’t reach her eyes.

“Occupational hazard.” But I saw the flicker of pain in her gaze, the way her fingers tightened around the jar of poultice.

We were the same, she and I. Two broken people trying to fix everyone but ourselves.

And maybe that was why I couldn’t stay away.

I flexed my side experimentally. The pain was dulled but not gone. “It’s better,” I admitted, words costing me more than I cared to admit.

She smiled, the warmth reaching her eyes this time. “Good. Now let’s talk about those water samples.”

Her focus shifted, hands moving with purpose as she pulled out a map from the cabinets and unrolled it.

But I couldn't stop staring at her, at the way her brow furrowed in concentration, the way her lips pressed together when she was thinking.

She was a force of nature, relentless and unyielding, and I was caught in her orbit whether I liked it or not.

The familiar markings of Roberts Mining's property lines stood out against the faded paper. "If the same chemical is in the runoff, we'll have proof it's deliberate. But we need to find a way to get access."

My fingers brushed hers as I pointed to a creek on the map, the touch sending a spark up my arm. "The mine's security crew patrols the main sites. We'll need samples from here, at the edge of the property."

She nodded with a determined expression.

I started to leave, then hesitated at the door, the words sticking in my throat. "Wu?" She looked up, brow furrowing slightly. "Thanks. For not making it, you know." My hand gestured awkwardly at the exam table.

Her grin was quick and sharp, the kind that could cut through tension like a knife. "An alpha wolf moment? Please. I treat toddlers with more attitude."

As I made my way through the waiting room, Juniper shot me a knowing look. With a nod, I pocketed the vial of tincture still on the reception desk.

Outside, I paused, taking a deep breath of crisp mountain air. For the first time in years, the pain in my side was just an ache.

The sound of violent coughing cut through the quiet.

I turned to see Marshall bent over near his truck, one hand braced against the tailgate as he sucked in a ragged breath.

Sweat beaded on his forehead despite the chill, and his skin was an unhealthy red.

The feed sacks he'd been loading sat half-dumped in the truck bed, one split open, grain spilling across the rusted metal.

I crossed the distance in three strides. "You look like shit."

He wiped his mouth with the back of his hand. His skin was clammy, and his breath came in shallow gasps that rattled in his chest. "Feel like it too." His fingers trembled as he reached for another sack, but his grip faltered, the burlap sack falling to the ground.

I caught it and hefted it into the truck with more force than necessary. "When did this start?"

"Few days ago." He leaned against the truck as he took in labored breaths. "Thought it was just a cold."

I grabbed the next sack. The veins in his arms stood out too prominently, dark and snaking under his skin. Not a cold. Not allergies. Fuck. "You're seeing Wu."

Marshall's laugh turned into another spasm. His shoulders shuddered violently as he braved another wretched coughing attack. "She's got enough on her plate without—"

"Now." I slammed the last sack into place and gripped his shoulder, steering him toward the clinic. His muscles burned under my palm, fever-hot.

He shook me off but didn't resist, swaying slightly as he walked. "Since when do you

play nursemaid?”

“Since you started sputtering like a busted tailpipe.” I kept pace beside him, close enough to catch him if he stumbled. “And if you collapse in front of the feed store, Boone, I’m not dragging your ass home.”

He chuckled, though it ended in a wheeze. “Wouldn’t dream of inconveniencing you, Your Highness.”

The scar burned hotter with every step. East wind. Poisoned water.

Sabrina’s silhouette appeared in the clinic doorway. She took one look at Marshall and held the door open wider. “Get him inside.”

Marshall tipped his hat at her with false cheer. “Evening, Doc. Hate to intrude.”

She cut him off with a pointed look at the sweat soaking his shirt. “Save the charm for when you’re not about to pass out.”

I lingered in the doorway as Sabrina began her examination. Her fingers were already on Marshall’s wrist, brow furrowed as she counted his pulse. Her gaze flicked to me, unreadable. “You staying?”

Marshall groaned, sinking onto the exam table. “He’s allergic to concern.”

“Someone’s gotta make sure you don’t scare the doc with your whining.”

Sabrina’s lips quirked as she reached for her stethoscope. “Too late for that.”

I stepped back, but didn’t leave, just leaned against the wall, arms crossed, while she worked. My truck keys dug into my palm. Marshall’s rasping breaths filled the room,

too loud, too wrong.

This wasn't just one man. It was a warning.

And I'd be damned if I'd let this town burn on my watch.

Marshall's labored breathing filled the small exam room, each inhale a battle against whatever was ravaging him from the inside. I'd known this man for a decade. Watched him wrestle bulls and survive a winter blizzard trapped in his truck. Nothing took Marshall Boone down.

Until now.

I studied Sabrina's face as she worked, catching the way her lips pressed together in concentration. She knew. Without saying a word, she knew this wasn't just a sick friend. This was the beginning of something worse.

The east wind carried more than just the scent of the mine tonight. It carried a threat of what was coming for all of us.

My wolf paced restlessly beneath my skin. We had stumbled onto something dangerous, something that powerful people wanted kept secret. And in my experience, those kinds of secrets got people killed.

The phantom weight of responsibility settled across my shoulders. I'd chosen Angel Spring to escape my past. Now I would have to fight to protect its future.

Starting with the doctor who didn't seem to understand she was walking into a war.

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Source Creation Date: July 27, 2025, 7:08 am

SAbrINA

The rest of the week passed uneventfully after Logan visited the clinic.

Marshall insisted on going back to his ranch after he was stabilized, and there was nothing I could do to convince him to stay at the clinic for observation.

Word spread across the valley that Angel Spring had a new clinic, and I had a steady stream of patients, human and otherwise, to keep me busy.

The first scream shattered the first moment of stillness I had had in days. More voices joined, a cacophony of fear rolling through the square like storm surge. My pulse thundered against my ribs before I'd even registered moving.

I was sprinting out of my office before my brain caught up, with my medical bag in my hand before I'd even registered.

The cold air slapped my face as I burst outside, the scene in the square hitting me like a gut punch.

The acrid stench of sweat and fear hung in the air, mingling with the earthy scent of damp gravel.

A crowd had formed, their faces tight with fear, their murmurs a low, anxious buzz.

And in the center of it all was Marshall.

My years of medical training kicked in, and my mind was already cataloging symptoms even as my heart raced.

Tonic-clonic seizure. Possible respiratory compromise.

The doctor in me took over, pushing aside the fear that threatened to paralyze me.

This wasn't just a patient, this was Marshall, a man who'd welcomed me with gruff kindness as soon as I arrived in town.

His massive frame convulsed against the ground, muscles locking and twitching in violent spasms. Foam flecked his lips, his skin waxy and tinged with gray.

My fingertips registered the unnatural heat radiating from his skin even in the cool mountain air.

Somewhere in the crowd, a woman was sobbing, the sound punctuating the heavy silence like heartbeats.

Time seemed to stretch and compress simultaneously, the way it always did in medical emergencies.

My pulse roared in my ears, but my hands stayed steady as I dropped to my knees beside him.

The ground was cold and rough beneath me, the chill seeping through my pants.

"Give me space!" I barked at the onlookers, my voice slicing through the chaos.

They scrambled back as I rolled Marshall onto his side, my fingers checking his airway.

“Someone call Logan!” His pulse fluttered like a trapped bird under my fingertips.

It was too fast, too weak. Seizure. Advanced toxicity. Shit.

I yanked open my bag, my hands moving on autopilot.

The syringe of diazepam felt pitifully small against the enormity of what was happening, but it was all I had.

The needle slid home, the plunger depressing with a firm press.

Sweat dripped from my brow onto his shirt as I counted the seconds until his breathing stabilized.

Come on. Come on.

Three seconds. Five.

Then, blessedly, the tremors began to subside.

Someone muttered prayers. The smell of my medical supplies mixed with the sour stench of sickness. My breath came in short bursts. I couldn't lose him. Not like this.

The crowd's murmuring changed pitch, a ripple of movement spreading outward like a stone dropped in still water.

I felt his presence before I saw him. It was a shift in the energy of the square, the collective intake of breath from the onlookers.

Then the crowd parted, some stepping back instinctively, others moving with deliberate respect.

Logan didn't run, he stalked, each step powerful and controlled, his face a mask of barely contained fury that wasn't directed at anyone present but at the situation itself.

His eyes, those deep brown pools that usually guarded his emotions so carefully, now blazed with raw fear, not for himself, but for Marshall.

It hit me then, watching him move with such deadly purpose, that Logan Song's cold exterior hid depths I'd only begun to glimpse.

His phone was already pressed to his ear, his voice a growl that brooked no argument. "Get the jet ready. Now."

I barely registered the words, my focus locked on Marshall's jerking limbs. "Keep him still," I ordered, reaching for the sedative in my bag.

Logan's hands clamped down on Marshall's shoulders, his grip iron-strong.

The muscles in his arms stood out like cords, his jaw clenched so tight I could see the vein throbbing in his temple.

I felt the heat of his body radiating against my side, a steady presence in the chaos. "Tell me what you need," he ground out.

The needle slid into Marshall's arm with practiced ease, the sedative flooding his system. His thrashing slowed, then stilled, but his vitals remained erratic. My teeth sank into my lower lip. "We need advanced diagnostics, a full tox panel. Sedatives, fluids, things I don't have here."

Logan didn't hesitate. "You'll have them. My jet's en route with a mobile ICU unit."

My head snapped up. "You have a—?"

“Yes.” His voice was rough, his gaze unflinching. “It lands in twenty minutes. Trust me.”

And damn it all, I did.

The sheer speed of his response left me momentarily speechless.

I swallowed hard, forcing myself to focus.

Marshall’s pulse was stabilizing, but his skin still burned fever-hot under my fingertips.

“He’s holding for now,” I murmured, more to myself than to Logan.

“But we can’t waste time.” I couldn’t afford to falter, not now, not with Marshall’s life in the balance.

Logan’s phone buzzed again, his expression darkening as he read the message. His fingers tightened around the device, knuckles whitening. “Reeve,” he muttered, stepping away to take the call. Through the crowd, I caught snippets. Something about the mine, about unusual activity. My stomach twisted.

When he returned, his face was a mask of barely contained tension. “Reeve says there’s been movement at the Roberts headquarters. New investors sniffing around, contracts being renegotiated. He doesn’t have details yet, but it’s suspicious.”

I glanced down at Marshall, his labored breaths too shallow, too fast. The pieces clicked together with sickening clarity. The implication hung between us, heavy as a blade. My fingers tightened around Marshall’s wrist. “This isn’t a natural progression of the shifter sickness. It’s an escalation.”

Logan's nostrils flared, his wolf flashing behind his eyes. "Someone's forcing the timeline."

The roar of an approaching helicopter cut through the tension, its blades whipping the air into a frenzy.

I turned to see a black aircraft emblazoned with the Song Timber logo touch down in the field behind the clinic.

The helicopter was large enough to transport troops into battle.

I couldn't believe it. It was an actual flying hospital.

A team of medics in crisp uniforms disembarked, wheeling a stretcher and equipment toward us with military precision.

The display of power and resources should have intimidated me.

Instead, I felt a surge of fierce gratitude.

In my career, I'd fought bureaucracy and budget constraints at every turn, watching patients suffer while administrators debated costs.

Now, watching Logan's wealth translate instantly into life-saving technology appearing as if by magic, I understood something fundamental about him.

His fortune wasn't just about luxury or status.

It was a weapon he wielded to protect what mattered.

A memory flashed through my mind of my mentor at medical school saying,

“Sometimes the difference between life and death isn’t skill, it’s access.” The unfairness of that reality had always burned in me, but today, I was selfishly, desperately grateful for it.

Logan’s hand brushed my elbow as the medics took over, his touch fleeting but electric. “Go with him,” he said, low enough that only I could hear. “I’ll handle the rest.”

For once, I didn’t argue.

The medics transferred Marshall to the mobile unit with practiced efficiency, their movements smooth and synchronized. I fell into step beside them, my clinical instincts overriding my shock. One of the medics handed me a tablet displaying real-time vitals. “We’ve got him, Doctor,” she assured me.

Inside the unit, the hum of high-tech equipment surrounded us—monitors, scanners, machines I would only have access to in urban hospitals.

I worked alongside the team, my fingers flying over the touchscreen as I ran diagnostics.

The results flashed onto the screen, and my stomach dropped.

“His liver enzymes are off the charts,” I muttered.

Logan’s presence loomed in the doorway, his broad shoulders filling the frame.

His eyes were locked on Marshall’s still form, the tension in his body palpable.

“Poisoning,” he repeated, the word a low growl that sent a shiver down my spine.

“From the mine?”

I nodded, my fingers tightening around the tablet.

“The poison is in his system. It’s aggressive, fast-acting.

If we hadn’t gotten him stabilized...” I trailed off, the unspoken implication hanging heavy in the air.

“First, we need to flush the poison from his system. The medics are prepping the treatment now.”

His gaze flicked to Marshall, his expression softening for the briefest moment. “He’s strong. He’ll pull through.”

“He has to,” I said quietly, more to myself than to Logan.

The medics moved with precision, administering the treatment under my watchful eye. The hum of the machines filled the silence, a constant reminder of the stakes. Logan stayed close. I could feel his eyes on me, the intensity of his gaze almost a physical touch.

Logan stood silhouetted against the monitors, his profile carved from shadow and flickering blue light. When he turned, his eyes weren’t the cold obsidian I expected. They burned fiercely in a face usually carved from ice.

“You’re incredible.”

The rawness in his voice sent a shiver down my spine. Not admiration. Not gratitude. Something far more dangerous. Reverence.

I fumbled for sarcasm like armor. “Says the man who teleported a hospital to us.”

His thumb brushed my wrist. The contact lasted less than a heartbeat, but my skin burned where he'd touched. "It's just money."

"No," I countered, holding his gaze. "It's you caring enough to use it."

Logan looked away first, clearing his throat. The muscles in his jaw twitched like he was chewing on words he couldn't quite spit out.

After hours of touch and go, Marshall's breathing had evened, his color returning in slow increments. Logan dragged a hand down his face, the exhaustion finally catching up to him. "Get some rest, Doctor." His voice was gruff, but the edge had softened. "I'll watch him."

I opened my mouth to argue, but my body betrayed me with a yawn so wide my jaw cracked. The adrenaline crash hit like a freight train. My knees buckled, and I braced a hand against the cot to keep upright. Logan was there in an instant, his arm a solid bar across my back.

"Whoa." His breath stirred the hair at my temple. "Easy, Doc."

I wanted to protest, but my body betrayed me. I sagged into his embrace. His chest was a wall of heat against my shoulders. Closing my eyes, I let his masculine scent wrap around me.

"Stubborn woman," he muttered, but his hands were gentle as he steadied me. Still, I hesitated, my gaze flicking to Marshall's monitors.

Logan stepped closer, his warmth seeping into the space between us. "He's stable. And you're no good to anyone if you collapse." His fingers brushed my elbow, just a fleeting touch, but it sent a current up my arm. "Go."

For once, I didn't fight him. I nodded, swaying slightly as I turned toward the unit's cramped cot. The last thing I saw before sleep dragged me under was Logan's broad back silhouetted against the monitors, his shoulders squared like he could single-handedly hold the world at bay.

And for the first time in years, I let someone else carry the weight.

Sleep came in fitful waves, my doctor's brain still half-alert for the sound of alarms or changes in Marshall's breathing. Sometime in the gray hours between night and morning, I surfaced briefly from dreams filled with beeping monitors and rushing water.

Through half-lidded eyes, I saw Logan still standing guard.

He'd pulled a chair close to Marshall's bed, his powerful frame somehow fitting into the uncomfortable portable furniture.

His head was bowed, not in sleep but in what looked like prayer or deep thought, his large hand wrapped around Marshall's wrist. The gesture was so achingly tender from such a formidable man that I felt my throat tighten.

When he sensed my gaze, he didn't startle or pull away. Instead, he met my eyes across the dim room, a silent understanding passing between us. Neither of us spoke. We didn't need to.

I drifted back to sleep with the realization that I'd glimpsed something precious and rare. Logan Song with his walls completely down. And what I'd seen behind those walls made my heart ache in ways I wasn't ready to examine.

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Source Creation Date: July 27, 2025, 7:08 am

LOGAN

The overhead drone footage on my tablet showed the same damn trespassers near the contaminated creek.

My jaw tightened, a growl rising in my throat.

I slammed the tablet onto my desk. Too many red flags, equipment failures, delayed shipments, sickness spreading through town, and now this.

It all pointed to the Roberts Mine, but proving it was another matter.

Marshall's image flashed in my mind. He was still recovering at the clinic after the medical resources I'd flown in saved his life.

The sight of his massive frame convulsing on the dusty street haunted me.

His condition had stabilized, but for how long?

The tests Sabrina ran showed the poison lingering in his system.

His condition was resistant to treatment despite modern medicine and endless resources.

I'd known Marshall since I first arrived in Angel Spring. He was the only friend I'd allowed myself after Victoria's betrayal, and a stubborn bastard as strong as the mountains themselves. Seeing him reduced to that state had cracked something in the

walls I'd built around myself.

The phone buzzed on the desk with an incoming call.

The clinic's number flashed on screen, and my heart lurched in my chest. Sabrina.

My wolf surged forward without permission, canines lengthening as her face flashed through my mind.

The response was immediate and impossible to ignore.

She'd been in my territory barely a month, yet my instincts screamed as if she'd been part of my pack for years.

I snatched up the phone, my voice gruffer than intended. "Song."

"Logan," Juniper's voice crackled through. "You might want to get down here. That snake Vance is slithering around the clinic, trying to rattle your doctor. And, well, you know how she is. She's not the type to back down, even when she should."

A growl escaped before I could stop it. My fingers tightened around the phone. "I'm on my way."

"Good," she said, amusement threading her tone. "But don't tear the place apart. Sabrina's holding her own, but she could use a little backup. And maybe a reminder she's not the only one who can play hero."

I was already moving, shrugging on my jacket as I stormed out. My instincts screamed to protect.

I gunned the engine, tearing down the mountain road.

Dust clouds swirled behind me as I took each curve too fast, tires spitting gravel.

The rational part of my brain knew Sabrina could handle herself.

I'd seen how that tiny woman commanded a room, but my wolf was beyond reason.

Someone had invaded my territory, threatened what was mine.

The thought brought me up short. When had I started thinking of her as mine? I gripped the steering wheel harder, feeling leather creak beneath my palms. This wasn't the plan. No attachments. No vulnerabilities. No weakness for anyone to exploit.

Yet here I was, racing down the mountain because someone dared to upset my doctor.

My knuckles whitened on the wheel, the ache in my side burning hotter with every mile.

Sabrina's face flashed in my mind. Her stubborn chin, the fire in her eyes, how she'd challenged me from the moment we met.

She wouldn't back down from the mine's doctor, and that terrified me.

Gravel crunched beneath my tires as I pulled into the clinic parking lot. The sun burned high, casting the building in sharp relief. Inside, fluorescent lights glared, illuminating the battle taking place inside.

I strode in, the door slamming shut behind me.

The sound cracked through the room like a gunshot.

Vance leaned against the reception desk, his tailored suit and polished shoes a jarring contrast against worn clinic furniture.

Sabrina stood before him, her petite frame rigid with defiance, hands clenched into fists at her sides.

“Ah. The infamous Logan Song,” Vance drawled. Condescension dripped from his voice like oil. His eyes flicked to me, cold and calculating. “I wondered how long it would take you to show up.”

Sabrina’s head snapped toward me, her brown eyes wide with surprise and relief. But she quickly masked it. She lifted her chin as she turned back to Vance. “We’re not finished, Doctor.”

Vance smirked, the gold ring on his pinky glinting in harsh light.

His scent hit me. It was wrong, like a cheap dollar store air freshener masking rot.

Not human, but he wasn’t a Song or a Roberts either.

I didn’t recognize it. He was a hired gun with no pack loyalty.

“Oh, I think we are,” he said, rolling his shoulders in a mock stretch.

A challenge. My wolf reared up, hackles rising.

This bastard thought he could posture in my territory?

Sabrina’s pulse jumped, pumping rapidly against the fragile skin of her throat. Her scent flared, and my vision tinted amber. Mine to protect.

I stepped forward, my claws barely sheathed. “What’s your business here, Vance?”

He straightened, smirk widening. “Just doing my job, Song. Ensuring the mine’s reputation remains intact.”

“The mine’s reputation?” Sabrina’s voice sharpened. “People are dying, and you’re here to protect a corporation’s image?”

Vance shrugged, movements deliberately casual. “Evidence, Dr.Wu. That’s all I need. And so far, you’ve provided none.”

A growl tore from my throat. My vision turned red, the wolf clawing at the surface. “People don’t need evidence to know something’s wrong. They’re sick. Suffering. And you’re standing here spouting corporate bullshit.”

Vance’s mask slipped for a moment, unease flickering in his eyes as his nostrils flared.

The sign of a wolf sensing another wolf.

But he recovered quickly, the greasy smirk returning.

“Emotions won’t change facts, Song. Without proof, this is nothing more than a localized anomaly.

” He waved dismissively, though I caught the slight tremor in his fingers.

Sabrina stepped forward. “We’ll find the proof. And when we do, you won’t hide behind your lies.” Pride flared in my chest at the steely resolve in her voice.

Vance’s gaze narrowed. Rage darkened his face as he leaned in. “Be careful, Dr.Wu.

You're playing with forces you don't understand," he hissed.

The threat hung in the air for one heartbeat. Two.

Then my control snapped.

I moved on instinct, my body acting without thought.

In one fluid motion, I inserted myself between them, crowding into Vance's space until his back pressed against the reception desk.

The air was charged with the energy of my barely contained shift.

My vision tunneled, bleeding at the edges as my wolf surged forward, fangs poking out of my gums.

"Threaten her again," I snarled, the words barely coming out as human. "And they won't find enough pieces of you to identify."

The scent of Vance's fear perfumed the air, sharp and acrid.

It was sweet satisfaction to my wolf. He gulped, prey recognizing predator.

Stepping back, his polished facade cracked.

"This isn't over," he spat, voice losing its smooth edge.

He turned on his heel, storming out, the door slamming behind him.

The silence that followed was deafening. Sabrina let out a sharp breath and relaxed her shoulders. "That could've gone worse."

I turned to study her. Her dark hair framed her face in an unruly halo, and the fire in her eyes still burned even after her enemy had retreated. “You shouldn’t have faced him without me.”

Behind the counter, Juniper busied herself with her mortar and pestle, even though I knew she was listening to every word.

She met my gaze without flinching. “I can handle myself.”

“I know you can.” I paused. “But you don’t have to.”

Her eyes softened for a moment, vulnerability breaking through her armor. “Thanks for coming.”

I nodded, my wolf calming in her presence, and purring at her approval. Now that danger had passed, it wanted me to bury my face in her neck and breathe her in until the world narrowed to just us.

Focus. Vance’s scent was wrong, but Sabrina’s was a drug I couldn’t afford to crave. Not when every breath she took put her deeper in the crosshairs.

The air between us thickened, charged with something nameless. My pulse pounded in my ears, drowning out reason. For a moment, I imagined closing the distance, tasting those defiant lips for myself.

I cleared my throat, breaking the spell. “We need those water samples. Vance just confirmed it.”

“I agree. Vance showing up here isn’t a coincidence,” Sabrina said, pulling a folder from her desk drawer. Her hands were steady now, as professional determination took over. “Look at this.”

She spread preliminary test results across the desk. Water samples taken from three locations around the valley. The numbers meant little to me, but the red highlights told everything.

“Heavy metals,” she explained, finger tracing a line of figures. “Concentrated around the eastern creek bed, right where it flows past the Roberts Mine property.”

I leaned closer, shoulder brushing hers. Forcing myself to focus on the results instead of how she seemed to lean into me, I pieced it together. “That’s where the trespassers were spotted near my property. They’re monitoring the contamination.”

Sabrina nodded, her eyes bright with triumph and concern. “Exactly. But I need more comprehensive samples. The kind that stand up in court.” She glanced up, determined. “Tomorrow at dawn, we hit the creek.”

“Be careful, Wu.” The words came out rougher than I intended. “Vance isn’t the only one watching us.”

She met my gaze, unflinching. “I’m not scared of them.”

I knew she wasn’t. That’s what terrified me.

As she walked away, I watched the sway of her hips and the confident set of her shoulders. I was torn between protection and possession. The pain in my side flared again. A warning of what happened when you let someone close.

I pressed my palm against the wound, feeling its familiar throb. Victoria had taken enough from me. I wouldn’t let her, or anyone else, take Sabrina, too.

For ten years, I’d chosen isolation. Safety through solitude. The mountain and my fortune were my only companions. It had been enough, or so I’d convinced myself.

Back at my estate, I paced my study, unable to settle. The pain pulsed with my heartbeat, but for once, it wasn't the dominant thought in my mind.

Sabrina Wu had wormed under my skin in ways I couldn't comprehend. My wolf recognized something in her, not just fierce protectiveness when Vance threatened her, but something deeper, more primal. Something I'd sworn never to feel again.

I pulled out the antique compass my grandfather gave me, its weight solid and comforting in my palm. North had always been my constant, my guide when everything shifted. But since Sabrina arrived, my internal compass spun wildly, always pointing to her no matter which way I turned.

The realization terrified and exhilarated me equally.

Soon we would collect the water samples and take the first real step toward exposing the Roberts Mine. But tonight, alone in my mountain castle, I allowed myself to acknowledge the truth I'd been fighting. Sabrina Wu wasn't just an ally in this battle.

She was becoming my true north.

SAbrINA

The lights overhead cast a harsh glow that made my eyes ache after hours of squinting at samples.

Twelve vials lined up like silent witnesses to a crime.

My lab coat clung to my shoulders, damp with nervous sweat as I adjusted the microscope's lens for the hundredth time.

After our trip to the mountains to gather samples of the mine runoff, I rearranged my office at the clinic into a makeshift laboratory.

My fingers trembled slightly. I took a deep breath to steady them.

This can't be what I think it is. Please, let me be wrong just this once.

The screen flickered into focus, and my heart sank as the evidence appeared before me in horrifying clarity.

Helplessly, I watched the chemicals attack the shifter blood cells from the samples I'd taken from Marshall and Logan.

From my analysis, they were silver and arsenic compounds along with something engineered that I couldn't immediately identify.

"No, no, no," I whispered, my throat tight as I switched to my own human blood

sample and watched it remain completely unaffected. The contrast was damning.

The room seemed to close in around me, the brightness of the lights suddenly suffocating. I pressed my palms against the cool metal of the lab table to ground myself, feeling my pulse hammering through my fingertips. Every heartbeat pushed the terrible truth deeper into my consciousness.

I pulled up the image again on the computer screen, staring at the magnified blood cells as they reacted to the contaminants.

The shifter cells didn't just deteriorate.

They writhed in agony, their membranes bubbling and bursting like they were being burned from the inside out.

My own cells remained placid, unbothered by the same poisons.

"God," I whispered. The taste of bile rose in my throat as I swallowed hard against the nausea.

"It's deliberate," I murmured, my voice cracking. "Someone's trying to kill them."

I scribbled down my findings, my handwriting hurried but precise. My mind raced, piecing together the puzzle. The Roberts Mine, the sickness spreading through town. All of it was connected.

The hinges creaked out their protest as the door swung open. "You've been here all night," Logan said. His voice was a rumble in the quiet room. There was no accusation in his tone, just quiet observation.

I looked up, suddenly aware of my disheveled appearance. My ponytail had loosened

hours ago, and strands of hair stuck to my neck. Exhaustion pulled at every muscle, making my lab coat feel like chain mail.

“I had to be sure,” I said, pushing my glasses up with the back of my wrist. “And now I am.”

I gathered my notes and handed them to him. “The contamination kills shifters. Only shifters.”

Logan’s face transformed as he read my notes, his expression morphing from concentration to dawning horror and finally settling into something darker. Raw, primal rage. The paper crumpled in his fist.

“You’re saying this is...” His voice trailed off, dangerously quiet.

I swallowed hard, then reached for another file folder, the one I’d been dreading to show him.

“There’s more,” I said, my voice barely above a whisper. “I compared the water samples with the fluid I extracted from your wound.”

His head snapped up, eyes flashing amber. His wolf was barely contained below the surface. I forced myself to continue despite the predator’s gaze now fixed on me.

“The chemical signatures match, Logan. Identical compounds. Whatever’s in the runoff is the same poison that’s been keeping your wound from healing.

” My hands trembled as I laid out the test results side by side.

“This isn’t a coincidence. Someone engineered this poison specifically to target shifter physiology, and you’ve been the original test subject for years. ”

The muscle in Logan's jaw pulsed as he stared at the matching chemical signatures. His breathing grew shallow, controlled. It was the kind of deliberate calm that masked lethal intent.

"Victoria," he growled, the name like venom on his tongue. "This has my aunt's fingerprints all over it."

I froze, pieces clicking together. "Your family's behind this?"

"Not family," he corrected, his voice hardening.

"The Songs stopped being my family the day they tried to kill me. She's been trying to form an alliance with the Roberts pack for years.

"His eyes darkened with realization. "The wound that never healed was just her first experiment. Now she's poisoning an entire town. "

His fist slammed down on the counter, sending vials rattling. "I should have known. I should have fucking known she'd follow me here."

The raw guilt and fury emanating from him were almost tangible. I reached out before I could stop myself, my fingers brushing his forearm. The contact seemed to take the wind out of his rage. His breathing slowed as his eyes met mine.

"This isn't your fault," I said firmly. "But it is something we can stop." Despite my nerves, I kept my voice steady. "We need to act fast. If this gets out, the town will panic. But if we don't do something, more people will die."

Logan's gaze met mine, his usual scowl softened by something I couldn't quite place. "What do you need?"

The question caught me off guard. For the first time, Logan wasn't resisting me.

Instead, he was offering help. "We need proof," I said, my mind racing.

"Something concrete that proves the contamination comes from the mine and that it isn't an accident.

And we need to warn the town without causing a panic. "

Logan nodded, his expression grim. "I'll handle the town. You focus on the evidence."

I nodded, resolve hardening. "Okay. Let's do this."

Logan pulled out his phone. His tone was brisk as he typed on the screen. "I'll fund a private lab to test the samples. We'll bypass the red tape and get results faster."

I blinked, surprised. "A private lab? That's expensive."

He shrugged, his expression unreadable. "Money's not an issue. Time is."

I felt a flicker of unease at how easily he could throw money at the problem, but pushed it aside. "Thank you," I said sincerely.

Logan's gaze softened. "Just get me the proof."

Later that day, I visited Marshall at the clinic's impromptu inpatient ward.

He had refused a transfer to a bigger hospital, stating he was going to die in Angel Spring with or without medicine.

Stubborn wolves. Marshall's usually robust frame looked shrunken against the white sheets, his skin ashen except for the fever flush across his cheekbones.

My chest tightened. This was a man who could wrestle a bull moose last month, but now he was barely able to lift his head.

"How are you holding up?" I asked.

His lips cracked as he attempted a smile. "Been better, Doc. Been worse too, I suppose."

I checked his vitals with practiced movements, but my mind raced beyond the numbers. His pulse was stronger than yesterday, and his temperature was down a full degree. Small victories that felt monumental after my discovery.

"You're improving," I said, unable to hide my small smile. "But you're not out of the woods yet."

Marshall's gaze sharpened as he studied me, reminding me that even weakened, he was still a predator who saw through pretense. "You look like hell, Doc. When's the last time you slept? Or ate something that wasn't from a plastic bag?"

I forced a laugh, tucking my stethoscope into my pocket. "Sleep's overrated. And I'll have you know I had an entire apple at some point yesterday. Or maybe the day before."

"You're as stubborn as Logan," he said, voice softening. "God help us all when you two finally figure yourselves out."

My smile faltered, a flush creeping up my neck. "Someone has to be stubborn around here. Otherwise, you'd all just growl your problems away."

As I left the clinic, I found Logan waiting outside. “We need to talk,” he said.

“What’s wrong?”

He hesitated, then gestured toward his truck. “Not here. Too many ears.”

We drove in silence, the moment percolating between us. When we were safely away from town, Logan stopped at a trailhead parking lot. “Victoria’s making her move. Reeve called. His sources say she’s pressuring the Roberts pack to sell the mine.”

“We’re running out of time,” I concluded.

Logan nodded grimly. “We need to act fast. But it’s going to be dangerous.”

I placed a hand on his arm. “We don’t have a choice. People are dying, Logan. We can’t let them get away with this.”

He studied me, amber eyes searching mine. “You’re not scared?”

I met his gaze steadily. “Terrified. But that doesn’t mean I’ll back down.”

Logan’s lips twitched in a faint smile. “Good. Because neither will I. We need to get these samples somewhere safe.”

Back at the clinic, I organized my evidence, packing away the test results and water samples into a carrier. My hands shook slightly, but my determination never wavered. I labeled each sample carefully, building our case piece by piece.

A knock startled me. It was Juniper. Her white hair was woven into a thick braid, and the scent of herbal medicine clung to her faded shawl.

“I heard about the water samples,” she said, her voice crackling like dried leaves. “The trees whisper your secrets, child. You’ve found something, haven’t you?”

I hesitated, then nodded, suddenly feeling the weight of my discovery anew. “Heavy metals. Silver compounds. Arsenic. As well as something that’s not all natural.” My voice dropped lower. “Someone’s been poisoning the water deliberately. Targeting shifters specifically.”

Juniper’s weathered face seemed to age another decade before my eyes. She crossed to where I stood and took my hands in hers. Her cool and paper-thin skin revealed a map of blue veins beneath.

“I’ve seen this before, child,” she whispered, her eyes distant with memory. “Thirty years ago, when the mine first opened and the Song pack still ran with the Roberts wolves.”

Her grip tightened, surprisingly strong.

“Last time they poisoned this valley, the Roberts men came at night with checks and threats.” Her thumbnail brushed aside my bangle and traced a circle on my wrist. It was an old protection symbol I recognized from my grandmother’s teachings.

“The ones who refused to sign disappeared into mine shafts. The rest drank themselves to death within a decade, as the guilt ate at them from inside like the poison ate their packs.”

My blood turned to ice. “Why doesn’t anyone talk about this? How could everyone forget?”

Juniper’s eyes flashed with fire that belied her age.

“Time may have forgotten, child, but I remember. The earth remembers. And now you know too.” She pressed something into my palm.

It was a small leather pouch that smelled of protective herbs.

“You’ll need this. The mine has eyes everywhere, and they don’t like people asking questions. ”

Night had fallen by the time Logan returned, moving through shadows like he belonged to them. “The private lab’s ready,” he said, voice pitched low enough that only shifter hearing could catch it. “We’re moving the evidence tonight.”

His eyes scanned the clinic walls, nostrils flaring slightly. “The mine has people sniffing around. Started this afternoon after you visited the creek again.” His gaze locked with mine. “It’s not safe here anymore, Sabrina.”

The use of my first name sent a jolt through me. He rarely called me anything but “Wu” or “Doc.” The change signaled our situation’s gravity more clearly than words could.

I nodded, already gathering the case of samples and securing the latches. “Where?”

Logan stepped closer, his warmth radiating in the cool night air of the clinic. “Somewhere they won’t think to look,” he said. “Do you trust me?”

The question hung between us, weighted with more than just our current predicament. “Yes,” I said aloud, meeting his gaze steadily. “I trust you.”

Something shifted in his expression. It was a softening around his eyes, a brief vulnerability that vanished so quickly I might have imagined it. He reached for the case containing the samples.

“Then let’s go,” he said. “And don’t look back.”

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LOGAN

My muscles strained with each movement, sending familiar sharp pain lancing through my right side.

I ignored it, as I'd done for years, grinding my teeth against the burning sensation that never fully disappeared.

Tonight it seemed worse. As I loaded the last crate of evidence into the back of my truck, I paused, scanning the treeline for any sign of movement.

Nothing but trees rustling in the cold mountain breeze.

Sabrina locked the clinic door. Her hands trembled slightly as she pocketed the key, and my wolf surged forward, desperate to comfort her, protect her. The intensity of that instinct shook me to my core.

"You sure about this place?" she whispered, her eyes darting toward the darkened woods surrounding Angel Spring.

"No one knows about the cabin." I kept my voice low, though we were alone in the parking lot. "We'll be safe there."

What I didn't say was how my pulse quickened at the thought of being alone with her in that isolated space. Just the two of us, with no interruptions, no prying eyes. The thought both terrified and exhilarated me.

The drive through the forest was silent.

Headlights cut through the darkness, illuminating the rough dirt road ahead.

My wolf remained hypervigilant, catching scents my human side might miss, the musk of deer that had crossed the road hours earlier, the fresh pine sap from trees we passed, and beneath it all, the faint chemical odor that had begun to infect these woods.

But overpowering everything was Sabrina's scent, growing more intoxicating by the hour.

The wolf recognized what my human side was still coming to terms with. Mate. My mate.

Beside me, Sabrina clutched her satchel of lab results against her chest like armor. I stole glances at her profile, noting the determined set of her jaw and the shadows of exhaustion beneath her eyes.

My fingers tightened around the steering wheel. Every instinct screamed at me to pull over, to wrap her in my arms until that worried crease between her eyebrows disappeared. Instead, I pressed harder on the accelerator.

The cabin appeared exactly as we'd left it.

Cold, slightly musty, but secure. While most saw a rustic hideaway on the outside, I knew the truth.

The windows were reinforced with bulletproof glass, a state-of-the-art security system surrounded the land, disguised as a simple wooden fence, and emergency supplies were hidden inside that could sustain us for weeks.

Another refuge I'd created, another fortress to lock myself away from the world.

While Sabrina meticulously unpacked the evidence, I built a fire in the stone hearth. Orange flames licked at the dry logs, creating shadows that danced across the wooden walls as warmth slowly filled the space.

When I turned around, Sabrina sat perched on the edge of the bed, her face buried in her hands. Her shoulders slumped forward. Something in my chest constricted painfully at the sight.

"Hey," I said softly, crossing the room before I could think better of it. She didn't look up, but I heard her breath hitch. I hesitated for a moment before sitting beside her, the mattress dipping under our combined weight. My hand hovered awkwardly before coming to rest on her back.

"I just..." Her voice emerged muffled through her fingers. "I can't stop thinking about Marshall, about everyone who's sick. What if we're too late? What if we can't stop her?"

My hand moved in slow circles against her spine, feeling the knots of tension through her shirt.

"We will." The certainty in my voice surprised even me. "You're the strongest person I know."

She lifted her head then, eyes glistening with unshed tears, and my heart twisted. "I don't feel strong right now."

My fingers moved of their own accord, brushing a strand of dark hair from her face. "You don't have to be strong all the time. Not with me."

Something shifted in the air between us, like before a storm.

My wolf paced restlessly beneath my skin, whining with need.

The constant pain in my side dimmed, overshadowed by a different kind of ache coiling through my body.

Sabrina's breath stopped as my hand lingered on her cheek, my thumb tracing the delicate curve of her cheekbone.

Her eyes, those warm, intelligent eyes that saw through every defense I'd built, searched mine, and I felt the walls around my heart begin to crumble.

She'll leave eventually. Everyone does. The thought flashed through my mind, a last desperate attempt at self-preservation. But looking at her now, firelight reflecting in her eyes, I couldn't make myself believe it.

"I can't lose you," I murmured, the confession ripped from somewhere deep inside me. The truth of it hit me like a physical blow, stunning in its clarity.

"You won't," she whispered back, her voice trembling with emotion that matched the storm in my chest.

It was impossible to tell who moved first. One moment we were separated by inches of charged air, the next my arms wrapped around her waist, pulling her against me as my lips found hers.

The kiss was desperate, tender, a culmination of every glance and touch we'd shared since she'd arrived in Angel Spring.

Her hands clutched at my shirt, fingers twisting in the fabric as if anchoring herself to

me.

The fire crackled behind us, drenching us in a golden glow as the world beyond the cabin walls ceased to exist. My hands slipped under the edge of her shirt, tracing the curve of her spine, feeling the warmth of her soft skin.

Her fingers tangled in my hair, nails scraping lightly against my scalp in a way that sent shivers straight down to my loins.

When we finally broke apart, our foreheads pressed together, our breaths mingling in the space between us. My heart hammered against my ribs so hard I was certain she could feel it.

“I’ve never let anyone in like this before,” I admitted, my voice barely audible above the fire’s crackle.

Her lips turned up in a soft smile before pressing against mine again, feather-light. “Neither have I.”

We stayed wrapped in each other’s arms for what felt like hours. For now, the problems outside of this cabin ceased to exist. Firelight danced across her skin, turning it to gold, highlighting the contours of her face in a way that made my breath catch.

Sabrina’s shoulders trembled slightly, a sign of the fatigue that had been gnawing at her for hours.

Even with the fire roaring in the hearth, a chill seemed to cling to her, and it wasn’t just from the cool mountain air.

Her eyes shimmered with weariness, and my heart clenched at the sight.

Every inch of me ached to provide her comfort and warmth.

“You’re exhausted,” I murmured, my voice low and gentle. I ran my fingers lightly down her arm, feeling the goosebumps that prickled her skin. “And cold.”

Without waiting for her response, I stood up, not willing to let her shiver any longer.

I crossed the room to the small bathroom, where the clawfoot tub had always seemed indulgent until now.

I twisted the shiny brass knobs until the porcelain tub began to fill with hot water.

The steam rose in curls, carrying with it the faint scent of sandalwood and musky amber from the bath salts scattered on a shelf.

As I turned back toward the bedroom, I caught the reflection of Sabrina’s face in the mirror above the sink. She was watching me, her eyes heavy with a mix of gratitude and something more intense. Something that made the air between us hum with electricity.

I returned to her, the sound of the running water filling the otherwise silent cabin. Sabrina had moved to the edge of the couch, her eyes locked onto mine as I approached.

“Come,” I said softly, reaching out my hand. “I’ve run you a bath.”

Sabrina slipped her hand into mine, her fingers cold against my warm palm. I led her to the bathroom, the steam from the bath wrapping around us like a tender embrace. She hesitated for a moment, her gaze flickering between the bath and me, before taking a step closer.

“Logan,” she whispered, her voice barely audible over the sound of the running water.

Before I could respond, she pressed her lips to mine, the kiss slow and deep.

The sensation of her mouth against mine sent a surge of heat through my body, igniting a fire within me that rivaled the one burning in the hearth.

Sabrina’s hands slid up my chest, her fingers tracing the contours of my muscles through my shirt. I could feel the tension in her body melt away, replaced by a hunger that matched my own. The steam from the bath enveloped us, creating a cocoon of warmth and desire.

When she pulled back, her eyes were dark with passion, and a small, secretive smile played on her lips. “I think this bath might be big enough for two.”

My breath caught as the invitation in her eyes was unmistakable. The thought of joining her in the bath, of feeling her skin slippery and slick with water, sent a rush of primal desire through me. My wolf howled within, eager to claim his mate.

“Sabrina,” I whispered, my voice ragged with need. It was all the answer she needed.

She undressed me slowly, her touch lingering on every bruise and scar. Each caress was a silent promise of healing, of acceptance. I stood still, letting her take the lead even as my wolf growled with impatience, wanting nothing more than to claim her, to make her mine completely.

When I was finally bare before her, the cold washroom air contrasting sharply with the heat of the bath, Sabrina’s eyes met mine.

There was a vulnerability in her gaze, but also wanton desire that sent a jolt of

possessiveness through me.

Reverently, I returned the favor, revealing her body bit by bit until all of her creamy skin glowed under the flickering light from the fire.

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She turned the taps off and drew me toward the tub. I stepped in, feeling the scented water lapping at my skin, then gripped her waist, guiding her in after me. She settled between my legs, her back against my chest, and the sudden warmth of her skin against mine made my breath hitch.

Sabrina reached for the bottle of massage oil on the shelf, pouring it into her hands, and began massaging my shoulders. Her fingers worked magic, kneading the knots away, soothing the constant ache that had become a part of me. I groaned low in my throat, the tension melting away under her touch.

As she worked, I slipped my hands over her hips, feeling the supple curves beneath my fingertips.

I found the massage oil and poured it onto my palms, rubbing them together to warm the liquid.

I started with her stomach, working in slow circles, my fingers sliding through the oil, tracing the delicate lines of her muscles, her skin soft and slick under my touch.

I lifted my hands to her shoulders, my thumbs pressing into the knots at the base of her neck. She moaned softly, letting her head fall back against my chest. Her surrender, the way she gave herself over to me, sent a primal surge of power through me.

I moved my hands lower, massaging every inch of her as if it were sacred ground. She arched against me as I slid my hands to her thighs, taking the oil with them. When I finally eased my fingers between her legs, her gasp was the sweetest sound

I'd ever heard.

She was slick, the oil blending with her own arousal, turning her into a slippery dream under my touch. I circled her clit, teasing, edging, driving her wild before pushing two fingers inside her. She clenched around me, and I felt the first ripple of a deep, dark need.

I pressed my lips against her shoulder, whispering my intentions into her ear. "I want to prepare you for me, Sabrina. All of you."

She nodded, her breath coming in quick pants as I slid my finger, slick with oil, around the rim of her tighter opening. She tensed for a moment, but I kissed her neck, my voice a low rumble against her skin. "Open for me, sweetheart. Let me in."

She relaxed, her body becoming pliant, trusting. I pushed in gently, feeling her stretch around me. The growl that ripped from my throat was animalistic, primal. She moaned, her body writhing against mine, seeking more.

I lifted her, turning her to face me, her legs wrapping around my waist. Her eyes were dark pools of desire, and I saw my own reflection in them, wild and untamed. I positioned myself, feeling my cock nudge at her entrance. She hesitated, her breath catching as she felt the size of me.

"You can take it," I murmured, my voice a low growl. "Be a good girl and let me in."

She whimpered as I began to push inside her, her body stretching to accommodate me. I felt her tense, and I kissed her deeply, sucking her lower lip into my mouth as I inched deeper. "That's it, baby. Take it all."

Her whimpers turned into soft moans as she adjusted to my size, the pain giving way to pleasure. I thrust slowly at first, letting her feel every inch of me. Her fingers dug

into my shoulders, her nails biting into my skin as she began to move with me, her hips meeting mine.

As Sabrina wrapped her legs around my waist, drawing me deeper into her, I could feel her body opening up to me, trusting me completely. The sensation of her wet heat enveloping me was intoxicating, but I wanted more. I wanted all of her.

I slipped one hand between us, tracing the curve of her ass, my fingers slick with the massage oil that still coated our skin.

As I thrust into her, I circled her tight entrance with my index finger, applying gentle pressure.

She tensed for a moment, but I kissed her deeply, distracting her as I eased my finger into her ass.

The sensation was overwhelming, a symphony of pleasure that sent jolts of electricity coursing through my body. Sabrina gasped, her eyes widening as she felt the dual invasion.

“That’s it, baby,” I murmured against her lips. “Let me in. Let me feel you completely.”

I began to move my finger in sync with my thrusts, pushing in as I pulled out, creating a rhythm that had her writhing in my arms. The increased tightness around my cock was exquisite, each movement heightening the pleasure that coursed through us both.

As she adjusted to the sensation, I slipped a second finger into her ass, stretching her further.

The moan that escaped her lips was raw and primal, a sound that spoke directly to the wolf within me.

I could feel my knot beginning to swell, the primal urge to claim her, to fill her completely, surging through me.

“Logan,” she gasped, her nails digging into my shoulders as I thrust deeper, harder, my fingers working in tandem with my cock.

“Yes, baby. Feel it. Feel me.” I growled, my teeth grazing her neck, wanting to draw out the pleasure, to build it until she shattered.

The sensation of my fingers pressed against my cock, separated only by that thin wall of muscle, was more than I could bear. I added a third finger, stretching her to the limit, preparing her for what was to come. She was so tight, so wet, so completely mine.

Her cries became louder, harder, her body clenching around me in a vice-like grip.

I could feel her orgasm building, her inner walls pulsing around me, the sensation intensified by the pressure of my fingers.

I thrust deeper, chasing our release together, the connection between us so profound that I could feel her pleasure as if it were my own.

She began to bounce on my lap, her eagerness driving me wild. Her breasts pressed against my chest, her hardened nipples brushing against me with every movement. I reached around, gripping her hips tightly, guiding her movements, pushing her down onto me with every thrust.

When she came, it was with a scream, her body convulsing around me as she

clenched and released in wave after wave of pleasure, the ecstasy pushing her over the edge again and again.

The sight of her, lost in the throes of pleasure, tipped me over the brink.

My cock swelled, my knot locking us together as I filled her with my cum, the hot stream pulsing deep inside her.

My cock throbbed and pulsed, the sensation intense as my cum spilled out, marking her from the inside.

In that moment, my wolf surged forward, demanding his claim.

My teeth sank into the soft skin of her neck, marking her as mine, forever.

The act was brutal, raw, but also filled with a tenderness that acknowledged our souls entwined.

“Mine,” I whispered against her neck, my voice a mix of man and beast. “You are mine, my mate.”

She clung to me, biting down on my neck as her honeyed walls squeezed me once again. Her heartbeat matched mine, her breaths mingling with my own. We stayed locked together, riding out the pleasure, the connection deeper than any I had ever known.

This was more than just a physical act. It was a raw, primal claim and complete surrender.

As the steam from the bath began to dissipate, the water cooling around us, I became acutely aware of the warm glow that had ignited within me.

It was the mating bond, a connection that transcended the physical, a tie that bound our very souls together.

I could feel Sabrina's emotions as if they were my own.

Her satisfaction, her exhaustion, and underneath it all, a surge of love that mirrored mine.

With a tenderness I hadn't known I was capable of, I slipped my fingers from her, causing her to shudder one last time. I kissed her shoulder, her neck, the spot where my mark now lay, a sense of primal satisfaction filling me at the sight of it. She was mine, and I was hers. Forever.

"Let me take care of you," I murmured, my voice gentle yet firm. She nodded weakly, her body limp and sated against mine.

I reached for the soft cloth resting on the edge of the tub and dipped it into the water. Slowly, carefully, I began to clean her, wiping away the remnants of our passion with reverent strokes. She sighed contentedly, her eyes fluttering closed as I ministered to her, my touch gentle and loving.

Once I was satisfied that she was clean, I stepped out of the tub, wrapping a towel around my waist before lifting her into my arms. She was light, her body pliant as I enveloped her in a soft, warm robe. Her eyes met mine, and the sheer depth of emotion in her gaze shook me to my core.

Carrying her to the bed, I laid her down gently, her dark hair fanning out around her like a halo. I climbed in beside her, pulling her into my arms, our bodies fitting together like two pieces of a puzzle. She nuzzled into my chest, her breath warm against my skin.

“I love you, Sabrina,” I whispered, the words escaping my lips like a secret. Her eyes opened, meeting mine, and I saw the reflection of my own feelings in their depths.

“I love you too, Logan,” she replied, her voice barely above a whisper.

Our lips met in a soft, languid kiss. There was no urgency, no desperation, just a gentle exploration, a promise of more to come. As we pulled away, our foreheads rested against each other, our breaths mingling in the space between us.

Exhaustion washed over me, the events of the day and the intensity of our mating catching up with me. I felt Sabrina’s body relax, and her breathing evened out as she succumbed to sleep. I followed her soon after.

Later, as the night deepened around us, we lay entwined on the narrow bed.

Her head rested on my chest, her long, dark hair spilling across my skin.

I traced lazy patterns on her back, marveling at how perfectly she fit against me.

My thoughts whirled with emotions I was only beginning to understand.

Fear, hope, and something deeper I wasn’t ready to name.

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I watched Sabrina sleeping beside me, her dark lashes casting delicate shadows on her cheeks.

Something fundamental had shifted inside me.

My enhanced hearing picked up the gentle rhythm of her heartbeat, steady and calm.

Outside, a fox slipped through the underbrush.

My wolf cataloged the sound automatically, dismissing it as non-threatening.

The territory around the cabin had been marked as mine long ago, my scent warnings clear to any creature with the sense to heed them.

But now, as I inhaled deeply, I realized the markers had changed.

My scent was now intertwined with Sabrina's, creating something new and powerful.

It was the unmistakable marker of a mated pair's territory.

My wolf, usually prowling restlessly beneath my skin, was content and silent when she was around.

The sensation was so foreign that I nearly gasped aloud.

For years, my inner beast had been a source of constant vigilance, always alert for threats, always prepared to defend.

Now it purred with a bone-deep satisfaction that left me reeling.

I carefully traced the curve of her shoulder with my fingertips, afraid she might vanish if I touched her too firmly.

The mate bond between us pulsed like a living thing, warm and vibrant.

I could feel her emotions now, a gentle echo alongside my own.

It was contentment, security, and beneath it all, a fierce protectiveness that matched my own.

Mine , my wolf rumbled. Ours to protect. Ours to cherish.

The weight of that responsibility should have terrified me. Instead, it settled on me like a crown I'd been born to wear.

For so long, I'd defined myself by what I wasn't. I was not weak like my father, not manipulative like Victoria, not a pawn to be sacrificed for the Song pack's advancement. I'd built walls around myself so thick and high that I'd forgotten what it felt like to let anyone see beyond them.

Yet Sabrina had walked through those barriers as if they were nothing more than fog.

I pressed my face into her hair, breathing in her scent. The chronic pain that had been my constant companion flared briefly before subsiding to a dull throb, as if even that ancient wound recognized the healing that had begun.

"I never thought I'd find this," I whispered against her skin, the confession easier in the hushed stillness of dawn with her still drifting in sleep. "Never thought I deserved it."

She stirred slightly, instinctively pressing closer to me. Through our new bond, I felt her happiness ripple, responding to my touch even in sleep. The sensation nearly undid me.

For the first time since I'd left the Song pack, the hollow ache of isolation that had been carved into my chest was filled. Not just with Sabrina, but with the possibility of family, of belonging, of a future where I wasn't perpetually braced for betrayal.

It terrified me. It exhilarated me. It felt like coming home to a place I'd never known existed. I tightened my arms around her, a silent vow forming in my heart. I would protect this bond with everything I had.

Morning arrived in thin beams of light filtering through the cabin's wooden slats.

For the first time in years, I woke without the immediate stab of pain in my side.

Sabrina's head rested on my chest still, her arm draped across my torso.

The buzzing of my phone pulled me from this unexpected peace.

I carefully extracted myself from Sabrina's warm embrace, her soft breathing uninterrupted as I slipped outside to answer.

The moment I stepped away from her, the pain returned, sharper than before, as if punishing me for the brief respite.

Reeve's message hit me like ice water. "The Roberts Mine CEO is dead. Victoria's making her move."

My stomach plummeted. I clenched my fists, staring at the screen. This was no coincidence. Victoria's fingerprints were all over this. I could feel it in my bones.

When I stepped back inside, Sabrina was beginning to stir awake, her eyes fluttering open slowly. Her hair was mussed from sleep, her lips still slightly swollen from our kisses.

“What’s wrong?” The remnants of sleep vanished from her voice when she saw my expression.

I sat beside her, handing her the phone. “Roberts is dead. Victoria’s behind it.”

Her face paled as she read the message. “This is bad, Logan. She’s trying to take control.”

“We need to act fast.” My jaw tightened with resolve. “She’s not going to stop until she gets what she wants.”

Sabrina reached for my hand, her grip strong and certain. “We’ll stop her.”

As we prepared to leave the sanctuary of the cabin, I paused at the threshold, my hand braced against the doorframe. I turned to face her, suddenly needing her to understand.

“Last night... it meant something to me.” The words felt clumsy, inadequate for what I was trying to convey. “This wasn’t just a one time thing for me.”

Her smile reached her eyes, warming them like sunshine. “It meant something to me, too.”

The drive back to town passed in comfortable silence. The threat of Victoria loomed larger than ever, but my thoughts kept circling back to Sabrina, her strength and her compassion, and the way she’d somehow slipped past every defense I’d built.

When we arrived at the clinic to check on Marshall, I noticed the old wolf was sitting up in bed, and some color had returned to his weathered face. A rush of relief washed through me as Sabrina immediately switched into doctor mode, reaching for her stethoscope.

“Your complexion’s better,” she observed, pressing the cold metal disc against his chest. “Deep breath for me.”

Marshall complied, his knowing gaze moving between us as Sabrina conducted her examination.

I could feel his assessment, sharp and perceptive despite his illness.

He’d always been able to read me, even when I first arrived in town.

In many ways, he’d filled the void my father had left by simply being the kind of man I’d needed to see. Strong, principled, patient.

“The fever’s down,” Sabrina announced, checking his chart with efficient movements. “And your white count is stabilizing.” Her fingers pressed gently along his lymph nodes. “Swelling’s reduced too. How’s the pain?”

“Still there, but not trying to tear me apart from the inside anymore,” Marshall replied, his voice stronger than I’d heard it in days. My wolf relaxed slightly at the improvement in his condition.

As Sabrina continued her exam, checking his pupils and lung sounds, Marshall’s eyes locked with mine. “Something’s happened,” he stated rather than asked, reading my tension. “I can smell it on you.”

I nodded grimly. “Roberts is dead. Someone’s making their move.”

Marshall's weathered face hardened. "Convenient timing, wouldn't you say?" Though he didn't know Victoria or her schemes, Marshall had always possessed an uncanny ability to sense when larger forces were at work. "This mine business stinks worse than a wounded coyote."

"You don't know the half of it," I muttered, thinking of Victoria's ruthless ambition. "It's complicated. Family business."

Marshall's eyebrows rose at that. He knew enough about my past to understand what those two words meant coming from me. "Your family business has a way of becoming everyone's problem, son."

"I know," I admitted. "This town, the pack territories surrounding it. It's all being threatened."

"And how do you plan to handle it?" Marshall asked, not demanding an answer, but guiding me toward finding my own solution. It was how he'd always approached our conversations, from the day I'd arrived in Angel Spring, a lone wolf with too many scars and not enough trust.

Sabrina finished writing her notes in Marshall's chart before joining the conversation. "We have evidence of the contamination," she said. "If we can prove who's responsible—"

"You'll need more than paper trails," Marshall interrupted gently. "People with power don't leave obvious tracks."

I rubbed my jaw, feeling the stubble there. "You're right. We need a direct connection between the mine operations and what's happened here."

Marshall nodded, relaxing back against his pillows.

Though still weak, the improvement in his condition was undeniable.

His eyes weren't as glassy, his breathing less labored.

The veins in his neck, which had been dark and prominent just days ago, had faded to their normal appearance.

Whatever Sabrina had done was working, at least temporarily.

"You've done good work, Doctor," Marshall said to Sabrina, his tone warm with approval that made my chest tighten. He'd never been easy with praise, making it all the more meaningful when offered. "This town hasn't had proper medical care in a long time."

"Thank you," Sabrina replied, her cheeks flushing slightly. "But we need to stop the source, or this will just keep happening."

"You two make a good team," he remarked, a faint smile playing on his still-pale lips. Marshall's gaze shifted between us again, a knowing glint in his eyes that made me want to look away. He saw too much, always had.

I glanced at Sabrina, chest swelling with a pride I'd never felt before. "Yeah," I agreed softly. "We do."

"About damn time you found someone worth fighting alongside," Marshall added, his voice lowering so only my shifter hearing could catch it. "Instead of fighting alone."

"Now," Marshall continued, speaking normally again.

"You two better get moving. Whoever's behind this won't wait for you to build a

perfect case.

” He reached out, catching my wrist in a surprisingly strong grip.

“And Logan? Remember what I taught you about hunting wounded predators. They’re at their most dangerous when cornered. ”

I nodded, covering his hand with mine briefly. “Rest. Get stronger. We’ll handle this.”

As we prepared to leave, Marshall called after us: “Doctor Wu?”

Sabrina turned back. “Yes?”

“Whatever you’re doing for me is working. I can feel my wolf healing.” His eyes, so much like the timber wolves that roamed these mountains, held fierce determination. “Use that. The evidence isn’t just numbers on paper. It’s lives.

She nodded. “I will.”

Outside the clinic, I paused, taking in Sabrina’s focused expression. The sunlight caught in her dark hair, highlighting strands of deep amber I hadn’t noticed before. The mate bond between us hummed steadily, a constant awareness of her presence that both grounded and exhilarated me.

“Marshall’s looking better,” I observed. “Your treatment is working.”

“For now,” she qualified, but I could feel her satisfaction through our bond. “But it’s just managing symptoms. If we don’t stop the contamination once and for all...”

She didn’t need to finish. We both knew what was at stake. It was not just Marshall’s

life, but the entire shifter community of Angel Spring. My territory. My responsibility.

And now, with Sabrina by my side, I finally felt equipped to face it.

As we walked to my truck, I instinctively placed my hand at the small of Sabrina's back. "Victoria won't stop until she gets what she wants," I said. "But neither will we."

Sabrina's eyes met mine. Through our bond, I could feel her resolve matching my own. "No," she agreed, reaching up to brush her fingers against my jaw. "We won't."

My wolf practically purred with satisfaction. For the first time in years, I wasn't facing a fight alone. We'd build our case against Victoria and the Roberts Mine. We'd protect what was ours.

But today, in this moment, I allowed myself to savor the certainty that had replaced a lifetime of doubt. Sabrina was my mate, my partner, my future. And nothing, not Victoria, not the Song pack, not all the forces they could muster, would take that from me.

SAbrINA

Marshall's massive body hung limp in Logan's arms as he kicked open the clinic door.

My heart lurched at the sight. Marshall's skin had turned ashen, his breathing so shallow I could barely detect it.

His normally ruddy sun-kissed complexion was now pale as winter moonlight.

The sour scent of sickness rolled off him in waves.

"Get him on the table," I commanded, sweeping my arm across the exam surface to clear it. Supplies clattered to the floor. "What happened?"

Logan laid Marshall down with surprising gentleness. "Found him collapsed in his barn. Temperature is through the roof."

"Stubborn old wolf." Despite my protests that he stay at the clinic for further observation, Marshall insisted on going back to his ranch.

Said his animals needed him. Now, he was paying the price.

I pressed my stethoscope to Marshall's chest, wincing at the erratic, racing heartbeat. "Fever's at 105."

My hands moved steadily, but inside, panic clawed at my chest. I'd treated shifter

illnesses before, but never one this advanced, never one where failure meant losing not just a patient but someone who had become my friend.

The voice of my old medical school professor echoed in my head: “You’re smart, Wu, but are you tough enough? ”

I yanked open the medication cabinet, hands moving on autopilot as I grabbed what I needed. “Logan, get me the blue bottle on the top shelf.”

Logan moved with silent efficiency, his usual growl replaced by tense concentration. When he handed me the vial, his fingers brushed mine, and I felt something I’d never detected from him before, a tremor. The unshakeable alpha was scared.

I’d smelled fear on countless patients, but on Logan? It felt wrong, like watching a mountain crumble.

He trusts me with this , I realized. He’s letting me see him afraid.

That fear sparked something fierce inside me. I wouldn’t let him down. Wouldn’t let Marshall down.

Marshall’s eyes flickered open, clouded with pain. “Doc...?” The word barely escaped as a rasp.

I squeezed his hand, forcing a smile. “You’re not dying on my watch, Boone. Don’t give up on us now.”

My fingers moved with practiced precision while my mind raced through every case study, every lecture, every desperate midnight remedy I’d ever encountered.

The silver nitrate solution shimmered under the harsh fluorescent lights as I measured

the precise dosage, knowing the line between cure and poison was razor thin.

Too much would send Marshall into immediate organ failure.

Too little would leave the heavy metals free to continue ravaging his system.

Logan hovered at my elbow, his body radiating heat I could feel without touching him. His breath came in controlled, even measures. Every muscle in his powerful frame coiled tight, ready to act, yet he remained still, giving me space to work while staying close enough that I knew he had my back.

“His heartbeat is irregular,” I murmured, more to organize my thoughts than to inform Logan. “The poisons are affecting his cardiac rhythm.”

Juniper’s voice cut through my concentration. “Try this.” The elderly healer pressed a mortar filled with a slurry into my palm, her weathered face creased with concern. “Burdock root. Draws out poisons.”

Logan elevated Marshall’s shoulder as I administered the mixture through the IV while Juniper fed him her herbal concoction. “Stay with us, you stubborn bastard,” Logan growled.

Marshall’s lips twitched slightly, but then his body convulsed. His back arched off the table like he was being electrocuted.

“Hold him down!” I barked, reaching for an anti-seizure medication.

My pulse hammered in my ears as I checked the monitors. No change. Damn it. I reached for another vial, but Logan caught my wrist, his touch surprisingly gentle.

“Breathe,” he murmured, his eyes finding mine. “You’ve got this.”

His faith in me steadied my hand. I nodded, adjusting the medication dosage. This time, when I administered it, Marshall's breathing evened slightly. Not a victory yet, but a reprieve.

Hours blurred together. Logan never left my side, anticipating my needs before I could voice them, handing me instruments, wiping Marshall's brow when my hands were busy, bringing me water when my voice grew hoarse from murmuring encouragement to our patient.

When my confidence faltered as Marshall's vitals dipped dangerously low, Logan's steady presence kept me going.

Each time I caught his gaze, his belief in me flowed through our bond.

This was what being mated meant. It was not just protection, but unwavering support when the fight seemed impossible.

Near dawn, Marshall's fever finally broke. I checked his vitals for the twentieth time and found them steady. Not normal, but no longer critical. I collapsed into a chair, every muscle in my body screaming in protest.

Logan knelt in front of me, his rough hands cradling my face with a tenderness that made my chest ache. "You did it."

"No," I whispered, my voice cracking from exhaustion. "We did it."

His eyes, those amber depths that had seemed so cold when we first met, now glowed with warmth.

I leaned into his touch, too exhausted to speak.

His thumb brushed across my cheek, and I realized it was wet.

I was crying. Logan didn't try to wipe the tears away or tell me to stop.

He simply held me, letting them fall, his gaze telling me everything I needed to hear.

The moment broke when Logan's phone buzzed. He pulled it out, his expression darkening as he read the message.

"Victoria's lawyers are circling the mine like vultures.

" His voice dropped to a dangerous register, the growl rumbling through his chest and into mine where we touched.

"They've already approached the Roberts board with a generous offer to buy controlling interest for the good of the community. " Disgust dripped from every word.

My exhaustion vanished, replaced by a cold fury. "She's been planning this. The contamination was an opportunity she's been waiting for."

Logan's eyes flashed wolf-gold, canines lengthening and garbling his words. "Victoria doesn't wait for opportunities. She creates them."

Logan's phone lit up again with a news alert. His face darkened further. "The Roberts Mine CEO's death is being ruled a natural cause."

"How convenient," I scoffed, anger cutting through my exhaustion. "Heart attack right when the contamination is discovered?"

Logan's grip on my shoulder tightened. "We're running out of time."

A weak groan drew our attention. Marshall's eyes were open, clearer now, though still pained.

"You two look like hell," he croaked.

I laughed, the sound catching in my throat. "Takes one to know one, Boone."

While Marshall drifted back to sleep, Logan helped me clean up the medical supplies, our movements synchronized without a word between us. When the last syringe was disposed of and the monitors set to alert us to any changes, I finally allowed myself to collapse against Logan's chest.

His arms wrapped around me immediately, solid and sure. I breathed him in.

"You scared me," he admitted, the words muffled against my hair.

I tilted my head up, surprised. "Me?"

Logan's gaze was raw, stripped of pretense. "Seeing you push yourself to the edge. I couldn't lose you."

I raised my hand to cup his face, my thumb tracing the scar on his jaw. "You won't," I whispered.

His lips met mine in a slow kiss. It was not frantic like our night in the cabin, but something deeper, an oath sealed between us.

A sharp knock shattered the moment. The door swung open before either of us could respond, and Dr. Elias Vance strode in, his expression a careful mask of professional concern that didn't quite reach his eyes.

“I heard about Marshall’s condition from the mine foreman,” he said. Dark circles shadowed his eyes, suggesting he’d been up all night too, though his shirt remained crisply pressed. “I came as soon as I could.”

The faint scent of cologne couldn’t quite mask the acrid stench of anxiety emanating from him. This wasn’t just a social call or a power play. Vance was worried. Not about Marshall, I realized, but about something else entirely.

I stepped forward, putting myself between him and my patient. “Marshall is stable now, Dr.Vance. Your assistance isn’t necessary.”

Vance’s eyes narrowed slightly as he assessed Marshall’s monitors, his expression shifting from feigned concern to genuine surprise. “You actually stabilized him.” He wasn’t speaking to me but to himself, the words carrying a weight of implications I couldn’t fully decipher.

He recovered quickly, straightening his tie. “Impressive work, Dr.Wu. But I’d recommend transferring him to the company facility. We have equipment specifically calibrated for treating these unusual cases.”

His words set off warning bells. He knew exactly what we were dealing with.

Logan moved to stand beside me, his body radiating barely restrained violence. “You mean you have facilities designed to cover up contamination symptoms.”

A muscle in Vance’s jaw twitched. “That’s quite an accusation, Mr.Song. The Roberts Mining Corporation has always prioritized worker safety.”

“Then why are your workers dying?” I challenged, emboldened by Logan’s presence beside me. “Why does Marshall have toxic levels of heavy metals in his system that match exactly what we found in the creek?”

Something flickered across Vance's face, not just fear but genuine conflict. For a heartbeat, I glimpsed a man trapped between professional obligations and moral responsibility.

"You don't understand the complexities of the situation," he said in a low voice. "There are factors at play beyond your comprehension."

"Enlighten us," Logan growled.

Vance glanced at the door, then back at us. "The mine has been under external pressure. New investors are demanding increased production rates, pushing to cut corners." He straightened, his professional mask sliding back into place. "But that doesn't mean I condone what's happening."

"Yet you're here to contain the evidence," I said, the realization bitter on my tongue.

"I'm here to offer my professional expertise," Vance countered, but the denial lacked strength. "You're good, Dr. Wu. Better than I anticipated. But you're fighting forces larger than one doctor can handle."

He turned to leave but paused at the door. "And Mr. Song? Your family connections won't protect you if you continue pursuing this. Some of us learned that lesson the hard way."

The door closed behind him with a soft click, far more unsettling than a slam would have been.

My hands shook with anger and a delayed adrenaline crash. Logan pulled me close again, his heartbeat steady against my ear.

"He's wrong," Logan said fiercely. "You saved Marshall with nothing but guts and

grit. That's worth more than all his damn resources."

I buried my face in his shirt, letting the rhythm of his heart calm my nerves.

Logan pressed his lips to the top of my head. "When this is over, when we've stopped Victoria and cleaned up this mess with the mine," he started, but then paused. His arms tightened around me. "Stay, Sabrina."

The simplicity of the request knocked the breath from my lungs. Two words that carried the weight of a future I hadn't allowed myself to imagine.

But I remembered every time I'd put down tentative roots only to be uprooted again. Every hospital that had valued my skills but never quite accepted a female doctor who smiled too much and didn't play corporate politics.

"Logan, I—" My voice caught. How could I explain that staying terrified me almost as much as leaving? That the thought of belonging somewhere, to someone, after a lifetime of professional detachment made my heart race with both longing and fear?

Instead of words, I lifted my hand to his face, tracing the strong line of his jaw. The stubble there rasped against my fingertips, another sensory memory I would carry with me no matter what came next.

"Let me help you save this place first," I whispered, neither a yes nor a no but a promise of now. "Then we'll talk about forever."

LOGAN

The acrid scent of diesel and desperation hit my nostrils before I even reached the mining camp. Workers scattered as I strode through the dusty compound. My boots kicked up clouds that matched the storm brewing inside me. My wolf paced beneath my skin, ready to break free.

Everything my senses took in put me on edge, the caustic chemical odor that shouldn't exist here, the nervous heartbeats of workers who avoided my gaze. My beast recognized the scent of corruption before my human mind processed it.

I spotted Vance near the main office with a clipboard in hand, his self-satisfied smirk vanishing when he saw me approach.

Despite the dusty surroundings, he wore an immaculate suit and Italian leather shoes.

The contrast between his polished appearance and the poisoned land made my wolf roar.

His scent changed instantly as I walked toward him, sharp with fear cutting through his designer cologne.

"Song." He straightened, attempting nonchalance while his pulse raced visibly at his throat. "Here to throw your weight around again?"

I didn't slow. Three strides closed the distance, then I grabbed him by his pristine collar and slammed him against the corrugated metal wall. His clipboard clattered to

the ground, papers scattering in the dirt.

“Victoria’s game is over,” I snarled. The wolf in me wanted to roar, to let the entire camp hear this man’s confession, but strategy demanded discretion. For now. “You’re going to tell me everything.”

Vance’s bravado wavered, but he managed a sneer. “Or what? You’ll kill me? She’ll just send another puppet.”

My grip tightened around his collar. I leaned closer, letting him feel my breath, smell the predator barely contained within my human form.

“Try me.”

The air between us crackled with alpha energy. Vance’s pupils dilated—naked fear finally breaking through his facade. He swallowed hard, his Adam’s apple bobbing against my knuckles.

“Fine.” His voice cracked. “You want the truth? She planted me here. Just like she planted others. To control the narrative, to make sure the contamination stayed hidden until it was too late.”

My wolf howled inside, demanding retribution. My own blood was capable of this calculated cruelty. The primal part wanted to shift right there, to tear out Vance’s throat for being Victoria’s puppet while innocent shifters suffered.

I fought the change, feeling my canines lengthen against my will, my vision sharpening as my eyes threatened to shift.

“And Roberts?”

Vance's laugh cracked like brittle glass. "You think that was natural causes? Please. She needed him out of the way so she could swoop in and save the mine. At a steep discount, of course."

The pieces clicked into place with sickening clarity. The contamination, the timing of Roberts's death, and Victoria's lawyers circling like vultures. All of it orchestrated with ruthless precision.

As I released Vance, something flashed in his eyes beyond fear or anger. He straightened his jacket with trembling hands, but beneath the scent of fear, I caught something else, the acrid odor of a cornered predator.

This man wasn't just scared. He was unstable. The combination of fear and opportunism made him unpredictable. Like a wounded animal that might flee or might turn and attack with unexpected ferocity.

I filed the observation away, keeping my expression neutral. "You're pathetic. Selling out your own kind for her scraps."

Vance adjusted his collar. "She pays better than loyalty."

I turned to leave.

"You can't stop her, Song," he called after me. "She's already won."

I didn't look back. "We'll see."

Back in my truck, I slammed the door and gripped the wheel until the leather creaked beneath my hands. My claws were still partially emerged, leaving rips in the expensive upholstery. I couldn't remember when I'd last lost control like this.

I closed my eyes, forcing myself to breathe through the fury. Each inhale carried the lingering scent of the mine's poison, each exhale a reminder of Victoria's betrayal. My family had deliberately contaminated the water, knowing it would sicken shifters. Knowing it would hurt my people.

Because they were my people now, weren't they? Not the Songs with their power plays and backstabbing, but Angel Spring. Marshall. Juniper.

Sabrina.

Her face appeared in my mind, and immediately, the rage faded. My claws retracted, and my breathing evened to a slow and steady pace. The clarity my mate brought me, even when she wasn't next to me, was becoming something I couldn't live without.

I pulled out my phone and dialed my PR team, the elite media specialists I kept on a seven-figure retainer for situations requiring discretion and immediate action.

"Faulkner," I said when my head of PR answered on the first ring. "I need the full package. Roberts Mining contamination scandal. Give it everything we have. Front page headlines, investigative features, social media blitz. This story breaks on every platform by morning."

"Sir, that's an aggressive timeline. The legal team will need—"

"Double their fees. Triple them if necessary." My tone left no room for negotiation. "This goes beyond business. People are dying."

I ended the call and immediately dialed my personal office. "Allocate twenty million for medical relief and water filtration systems. And I want Song Timber's environmental division redirected to Angel Spring. Full decontamination protocol."

The power of wealth had always felt hollow before, just another form of family control. But now, with the power of using my resources to protect rather than exploit, I felt something unfamiliar. Purpose.

Like instinctive muscle memory, I dialed Sabrina's number.

While I told her everything, I navigated the truck down the mountain road, dirt and gravel pinging against the undercarriage.

Sabrina went silent for several heartbeats, and I could almost see her processing, that brilliant mind working through implications.

"We'll shut the mine down," she finally said, voice firm with resolve.

My chest tightened with something between pride and worry. "It's not that simple. Without the heir of the Roberts pack's assets signing off—"

"Then we find him," Sabrina cut in. "Who owns the mine now?"

My mind raced through old connections, half-forgotten conversations at pack gatherings. "Tanner Roberts. Estranged, but the only heir left." I pulled over just long enough to text my assistant: Find Tanner Roberts. Get him to Angel Spring ASAP.

By the time I reached the clinic, I had settled into a state of vigilant calmness. The rage hadn't disappeared, but it had transformed into something focused.

Sabrina was already packing up her supplies into her bag when I walked in. She looked up, those warm brown eyes assessing me in that way only she could. "Your eyes are still amber," she said softly, setting down a stack of bandages. "The wolf is close."

I hadn't realized my partial shift was still visible. With anyone else, I would have hidden that vulnerability. With her, I didn't bother.

I caught her wrist as she reached for more supplies, feeling her pulse jump beneath my thumb. The connection between us sparked like a live wire, making my wolf rumble with satisfaction.

"Sabrina."

She turned, and I cupped her face, my fingers tracing the delicate line of her cheekbone. Against my rough, calloused hands, she felt impossibly soft. The contrast between us, her warmth against my cold fury, her healing touch against my destructive rage, struck me as the miracle it was.

"You healed me," I murmured, the words coming from somewhere deeper than thought.

Her eyes softened. "You let me."

I exhaled, feeling the last of my defenses crumble. "I was afraid. Of failing the town. Of failing you." The admission cost me, but her presence made it possible.

Sabrina leaned into my touch, her eyelids fluttering closed for a moment. "You're not alone anymore. Now let's end this for good."

Later, I sat in my study, reviewing the press release draft.

The language was clinical and precise, laying out Victoria's connections to the mine's management, the contamination timeline, and the suspicious circumstances of Roberts' death.

Every claim backed by evidence, every accusation a loaded gun aimed at my aunt's empire.

Sabrina watched from the doorway, arms crossed over her chest. "You're really going nuclear with this, huh?"

Outside, dark clouds hung over the mountains. A storm was approaching, both literally and figuratively. Time was up.

I looked up, meeting her gaze. "It's the only way to stop her."

Sabrina came over, leaning over the back of my chair. She rested her chin on my shoulder and wrapped her arms around me. "Just be careful. Power like this, it's a double-edged sword."

I nodded, my voice softening. "I know. But I'm doing this for them." My eyes held hers. "For you."

The next morning, the story broke. Headlines screamed about Roberts Mining's negligence and Victoria's shadowy involvement, even questioning the CEO's cause of death. My phone buzzed constantly with calls from reporters, investors, and business associates. Then finally, Victoria's number.

I silenced the device and pocketed it. Let her stew. Let her feel, just for a moment, what it was like to have your life controlled by someone else.

Sabrina found me on the porch, staring at the mountains as the sun rose over the peaks.

"It's everywhere," she said, holding up her phone to show another headline. "You've got the whole world talking."

I nodded, jaw tight. “Good. Let them talk. Let her squirm.”

Sabrina settled beside me on the porch swing, her shoulder brushing mine. Her warm scent mingled with the pine and dew in the morning air. She rested her hand on my arm.

“You’re not just a billionaire throwing his weight around, Logan,” she said softly. “You’re doing the right thing.”

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I turned to her, studying the sincerity in her eyes, the unwavering faith that humbled and strengthened me. “I hope so.” Maybe I could be more than just another Song. I could be better.

My phone buzzed again, Victoria’s number flashing on the screen. This time, I answered. I checked my watch. It was just past noon. My aunt had let me stew all morning, probably gathering her forces, calculating her response. Typical. She’d always preferred to let her prey panic before she struck.

“Victoria.” My voice was ice, revealing nothing of the storm inside.

“What do you think you’re doing?” Her voice was controlled, but fury bubbled beneath the surface.

“Cleaning up your mess.”

“My mess?” She laughed, the sound razor-sharp. “You naive boy. This is bigger than you understand.”

“I understand perfectly. You poisoned an entire town for profit.”

“I was strategic,” she countered. “Business requires sacrifices.”

“Not those kinds of sacrifices.” My grip tightened on the phone. “Not innocent lives.”

“Since when do you care about innocent lives, Logan? You’re a Song. Power is in our blood.”

“I’m nothing like you.” The words felt like a vow.

“You’ve declared war on your own family,” she said, her voice dropping dangerously.

“There will be consequences.” The silky threat in her voice made my wolf stand on alert.

“I made you, Logan. I know every skeleton in your closet, every weakness you’ve ever shown.

And now I know your greatest weakness wears a white coat and thinks she can save everyone. ”

My vision went red, a growl tearing from my throat. “If you so much as mention her—”

“What?” Victoria’s voice turned playful. “The big bad wolf will huff and puff? I’ve been blowing down houses since before you grew your first fang, nephew.”

My free hand curled into a fist, claws piercing my palm. Blood dripped onto the porch boards as I fought for control.

“This conversation is over,” I managed, each word clipped and guttural.

“It’s just beginning,” Victoria promised. “You’ve made your choice, nephew. Now live with it. While you can.” Her voice dropped to a whisper. “By the way, I had a fascinating chat with Dr. Vance after your little visit. He seemed motivated to resolve his situation. Immediately.”

The implication hit me like a physical blow. I opened my mouth to demand answers,

but the line went dead.

My body went cold with dread. My wolf recognized the sensation instantly. It was a predator's instinct, the knowledge that somewhere, a trap waited.

Hours passed as we strategized. I made calls to my security team, reviewed maps of the mining property, while my legal team prepared documents to force an emergency shutdown. Sabrina worked alongside me, consulting with medical colleagues online about treatment protocols for the affected residents.

"We should move before dark," I said, watching the premature twilight creeping across the valley as storm clouds swallowed the sunset.

I pulled her closer, inhaling the scent at her neck, letting it calm the wolf still pacing beneath my skin. She fit perfectly against me, her smaller frame aligning with mine as if designed for this purpose.

"She threatened you," I murmured against her hair. "Not directly, but—"

Sabrina pulled back just enough to meet my gaze, fearless. "I'm not afraid of her."

"You should be." My voice roughened. "Victoria doesn't make empty threats."

"Neither do I." The steel in her voice made my wolf rumble in approval. "And I'm not going anywhere."

"We need to move now," I said, voice hardening with resolve. "We're shutting down that mine tonight, before Victoria can cover her tracks or Vance can do more damage."

Sabrina nodded, her expression matching my determination. "I'll bring everything we

might need for medical emergencies.”

I pulled out my phone and sent rapid-fire texts to three different contacts. “I’m activating my security team. They’ll meet us at the access road. The sheriff owes me a favor; he’ll bring deputies. And I’ve got environmental inspectors with a hazmat team standing by.”

My mind raced through contingencies, mapping potential threats and responses. Victoria’s words about Vance being motivated suggested she’d backed him into a corner. And desperate men made unpredictable moves.

“We’ll approach from the east access road,” I continued, pulling up satellite imagery on my tablet.

“Security will secure the perimeter while we locate Vance. The environmental team can only enter once we’ve confirmed it’s safe.

” I zoomed in on the main office building.

“Vance will likely be here, gathering or destroying evidence.”

As thunder rumbled overhead, we loaded supplies into my truck. I caught Sabrina’s arm gently, turning her to face me.

“Stay close to me when we get there,” I said, not hiding the protective growl in my voice. “Vance may be Victoria’s puppet, but that makes him more dangerous, not less. He’s trapped between her threats and our investigation.”

Sabrina’s eyes met mine, her gaze unflinching, and nodded curtly. “I’ll be right beside you when you take him down.”

As we drove toward the mine, the first heavy raindrops fell. Whatever waited for us there, whatever trap my aunt and her cronies had set, we would handle it.

Because Angel Spring was mine to protect now.

Because Sabrina was becoming my heart.

And because I was fighting for something that mattered more than power or wealth. I was fighting for home.

SAbrINA

The mine loomed ahead, a jagged scar against the mountainside as our convoy approached.

Logan's security team was made up of ex-military shifters with hard eyes.

As they arrived, they fanned out in precise formation as they worked with the sheriff's deputies and environmental inspectors in securing the perimeter.

My medical bag weighed heavily on my shoulder.

I had packed extra supplies in preparation for the worst-case scenario.

Workers in mud-caked boots and hard hats gathered at the entrance, their faces rigid with distrust. A few spat on the ground as we passed.

These weren't just employees but Roberts's loyalists, men whose livelihoods depended on the mine's continued operation regardless of who got sick.

One burly man with a salt-and-pepper beard stepped forward, deliberately blocking our path.

"You got no business here," he growled, eyes fixed on Logan with unmistakable hostility. "This is private property."

The sheriff stepped forward, unfolding a document. "Not anymore. We have a

warrant.”

Tension crackled in the air. Anger poured off the workers in waves. Logan positioned himself slightly in front of me, a subtle protective movement that didn’t go unnoticed by the miners.

“Victoria Song sends her regards,” another worker muttered, just loud enough for shifter ears to catch.

Logan’s shoulders tensed, but his voice remained measured. “Clear the area. Now.”

The police made sure the workers dispersed, though they moved with reluctant slowness. One lingered, his eyes meeting mine with a look of pure malice that chilled my blood.

I adjusted my bag strap, watching Logan direct his team with authority.

Rusted machinery and the layer of gray dust that covered everything gave the mine an apocalyptic feel.

The wind carried the stench of corroded metal and something worse, industrial chemicals that stung my nose and burned my eyes.

Even before reaching the main site, I could feel that everything here was wrong.

It was nature violated. Logan’s gaze flickered to me, concern etched in his tight mouth as he noticed my discomfort.

My heart pounded as I surveyed the operation. This wasn’t just about exposing corporate negligence anymore. I’d faced aggressive alphas and treated dangerous shifters, but something about this felt different. It was personal.

“Secure all exits,” Logan ordered his head of security, as his eyes constantly scanned for threats. “No one leaves until we’ve found Vance.” The team dispersed, radios crackling with status updates about evacuating remaining workers. Logan’s hand found mine, large and warm.

“Stay close,” he murmured, his breath warming my ear. “I don’t trust this silence.”

We moved toward the main office building together. Every shadow and rustle of wind against the sheet metal walls agitated my nerves. The office door stood slightly ajar. Setting off all the alarms in my head at its wrongness.

Inside, chaos greeted us. Papers were scattered across the floor, drawers were pulled out and emptied, and a computer monitor still glowed with a progress bar on the screen as files were being deleted. The place reeked of fear, sweat, and desperation.

“He’s destroying evidence,” Logan growled, kneeling to examine a half-empty filing cabinet.

The walls seemed to close in around us, the air thick with dust and lingering cigarette smoke. Outside, machinery creaked in the rising wind, metal contracting as temperature dropped with the setting sun. Each sound made me flinch.

Somewhere, a metal pipe clanged rhythmically. Then stopped. The silence that followed was worse than the noise.

I moved to the desk, rifling through scattered papers. My fingers brushed against something sticky. I brought my hands up and examined the dark red drops on my fingertips. Fresh blood. Someone had been hurt recently.

“Logan,” I whispered, showing him the blood.

He touched it, rubbed it between his fingers, then brought them to his nose. His expression darkened. “One of my security team. Nox. He was supposed to scout ahead.”

A silent communication passed between us. If Vance had taken down Nox, one of Logan’s best men, we faced someone far more dangerous than a corporate doctor covering his tracks.

I scanned the room, my medical training kicked in immediately. I observed for patterns and anomalies. That’s when I noticed it, muddy footprints that led toward the back door. Fresh. Still damp.

“Logan,” I whispered, touching his shoulder and pointing to the tracks.

His nostrils flared, taking in the scent trail. Before he could respond, a crash echoed from outside. The bang of metal against metal, deliberate and taunting. Logan immediately reached for his radio.

“Team Alpha, report position. Possible suspect movement behind admin building.”

Only static answered. He tried again, his expression darkening with each crackling second of silence.

“Communications are being jammed. Stay behind me.”

We moved toward the back door, with Logan walking in front.

The door creaked open to reveal a maze of metal shipping containers creating shadowed corridors. Perfect ambush territory. Logan stepped out first, shielding me with his body as his eyes scanned our surroundings.

The attack we expected didn't come. Instead, Vance emerged from between two containers about thirty feet away. His suit was gone, replaced by tactical clothing. His eyes gleamed with a wild light that crawled over my skin. It was the look of a man with nothing left to lose.

"You've ruined everything!" he snarled, his voice echoing between metal walls. Behind him, I glimpsed a body on the ground, one of Logan's security team, unconscious or worse.

The security team was nowhere in sight. With sickening clarity, I realized what had happened. Vance had methodically separated us from our backup, picking them off one by one while we searched inside.

Logan stepped fully in front of me, his growl so deep it vibrated off the containers around us. "This ends now, Vance."

Vance's lips curled into a sneer that revealed teeth already lengthening with his partial shift.

"You're too late, Song. Victoria always has a contingency plan.

" His eyes flickered to me, calculating and cruel.

"The lawyers are already filing for emergency control of the mine. She'll own it by morning. "

The sudden shift in his focus set off alarm bells. His muscles bunched, and I knew with absolute certainty he wasn't targeting Logan.

Without warning, Vance exploded into his wolf form, a massive gray beast with matted fur and wild eyes. He lunged forward with shocking speed, aiming directly at

me. Not at Logan, the bigger threat. At me. Logan's weakness.

Logan roared, a primal, ground-shaking sound. He shifted in mid-air, clothes tearing away as his body transformed into four hundred pounds of muscle and fur. His wolf was magnificent, midnight black with silver streaking his muzzle. Power radiated from every muscle.

As Vance and Logan crashed together in wolf forms, the violence sent me stumbling back against a container. The sounds of tearing flesh and snarls filled the air. My heart hammered against my ribs as I watched Logan fighting for both our lives.

His midnight fur gleamed with blood where Vance's claws had ripped through fur and flesh. Through the bond, each strike against him felt like a physical blow to my own body. I couldn't just watch him bleed. Logan fought for me, for the town, while I cowered. What kind of mate would that make me?

The word mate echoed through my mind, no longer shocking but feeling like a truth I'd always known. My hands steadied as determination replaced fear. I might not be able to shift and join the fight directly, but I was far from helpless.

Peering around the container edge, I spotted a security guard slumped against a wall, radio still clipped to his belt. Vance had been thorough, taking out communications one by one.

I darted from my hiding place, keeping low, and reached the guard. His pulse thudded steadily beneath my fingers—unconscious but alive. I grabbed his radio and pressed the call button.

"This is Dr.Wu. We need backup behind the administration building. Vance is attacking."

Nothing but static answered. The signals were still jammed. I swore and turned back to the fight.

Logan's wolf moved with deadly grace that spoke of years of battle experience. Though Vance was larger and fought with desperate savagery, Logan's tactical precision gave him the advantage. He struck with devastating efficiency at the enemy's vulnerable spots.

I couldn't just watch. Desperately, my eyes scanned for anything useful. A length of heavy chain hung from the hasp of one container. I scrambled toward it, my hands shaking as I worked it free.

The battle intensified, and Vance landed a vicious blow across Logan's right side. Blood spurted out, but he didn't falter. His answering strike sent Vance skidding across the dirt.

The fight moved between containers. The clashing of bodies against metal created a hellish symphony. When Vance knocked Logan against a container hard enough to momentarily stun him, I saw my opening.

Chain in hand, I rushed forward. Vance was too focused on attacking Logan to notice my approach. I swung the chain with everything I had. It whipped through the air and wrapped around Vance's back leg.

I yanked hard, throwing my entire body. It knocked him off-balance at the crucial moment. His attack went wide, giving Logan the opening he needed.

Logan lunged with lethal precision, pinning Vance to the ground. His jaws closed around Vance's throat. It wasn't a killing bite, not yet. The message was clear. Move and die.

Vance struggled beneath him, his larger size useless against Logan's superior position. Logan's massive paw struck with surgical precision at the base of Vance's skull, rendering him unconscious.

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The moment he did, the radios crackled to life, the jamming suddenly broken. Security teams poured into the area, weapons ready, as they moved to secure Vance's limp form.

I rushed to Logan's side as he shifted back to human form.

My heart hammered so hard I barely heard the chaos around us.

One of his men draped a blanket over his naked body, but my focus was fixed on the savage gashes across his ribs and side.

Blood pulsed from the deepest wound in slow, steady waves.

The coppery scent of his blood triggered something primal, visceral panic that this man, this wolf who had fought for me, might be seriously hurt.

My hands trembled as I examined the wounds.

His blood flowed between my fingers, hot and sticky.

Each torn edge of flesh represented a moment he'd put himself between me and death.

With clinical precision that belied my turmoil, I cleaned away enough blood to see what I'd dreaded.

Vance's claws had torn directly through Logan's old scar tissue, reopening the

chronic wound that never properly healed.

Something fierce and protective surged within me. I would make it my life's goal to find an antidote. Not just for Logan, but for any shifter subjected to this barbaric torture.

"I'm going to fix this," I whispered, the promise tasting like a blood oath. My fingertips traced the swollen line where old wound met new. "All of it."

His hand covered mine, pressing it against his wounded side.

"You're bleeding," I said, my voice breaking as adrenaline ebbed, leaving fear. "These are deep, Logan."

Logan winced as I applied pressure to the worst gashes, but he remained still, refusing to show weakness before his men. "Worth it," he said, voice rough with emotion and pain.

I shook my head, tears threatening. For all my medical training, the sight of his blood shook me to the core. "You could've died."

Logan's hand cupped my face, his thumb brushing my cheek, leaving a faint blood smear. "I'd face worse for you," he said softly, eyes holding mine with fierce intensity. "Every time."

The environmental team arrived in white hazmat suits, looking like aliens against the gritty industrial backdrop. The sheriff approached with a folder, expression grimly satisfied.

"Found these in a hidden compartment in Vance's desk," he said, handing the documents to Logan. "Communications from Victoria Song, detailed instructions

about the cover-up. Dates, amounts, even payoffs to keep workers quiet. She's burned."

Logan nodded. "Make sure those stay secure."

As cleanup began, deputies loaded the still-unconscious Vance into a police vehicle, we stood together watching hazmat-suited figures document the contamination.

Yellow tape cordoned off the worst areas.

They would have to work through the night and even tomorrow, but it was the beginning of healing for the wounded land.

I took Logan's hand, our skin rough with caked blood and dirt. The victory felt hollow, fragile, like holding precious glass.

"We stopped him," I said, as the vehicle with Vance drove off. "But this isn't over, is it?"

"Victoria doesn't lose gracefully," he said, voice low, vibrating through our joined hands. "She'll regroup. Come at us sideways when we least expect it."

I looked at him, hunched over as he guarded his wounds and still favoring his left side. Any other patient, I'd order bed rest and antibiotics. But Logan Song wasn't any other patient.

"Let her come," I said, surprising myself with the strength in my voice. Something had shifted between us during that fight. Watching Logan bleed had awakened something vicious and fierce inside of me. I wanted vengeance for the violence against my mate.

Logan's eyes found mine, glowing in the harsh emergency lights. His thumb traced a gentle circle on my wrist, right over my racing pulse.

"I should get you somewhere safe," he murmured, but made no move to leave. "Away from all this."

The wind shifted, bringing the scent of pine and coming rain.

The storm building in the mountains hovered overhead, the dark clouds swallowing stars one by one.

I thought of Marshall, still fighting the sickness back at the clinic.

Of Juniper, brewing remedies for those not yet showing symptoms. Of the town that had somehow, without my noticing, become mine to protect.

Lightning pierced the sky, illuminating the scarred mountainside, a landscape wounded just as we were, but not beyond healing. The coming storm felt like nature's response to the night's violence, washing away old sins to make room for healing.

"I'm exactly where I need to be." My free hand moved to Logan's side, carefully assessing the wound hidden beneath the borrowed blanket. "And so are you, after I stitch these gashes."

Logan's arm tightened around me as thunder rolled across the valley. "Storm's coming," he said, eyes fixed on the horizon where lightning split the darkness. "In more ways than one."

I leaned into his solid warmth, allowing myself this moment of connection before whatever came next. "Then we'd better be ready."

Within moments, the skies opened, rain washing over us in sheets. Logan looked at me, rain streaming down his face, his eyes reflecting the bright emergency lights. “You still with me, Doc?”

My answer came without hesitation, rising from some place beyond thought. “All the way.”

LOGAN

Rain lashed against the windshield as Sabrina parked the truck in my driveway.

The headlights illuminated the car already there.

It was Juniper. She stepped out with her medicine basket in hand already.

One of my security team must have alerted her.

The elderly healer stood unmoving in the downpour, rain beading on her weathered skin like she barely noticed it.

“You two look like you wrestled the devil himself,” she called as we approached. Her shrewd eyes took in our bloodstained clothes and exhausted faces. Her gaze lingered on the protective I kept Sabrina close, understanding flickering in her ancient eyes.

I kept my arm around Sabrina’s shoulders, leaning on her strength as we climbed the steps. My body screamed in protest with each movement, but having her against me made it bearable. “Vance is dealt with,” I said tersely. “But Victoria isn’t finished.”

Juniper’s mouth tightened, creating a web of lines across her face. “Never expected she would be. Come inside before you bleed all over the ground.”

The warmth of the house enveloped us as we stepped inside.

There was already a low fire burning in the hearth, and the familiar scents of home

mixed with the herbal aromas from Juniper's basket.

Sabrina guided me to the leather couch. My wolf, usually so resistant to being directed, submitted willingly to her care.

"Shirt off," she ordered, transforming from the rain-soaked woman at my side to the doctor in charge.

Despite the exhaustion etched into the shadows beneath her eyes, her movements were precise as she and Juniper unpacked their medical supplies.

The snap of latex gloves and the clink of metal instruments created a melody that was strangely comforting.

I peeled the ruined shirt away, a hiss escaping through clenched teeth as fabric stuck to drying blood.

The cool air hit my exposed skin, raising goosebumps across my chest and arms. The full extent of my wounds became visible.

Deep gashes sliced across my right side where Vance's claws had torn through muscle, reopening the old scar. The new wound ran from shoulder to hip.

Juniper whistled low. "That old wound's been festering for years." Her fingers hovered over the scar tissue, not quite touching. "Silver poisoning, and not the natural kind either."

Sabrina's fingers traced the jagged edges where Vance's attack had intersected with the old injury.

Her touch was clinical but tender, sending contradictory signals through my pain-

fogged brain.

My wolf whined, wanting to press into her healing touch while simultaneously hating the vulnerability. Her concern flowed through the bond.

“This silver contamination,” she murmured, examining the incandescent sheen in the wound. “It’s unlike anything I’ve seen in medical literature.” She leaned closer, her breath warm against my skin. “The molecular structure must be engineered to linger and cause maximum suffering.”

While Juniper prepared herbal compresses, Sabrina cleaned each open wound with meticulous care before stitching them closed.

The antiseptic stung, but I welcomed the pain.

I focused on her face rather than the memories Vance had stirred up.

I watched her work, mesmerized by the competent movement of her hands and the fierce concentration in her eyes.

The wrinkle that formed between her brows when she was thinking deeply had become one of my favorite sights.

Juniper nodded as she packed the herbal compress on the wounds.

It stung at first, before a warm tingling spread through my flesh, numbing the pain.

“The girl’s right. That silver compound wasn’t natural.

Someone designed it specifically for shifters.

” She began to pack up her supplies into her basket.

“I should head back and check on Marshall,” Juniper said, snapping her basket shut.

“You two get some rest. Doctor’s orders, and I don’t just mean hers.

” She cast a meaningful glance between us before disappearing into the night, the front door closing softly behind her.

After Juniper left, silence stretched between us, comfortable yet charged with unspoken emotion.

Sabrina sat beside me, close enough that I felt her warmth but not quite touching.

The fire popped and hissed, golden light flickering across her features.

She looked ethereal in the firelight, a stark contrast to the darkness I’d lived in for so long.

The vibration of my phone broke the moment. Reeve’s message flashed on the screen:

Victoria’s lawyers are scrambling. News leaked about the mine cover-up. We’ve got her on the ropes.

A second followed immediately:

Are you okay? Reports coming in about a shifter fight at the mine.

I exhaled sharply, showing Sabrina the messages. My chest tightened with conflicted emotions. He had never been the enemy, not really, but years of distance stretched

between us, filled with unspoken regrets and missed opportunities.

“Your cousin actually concerned,” she observed, studying my expression with those perceptive eyes that seemed to see right through me.

“Reeve was always different,” I admitted, the truth of it settling in my chest. “Not like his mother, not like the rest of the pack.”

Sabrina’s fingers squeezed around mine, her thumb tracing soothing circles against my skin.

“Maybe you shouldn’t shut him out then,” she said softly.

The suggestion hung in the air between us, gentle yet pointed.

Her eyes held mine. “Family isn’t just about blood, Logan.

It’s about who stands with you when it matters.

And right now...” She nodded toward the phone.

“He’s trying to stand with you. Let him help.

You don’t have to face Victoria alone. You have me, and maybe you can have him too. ”

I typed a brief response, confirming I was alive but injured.

Sabrina read my response and squeezed my hand.

“Progress,” she murmured. “She isn’t going to win.

Not against us, not against this town. I'm going to break down that poison molecule by molecule until I understand exactly how to neutralize it. ”

Her determination stunned me. This brilliant, fierce woman who crashed into my life and refused to be intimidated by my walls now stood ready to dismantle the very thing that had defined my existence for years. The wonder of her left me speechless, my wolf howling its approval inside me.

“You’re incredible,” I finally managed, the words inadequate for what I felt.

She smirked, some of her usual sunshine breaking through her exhaustion. “I know. And totally worth keeping around.” Her light tone couldn’t mask the deeper meaning behind her words.

I huffed a laugh that turned into a wince as it pulled at my stitches. Sabrina’s smile softened into concern, her fingers lightly tracing the edge of the bandage. “Come on, big bad wolf. You need rest.”

She helped me to the bedroom. The sheets were cool against my overheated skin as I sank onto the mattress. The familiar smells of home enveloped me, now mingled with Sabrina’s sweet scent. As she turned to leave, I caught her wrist, my fingers circling the delicate bones there.

“Stay,” I whispered, vulnerability raw in my voice. The single word held a universe of meaning. Stay tonight, stay tomorrow, stay forever.

She nodded, understanding everything I couldn’t say. As she settled beside me, her head found the uninjured side of my chest. Outside, the storm raged, the wind howling through the trees. Inside, I held Sabrina close, her heartbeat steady against my side, and her warmth seeping into my bones.

Morning light filtered through the bedroom windows when I woke.

I reached across the bed and found empty sheets where Sabrina should have been.

Panic flashed through me, primal and instinctive.

Had she left? Had it all been too much? My wolf surged forward, ready to track her, claim her, bring her back.

Then, I heard movement from my study. Papers rustling, keyboard clicking, the soft beat of her heart, and the whisper of her breathing.

The panic receded, replaced by a different emotion altogether, relief mingled with something dangerously close to happiness.

I followed the sounds, wincing as my stitches pulled against healing skin.

The pain was different now, still agonizing, but without the burning ache that had plagued me for years.

I found her surrounded by medical journals and her laptop open to chemical formulas.

Her hair was piled in a messy bun atop her head.

Reading glasses perched on her nose, giving her an adorably serious look that tugged at something in my chest. A half-empty mug of coffee sat by her elbow, her plum lipstick staining the rim.

The sight of her, so completely at home in my space, sent a possessive rush through me.

“Morning,” I said from the doorway, my voice rough with sleep and emotion.

She looked up, a smile blooming across her face like the sun breaking through clouds.

“Morning, grumpy. I hope you don’t mind.

I commandeered your office for research.

” She gestured to the organized chaos around her.

“I’ve already emailed colleagues for reference materials on silver poisoning treatments.

” Her enthusiasm was palpable, energizing the air around her.

I crossed to her, amazed at her determination.

My fingers skimmed her shoulder, needing to touch her to confirm she was real.

“What’s mine is yours,” I said, voice still husky from sleep.

“Whatever you need to find this antidote, money, equipment, connections, it’s yours.

” The promise came easily, the need to provide for her was a deep-rooted instinct I didn’t bother fighting.

My phone buzzed with a text from Juniper:

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Marshall's fever broke overnight. Looks like our treatment worked. Get your furry behind over here for a check-up too.

Another followed from my security chief:

Roberts mine secured. Environmental team worked through the night. Vance in custody but not talking.

Sabrina read over my shoulder, joy lighting her face at the news about Marshall.

"Let's head into town," she said as she stood and stretched.

Her shirt rode up, revealing a strip of skin that instantly distracted me from my pain.

My gaze lingered, triggering a knowing smirk from her.

"I need to check on my patients and gather more blood samples for my research."

The clinic bustled with activity when we arrived.

Marshall was propped up in bed, looking weak but alive.

His eyes tracked our entrance. "About time you two showed up," he rasped, his voice weak but the familiar gruffness returning.

"Juniper says we've won." His gaze moved meaningfully between us.

“Well, at least something good came out of this mess.”

Juniper appeared from the back room, hands smelling of medicinal herbs.

She squeezed my arm as she checked my bandages, her touch gentle despite her gruff demeanor.

“This is healing cleaner than I expected,” she observed, satisfaction in her tone.

“The town’s already talking,” she said, not bothering to lower her voice.

“The big bad wolf and the sunshine doctor. Some match you two make.” Her eyes crinkled at the corners, approval evident despite her teasing.

Sabrina’s cheeks colored, but she didn’t contradict the older woman. Instead, she busied herself checking Marshall’s vitals, her movements precise and professional despite Juniper’s knowing looks. The blush that stained her cheeks only enhanced her beauty, making my wolf preen with satisfaction.

As the day progressed, we worked side by side.

While Sabrina collected blood samples from affected shifters for her research, I coordinated with the environmental team and security.

Our partnership felt seamless now, our movements synchronized without conscious thought.

The town responded to us as a unit, the alpha and his mate, though neither had spoken those words aloud.

That evening, we returned to the mansion.

The familiar routine of coming home together felt both new and right, as though we'd been doing this for years instead of days.

I built a fire while Sabrina prepared tea, the domestic scene striking me with its rightness.

The crackle of kindling and the whistle of the kettle filled the space with comfort I'd never known I needed.

I joined her in the kitchen, leaning against the counter as she handed me a cup of tea. She grinned at me, a satisfied gleam in her eyes.

"I think I've isolated a component of the poison," she said, the excitement blossoming across her face. She tucked a stray lock of hair behind her ear. "With enough research, I could develop something that would help everyone affected. Not just a treatment but a cure."

I pulled her close, my lips brushing her forehead, breathing in her scent. Pride surged through me. Her brilliance was breathtaking. "You'll do it. I have no doubt." The absolute certainty in my voice surprised even me. My wolf had never felt such complete faith in anyone before.

Sabrina looked up at me. "About what you said before. About me staying..."

My heart stuttered, the rhythm faltering as my wolf tensed, preparing for rejection. Had I presumed too much? "I meant it," I said carefully, trying to keep the sudden vulnerability from my voice. "I want you to stay. Forever."

A slow smile spread across her face, like dawn breaking over the mountains. Her hand came up to cup my jaw, thumb tracing the line of my stubble. The gentle touch sent shivers down my spine. "Good. Because you couldn't get rid of me if you tried."

The wolf inside me howled in triumph as I captured her lips with mine. Her body melted against me, fitting perfectly as though designed specifically for this purpose. No more words were needed as we moved to the bedroom, our bodies expressing what our hearts already knew.

Later, as we lay tangled together, with Sabrina's head on my chest, I stroked her hair, marveling at how completely she'd transformed my world.

The silky strands slipped through my fingers like water, and I breathed in her scent, now mixed with mine in a way that satisfied my wolf on a primal level.

The past was behind me, the future uncertain with Victoria's inevitable retaliation, but here, with her, I'd found the center of my universe.

"We'll face whatever comes," Sabrina murmured, her voice sleepy. Her fingers traced lazy patterns on my skin, avoiding the bandaged areas with care, each touch healing something deeper than flesh. "And I'll find that antidote, Logan. I promise."

I tightened my hold on her. For the first time since I had been betrayed by my pack, the gnawing in my chest was gone. What had festered for years was finally starting to heal.

Outside, the wind had calmed, the storm had passed, leaving a clear night sky visible through the window. Stars shone bright over Angel Spring, a town that somehow, improbably, had become home. My territory. Our territory.

I slept deeply, without pain, with my mate in my arms and my wolf at peace.

SAbrINA

I woke to an empty bed. My heart pounded as I stumbled out of bed, wrapping myself in his discarded shirt before following the sound of his deep voice down the hall.

I found him in his office, shoulders hunched as he spoke in hushed tones on his phone. Sunlight caught in his tousled hair, giving him a golden halo that made my breath catch.

“The environmental assessment team will be here by noon,” he said, not looking up as his fingers drummed against the polished wood desk. “I want full transparency. Soil samples, water testing, everything has to be documented and by the book.”

I leaned against the doorframe, admiring the determined set of his jaw as he issued commands with the easy authority of a man used to being obeyed. But there was something different about him this morning. There was a lightness I’d never seen before.

When he finally ended the call, his eyes found mine, warming instantly. “I’m going to get the mine shut down. Permanently.” The muscle in his jaw ticked. “There’s going to be a town meeting tonight. They deserve to know everything about the contamination, Victoria’s involvement, the cleanup plan.”

I crossed the room without hesitation, sliding my arms around his waist. His skin burned hot beneath my palms, his scent wrapping around me like a physical embrace. The corded muscles of his back tensed, then relaxed under my touch, his body recognizing mine.

“You’re not what they expected, are you?” I murmured against his chest, feeling the steady thrum of his heartbeat beneath my cheek.

Logan’s chuckle rumbled against my ear. “A Song alpha organizing a community gathering? My grandfather would rise from his grave in protest.”

My fingers traced the scar on his ribs, feeling the ridge of healing tissue beneath my touch. “Good thing I’m not afraid of ghosts.”

The first thing I did when we arrived at the clinic was check up on Marshall. He sat propped against pillows, his skin no longer ashen but flushed with returning health. The silver poisoning had receded from his bloodstream, leaving his eyes clear and alert.

“Well, if it isn’t the alpha and his doctor,” Marshall called, his voice stronger than it had been in days. Other shifters occupied the remaining beds, all showing remarkable improvement.

I checked Marshall’s vitals, satisfaction warming my chest as the numbers confirmed what my eyes told me. The steady beep of monitors provided a reassuring background rhythm as I worked.

“The poison concentration has dropped by sixty percent since yesterday,” I said, updating his chart with steady hands. “Your wolf’s natural healing is taking over.”

“Thanks to you,” Marshall said, then his gaze shifted to Logan. Something unspoken passed between the men.

Logan clasped Marshall’s shoulder, a rare physical acknowledgment that made my heart twist. “This town needs you back on your feet. Don’t rush it.”

Marshall chuckled. “Careful, Song. People might start thinking you actually care.”

Logan’s mouth twitched. “Tell anyone and I’ll deny it.”

As we left, Juniper intercepted us with a knowing smile, her bright eyes sparkling with energy. “The town’s buzzing. Word of the mine closure is spreading faster than my best gossip. They’re setting up in the square already, calling it a celebration.”

Logan stiffened beside me. “A celebration?”

“Of course,” Juniper said, her weathered hands smoothing down her apron. “The poison is contained, the sick are healing. What else would we do but celebrate?”

I felt Logan’s confusion through his tense muscles. The alpha wasn’t used to being the cause of joy rather than pain.

We stepped outside to find the town square of Angel Spring already being transformed. Colorful banners stretched between lampposts, and a stage was being constructed near the courthouse steps. Townspeople nodded respectfully as Logan passed, not cowering in fear, but in acknowledgement.

The transformation wasn’t just in the decorations but in the atmosphere itself. Where fear had once hung like a fog, now a lively buzz of excitement filled the air. Children raced through the streets without their parents calling them back.

A human woman approached hesitantly, offering a paper bag that released the heavenly scent of fresh baked goods. The steam rising from the bag carried notes of cinnamon and butter that made my mouth water.

“For you both,” she said, her eyes downcast but her voice steady. “My son was one of the first you treated at the clinic, Dr.Wu. And Mr.Song—” she faltered, then

straightened her spine. “Thank you for putting our safety above profits. Not everyone would.”

Logan accepted the bag with an awkward nod, clearly unprepared for gratitude. As the woman walked away, I bumped his shoulder. “See? Not everyone thinks you’re the big bad wolf.”

The unfamiliar warmth in his eyes made my breath catch. “Only you get to call me that, Doc.”

Evening approached in a blur of preparations. I found Logan in his bedroom, standing before the mirror wearing a dark blue button-up shirt. His fingers fumbled with the top button, an unexpected vulnerability in the gesture.

“Here,” I said, reaching for the collar. “Let me.”

His hands dropped to his sides as I straightened the fabric. The crisp cotton beneath my fingers contrasted with the heat of his skin. This close, I could see the flecks of amber in his dark eyes, pupils dilating as I worked.

“I’ve never addressed the town like this,” he admitted.

I stood on tiptoe, pressing a kiss to the stubbled edge of his jaw. The scratch of his beard against my lips sent heat spiraling through me. “You’re not just the reclusive billionaire living in a mountain fortress. You’re their protector.” My fingers lingered on his collar. “And mine.”

His eyes darkened as he caught my hand, pressing it flat against his chest where his heart thundered. The steady rhythm beneath my palm belied the controlled expression on his face.

“Always yours.”

The town square buzzed with laughter and music, strands of lanterns crisscrossing overhead as Angel Spring celebrated.

I leaned against Logan’s side, his arm a warm weight around my shoulders as we observed the transformation.

The scent of grilled meat and the smoky scent of Juniper’s herbal bonfire mixed with the crisp mountain air, creating an intoxicating blend that seemed to affect everyone present.

The distant peaks caught the last rays of sunset, painted in shades of gold that mirrored the firelight below.

Children darted between adults, their faces painted with wolf markings and mountain flowers, their footsteps creating a percussive beat to the folk music flowing from old speakers. Their shrieks of laughter pierced the night, uninhibited in a way I’d never witnessed in Angel Spring.

“I never thought I’d see this place so alive,” I murmured, feeling the vibration of Logan’s contentment through our bond.

His fingers traced idle patterns on my shoulder. “It hasn’t been like this since I moved here,” he admitted. “Maybe not even before.”

The shadows had lifted from Angel Spring, leaving behind a place transformed. Where once suspicion had darkened doorways and windows had stayed shuttered against outsiders, now doors stood open, spilling warmth and light into the street.

Marshall clinked his beer bottle against Logan’s, his color noticeably improved from

the last time I saw him. The flush of health had returned to his cheeks, and his movements had regained their shifter grace.

“Never thought I’d see the day Song threw a party,” he teased, gestures looser than I had ever witnessed.

Logan’s grunt lacked its usual edge. “Blame the doctor.” His fingers squeezed my hip, making me grin. “She’s turning us all soft.”

“Not just soft,” Marshall countered, his expression growing serious. “Healthier. The treatment protocol she developed is working faster than anyone expected.”

Heat rose to my cheeks. “The combination therapy was the key. Traditional detoxification methods accelerated by targeted chelation. Juniper’s herbal knowledge was essential.”

“Don’t diminish it,” Logan said firmly. “You isolated the particular compound in the silver ore that was causing the more severe reactions. That’s why the recovery is happening so quickly.”

An older woman I recognized as the town’s librarian approached. She clasped my hands in her weathered ones.

“My grandson is breathing normally for the first time in months,” she said, eyes glistening. “We thought he might never shift again.”

More townspeople gathered, sharing similar stories. My throat tightened as I realized how many lives my research had touched.

Juniper appeared beside us, pressing a steaming mug into my hands. “For the hero,” she announced loudly enough for nearby conversations to pause. “My special blend

for those who heal others.”

The bitter taste of medicinal herbs undercut the honey as I took a cautious sip. I wrinkled my nose but drank deeper. “Just doing my job.”

Juniper snorted. “Bullshit. You rewrote the job.” The older woman’s eyes crinkled. “Most doctors would have reported the symptoms and moved on. You saw through to the cause.”

“With yours and Logan’s help,” I insisted, feeling his arm tighten around me.

“With yours,” he countered, the low timbre of his voice sending warmth cascading through me. “Remember our first meeting? You refused to be intimidated. You demanded answers when everyone else accepted the status quo.”

His public acknowledgment of my contribution made pride and love blossom in my chest. All too soon, the town’s mayor gestured for Logan to join him.

The crowd parted as Logan stepped toward the makeshift stage. I felt the absence of his warmth immediately, watching as he climbed onto the platform. Even in this informal setting, his authoritative presence commanded attention. Conversations quieted, faces turned expectantly toward him.

“The mine is sealed,” he said, voice carrying across the square without effort. “The immediate threat to our water and soil has been contained.”

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Cheers erupted, but Logan raised a hand for silence. I held my breath, captivated by the man who had transformed from isolated ruler to community leader before my eyes.

“But the work isn’t done,” he continued, scanning the crowd.

When his gaze locked with mine, something electric passed between us.

“I’m funding the complete environmental restoration of Angel Spring.

We’re going to build water treatment facilities, begin soil remediation, and wildlife habitat restoration.

Whatever it takes, however long it takes, I will make this right. ”

The certainty in his voice raised goosebumps along my arms. This wasn’t corporate PR or damage control. This was a vow from an alpha to his territory, from a man to the community that depended on him.

“Song Timber built its fortune on these mountains,” Logan said, his voice taking on a rawer edge. “It’s time we gave back what we’ve taken.”

The cheers shook the ground beneath my feet.

Logan stepped down from the stage, immediately surrounded by townspeople clapping his shoulders and shaking his hand.

The discomfort in his expression was barely perceptible, but I could read the effort it took for the solitary wolf to accept such contact.

When he finally made his way back to my side, I raised an eyebrow. “Savior complex, much?”

The hint of a dimple appeared as he smirked. “Just doing what’s right, Doc.”

A small hand tugged at my sleeve, interrupting the moment. I looked down to find Emma, the seven-year-old daughter of one of the miners, and one of my human patients at the clinic.

“Are you staying, Dr.Wu?” the child asked, her voice carrying in the momentary lull of conversation.

I felt Logan’s gaze burn into me, the weight of his attention heavier than the collective stare of the crowd that had turned to hear my answer. The question hung in the air between us, loaded with meaning that transcended the child’s simple curiosity. I hoisted the girl onto my hip.

Her small body felt warm against mine, her blue eyes bright with hope. The scent of chocolate and innocence clung to her hair as she watched me expectantly. I realized with a start that this child represented Angel Spring’s future. A future I desperately wanted to be part of.

My heart hammered against my ribs, not from uncertainty but from the overwhelming rightness of what I was about to say. The realization flooded me with warmth: I’d spent my career moving from crisis to crisis, never allowing roots to form, always convincing myself that detachment was strength.

“Yeah, kiddo,” I said finally, my voice steady despite the emotion threatening to

overwhelm me. “I’m staying.”

The words resonated inside me, settling into place like the final piece of a puzzle I hadn’t known I was solving. This town, these people, this life, they weren’t just another stopping point. They were home.

Emma threw small arms around my neck in a fierce hug before wiggling to be set down. As the child raced off to spread the news, I felt Logan’s hand slip into mine, his calloused fingers interlacing with my own.

“You’re sure?” he asked, the vulnerability in his voice audible only to me.

I squeezed his hand. “I’ve never been more sure of anything.”

The celebration continued around us, but in that moment, we existed in a bubble of our own making. We were two people who had found home in the most unexpected place.

Later, in the clinic’s back room, I organized supplies while Logan watched from the doorway. The celebration had wound down as the night grew colder, though distant music still drifted through the open window. The single examination room suddenly felt impossibly small with his presence filling it.

“You know,” he said slowly, as he leaned against the doorframe. “We could build a proper hospital. Full lab, diagnostic equipment, additional treatment rooms. Whatever you need.”

My hands stilled over the neatly arranged bandages. “That would cost millions.”

“I have millions,” he countered simply.

I turned to face him, heart hammering at the intensity in his gaze. “Logan Song, was that a bribe to keep me here?”

He pushed off from the doorframe, closing the distance between us with deliberate steps. The scent of campfire smoke and leather enveloped me as he crowded me against the shelves, his mouth hovering near my ear.

“Yes,” he said, the single word vibrating through me.

Heat pooled low in my belly as I turned my face toward his, catching his stubbled jaw between my palms.

Logan’s phone buzzed, interrupting us. Reeve’s name flashed on the screen.

Tanner’s on his way. He’ll be here by dawn.

I felt Logan tense beneath my hands, his shoulders drawing tight. The news of Tanner Roberts, the new owner of the mine, arriving so soon after the confrontation with Vance was a new complication.

I pressed a gentle kiss to the rigid line of his jaw. “One problem at a time.”

“He’ll want explanations,” Logan said, scrolling through additional messages from Reeve. “Documentation of Victoria’s actions. Proof of the contamination.”

“Which we have,” I reminded him. “Your environmental team has collected samples. My medical records show the pattern of illness. There’s nothing to hide.”

Logan’s thumb traced the pulse point at my wrist, his touch gentling as his focus returned to me. “When did you get so wise?”

“Always have been,” I said lightly. “You were just too stubborn to notice.”

Night had fully fallen as we walked to Logan’s truck. The air had grown sharply colder, carrying the bitter wind of approaching snow.

“Barometer’s dropping fast,” Logan observed, glancing at the heavy clouds gathering above the peaks. “Storm’s coming in. Might delay Tanner.”

As if confirming his words, the first snowflakes began drifting lazily around us, catching in my hair and melting against our skin. I tilted my face upward, catching the flakes on my tongue as I had as a child.

Logan stopped abruptly, his expression unreadable in the darkness as he scrolled on his phone. “The Song pack challenged her leadership,” he said. “The news just came through. She’s out.”

I blinked, processing the unexpected information. “When?”

“An hour ago.” His exhale fogged in the cold air. “It’s over. The pack council voted unanimously after the evidence of her schemes became public. They’ve stripped her of alpha status.”

Something tight unwound in Logan’s posture as he spoke. It was not triumph, but the release of a long-held tension. I realized this wasn’t just about business rivalry or territory disputes. Victoria’s downfall represented freedom from a shadow that had hung over him for years.

“She can’t hurt anyone else now,” I said softly.

“The meteorologist is predicting a blizzard by tomorrow afternoon,” Logan said, looking toward the mountains. “If Tanner doesn’t make it in by early morning, he’ll

be grounded until it passes.”

I considered the implications. “That gives us time to prepare. To organize the medical records and review the environmental reports.”

“Always the optimist,” Logan said, his voice warm with affection. “Finding silver linings in snowstorms.”

“Someone has to balance out your doom and gloom,” I teased, bumping my shoulder against his arm.

We began the drive home. The path to the mansion stretched before us, with snow already accumulating on the ground.

“I never expected this,” Logan admitted, his voice barely audible above the soft hush of falling snow. “When you first arrived in Angel Spring, I thought you were just another complication.”

I laughed, the sound crystallizing in the cold air. “I thought you were the most infuriating man I’d ever met.”

“And now?” His eyes reflected the scattered moonlight breaking through the clouds.

“Still infuriating,” I said, smiling up at him. “Just mine.”

Back at the mansion, I stoked the fire while Logan poured whiskey into two crystal tumblers.

The fire’s warmth battled the increasing chill as snow pattered against the windows.

Outside, the world was disappearing beneath a blanket of white, cocooning us in

isolation that felt more like a sanctuary than confinement.

Logan pressed a glass into my hand, his thumb brushing the sensitive skin of my wrist. The heat of his touch contrasted with the cool glass, sending shivers up my arm that had nothing to do with temperature.

“To forever,” he murmured, his gaze never leaving mine.

The amber liquid caught the flames’ light as we drank, warmth blooming in my chest that wasn’t solely from the alcohol. The word forever hung between us, enormous in its implications, yet somehow fitting.

“When I was in medical school,” I said, settling beside him on the couch. “One of my professors said we should never make major life decisions during times of crisis. That emotions run too high for clear thinking.”

Logan’s arm curled around my shoulders, drawing me against his side. “And what do you think, Dr. Wu? Is this just crisis thinking?”

I rested my head against his chest, feeling the steady rhythm of his heart beneath my cheek. “No,” I answered with certainty. “This is clarity.”

The whiskey warmed us from within as the fire crackled and popped.

Time seemed to slow, each moment stretching like honey as Logan’s fingers traced idle patterns along my arm.

Words gave way to touches, soft at first, then increasingly urgent as we sought deeper connection.

The journey from couch to bedroom passed in a blur of heated kisses and discarded

clothing, the cold forgotten in the heat building between us.

Later, tangled in sheets, I traced the scars on Logan's chest, the old ones, white and raised with time, and the fresh pink lines from his confrontation with Vance.

His hand covered mine, stilling my exploration. "You healed these," he said roughly, voice catching on the words.

I leaned down, pressing my lips to each mark, first the oldest, then the newest. "We healed each other."

Logan's fingers threaded through my hair, tilting my face up to meet his gaze. "I never believed in second chances," he confessed. "I thought people were who they were. Fixed, unchangeable."

"And now?" I whispered.

"Now I know transformation is possible." His thumb traced the curve of my lower lip. "Because of you."

I felt tears prick at the corners of my eyes, unexpected emotion welling up. "Not because of me. You changed because you chose to. You opened yourself to possibility."

He pulled me higher against his body, our faces level. "You gave me something worth changing for."

"Sleep," Logan murmured against my hair. "The storm's coming, but we're ready for whatever it brings."

I nestled into his warmth, feeling the truth of those words settle in my bones. For the

first time in my life, I wasn't just passing through, just temporarily patching wounds before moving on. I was home, in this town, in this man's arms, in my own skin.

As I drifted toward sleep, Logan's arms tightened around me. "Thank you for staying, Sunshine."

I smiled against his skin, already half-dreaming. "Always."

The snow continued to fall outside, covering Angel Spring in a pristine layer of white. It was a clean slate. A fresh beginning. Just like the life Logan and I were building together.

SABrINA

I woke to an unfamiliar silence, the world outside muffled by thick layers of snow. Stretching, my hand brushed against Logan's bare chest, warm and solid beneath my fingertips.

The blizzard had raged through the night, battering the windows and piling snow against the doors. Now Angel Spring lay buried under a pristine white blanket, transformed into something ethereal.

Logan stirred beside me, his arm tightening around my waist with possessive instinct even before his eyes opened.

"Morning, sunshine," he grumbled, his voice still thick with sleep.

"Morning, grumpy," I whispered, tracing the line of his jaw with my finger.

The rough stubble beneath my fingertip sent tiny shivers of awareness through me, a tactile reminder of the night we'd shared. His scent enveloped me, familiar now in a way that filled me with contentment.

"Sleep okay?" he asked.

I nodded against his chest, listening to the strong, steady thump of his heart. "Better than I have in years," I admitted, surprising myself with the honesty.

Logan's fingertips traced lazy patterns on my bare shoulder, circling his mark,

making my skin burn with his touch. Outside, the world was frozen in stillness, but here, in the cocoon of his arms, I felt nothing but belonging.

His answering hum rumbled half a growl as he pulled me closer, lips brushing my temple. The simple gesture sent warmth flooding through me, different from the blazing heat of passion the night before. This was comfort, connection, belonging.

We navigated the mansion in comfortable silence, sharing space as if we'd been doing it for years. Logan started the coffee while I rebuilt the fire, adding logs and kindling until flames licked upward. The bubbling sound of brewing coffee mingled with crackling wood.

I watched Logan move through the kitchen, his tall frame relaxed in a way I was still learning to cherish. Gone was the rigid tension that had defined him when I'd first arrived in Angel Spring. In its place was something looser, more natural. He was a wolf at ease in his territory.

He set a plate of eggs and toast in front of me. The domesticity made my heart squeeze. Then he slid a rolled-up blueprint across the table, his eyes suddenly intent on my face.

"What's this?" I asked around a bite of toast.

"For the medical center," he said, tone casual, but a muscle ticked in his jaw, revealing his nervousness. "It's state-of-the-art. Solar panels, even a greenhouse for your medicinal plants."

I unrolled the thick paper, securing the corners with my coffee mug and plate.

My breath caught as I took in the detailed architectural plans.

The sketch detailed a two-story building with clean modern lines, examination rooms, specialized treatment areas, a laboratory, a greenhouse, and even patient recovery suites.

“Logan...”

“Figured you’d want to design it yourself,” he said gruffly. Pride lurked beneath his attempt at nonchalance. “The foundation work can start as soon as the snow clears.”

My fingers traced the precision-drawn lines, taking in details that showed how much thought he’d already put into this. Tears pricked behind my eyes.

“You would build this for me?”

My voice broke, emotion making it impossible to say more.

The blueprints showed more than just a building.

They showed that Logan had been listening to every casual comment I’d made, every wish I’d expressed.

The greenhouse was positioned to catch the morning light, just as I’d mentioned once in passing.

The recovery rooms with large windows facing the mountains, another preference I’d shared one night without thinking he’d remember.

“I won’t just build it,” Logan said, his voice low and intimate. “I designed it for the way you work, the way you move. Watched how you handled patients, what frustrated you about the old clinic setup.”

Ideas flowed faster than I could articulate them, my finger tracing potential modifications. “We can add a pharmacy space here,” I said, pointing to a section of the blueprint. “We’ll need specialized medications for shifters.”

Logan watched me, arms crossed, a small but genuine smile playing at his lips. “It’s your canvas, Doc. Whatever you want.”

I stood, rounding the table to kiss him. My hands framed his face, thumbs stroking his stubbled cheeks as our lips met.

“You named it after me,” I whispered against his mouth, having noticed the bold lettering at the top of the plans: The Sabrina Wu Medical Center .

He pulled me onto his lap, strong hands warm against my back. “It’s your legacy,” he murmured. “Your chance to heal this town the way you healed me.”

With the roads buried under feet of snow, we spent the rest of the day at home. As night fell, we were curled up on the couch in front of the fireplace when Logan checked his phone.

“Tanner’s flight had to divert south,” he said, setting the device aside. “The blizzard’s grounded all incoming flights for at least three days.”

I set down my tea, considering the implications. “Good,” I said finally. When he sees what we’ve built here, he’ll know this town isn’t just surviving. It’s thriving."

As the clock ticked toward midnight, peace settled over me. The road ahead wouldn’t be easy. We still had negotiations with Tanner, the continuing recovery of the town’s sick, and the long process of environmental remediation. But with Logan by my side, I was ready for whatever came next.

I closed my eyes, his heartbeat steady under my ear. For now, everything was perfect. It was just us, the fire, and the promise of a future neither of us had imagined possible weeks ago.

Logan's breathing deepened, his chest rising and falling in a rhythm that lulled me toward sleep.

His body radiated heat like a furnace, warming me from the outside in as our bond warmed me from the inside out.

My last conscious thought before sleep claimed me was how perfectly we fit together, not just physically, but in all the ways that mattered.

Two lone wolves who had found their pack in each other.

As sleep claimed us both, I dreamed not of buildings or equipment, but of the lives we would touch.

Children who had been pale with illness running through town with rosy cheeks and bright laughter.

Elderly shifters regaining their strength, standing tall once more.

Miners and farmers receiving care they never could afford before, their relieved faces as I told them, "No charge." Pregnant mothers safely delivering their babies without traveling hours away to the nearest city.

The whole town, thriving and healthy, gathering at community health workshops.

The billionaire's gift wasn't just steel and concrete. It was Logan's way of showing he believed in my vision of healing this community that had become our home.

LOGAN

TWO YEARS LATER

Every inch of the medical center represented more than just construction.

It represented everything I'd built in Angel Spring since finding my mate.

Standing at the podium in the town square, with the gleaming building at my back and Sabrina by my side, I felt something rare. Pride without a hint of reservation.

"Thank you all for coming," I began, resisting the urge to fidget with the microphone. Public speaking wasn't my thing. That territory belonged to Sabrina. But today deserved my voice, however rough around the edges.

The crowd wasn't just Angel Spring residents.

Practitioners from across the country, neighboring shifter communities, and even a delegation from the Song pack stood before us.

Reeve and his mate Katie led them. My cousin stood tall with his arm wrapped around Katie's waist, her bright smile balancing his measured expression.

Two years ago, I'd never have imagined welcoming members of my former pack onto my territory.

Now, watching Reeve's approving nod as he surveyed the facility, I felt only

satisfaction.

“When I first came to Angel Spring, I was running from my past,” I continued, the words flowing easier than expected. “I never planned to build something lasting. I definitely never planned on meeting a stubborn doctor who’d challenge every wall I’d built.”

Laughter rippled through the crowd. Sabrina squeezed my hand, mischief dancing in her eyes.

“Yet here we stand, opening the most advanced shifter medical facility in the northern territories.” My gaze swept over the building with its clean, modern lines and massive windows reflecting the mountains. “This center isn’t just about healing bodies. It’s about healing communities.”

The applause felt genuine, but what touched me deeper were the expressions on faces throughout the crowd. Hope. Pride. Belonging. The same feelings that had bloomed in my chest since Sabrina chose to make Angel Spring, and me, her home.

Sabrina stepped forward, radiant in a simple blue dress that highlighted the subtle curves of her figure. My wolf stirred possessively at the barely noticeable swell of her abdomen. Our secret for just a little while longer.

“As a doctor, I’ve always believed healing happens beyond hospital walls,” she addressed the crowd, her voice carrying clearly despite her preference for one-on-one interactions.

“This center promises everybody in Angel Spring and beyond that you deserve care that honors both human and wolf nature.”

She detailed the center’s specializations, the shifter-specific emergency medicine,

chronic pain management, reproductive health, geriatric care.

Her voice swelled with pride as she described the research lab dedicated to studying shifter maladies.

This was her domain, her passion, and I'd been privileged to help build it.

After the ribbon-cutting, we led tours through the facility.

I hung back, content watching Sabrina shine as she showcased treatment rooms equipped with technology that would make prestigious human hospitals jealous.

Every patient room featured enormous windows framing mountain views.

A healing vista that Sabrina refused to compromise on during design.

"You've built something incredible here," Reeve said, appearing at my elbow with the silent grace that ran in our bloodline. Katie stood beside him, fingers intertwined with his, her eyes bright with admiration as she surveyed the facility.

"We have," I corrected, watching Sabrina demonstrate the specialized MRI machine that accommodated shifted wolves. "She's the heart of it."

Reeve's knowing smile told me he caught the devotion in my voice. Katie squeezed his hand, a silent communication about their own bond.

"The pack could use a satellite clinic like this," Reeve said casually. "If you're interested in expanding."

Two years ago, the suggestion would have raised every hackle I possessed. Now, I merely nodded. "We'll consider it. After the baby comes."

Reeve's eyes widened, then crinkled with genuine pleasure. Katie let out a small gasp of delight.

"Congratulations," Reeve said softly. "Victoria would have hated this."

I snorted. "All the more reason to do it."

"When is she due?" Katie asked, her warm smile infectious. "Any morning sickness? I remember with Luna, I could barely function the first three months."

As Katie chatted eagerly about pregnancy and children, I caught the fond look Reeve gave her. It was the same expression I knew crossed my face whenever Sabrina spoke passionately about her work.

We hadn't heard from Victoria since her disgrace and exile, but occasional whispers reached us of her diminished circumstances in a shifter community far south. Her fall from power came swiftly and completely. Justice for years of manipulation and harm.

By late afternoon, as the last visitors departed, exhaustion crept through me.

Hosting so many people on our territory, even in celebration, had my wolf on edge.

I found Sabrina in her office, sinking gratefully into the chair behind her new desk, fingers running appreciatively over the polished mahogany.

"Chief of Staff," I said, leaning against the doorframe. "Has a nice ring to it."

She smiled, but fatigue shadowed her eyes.

Pregnancy hadn't been easy on her, though she refused to slow down.

“It does, doesn’t it?” She looked around the office.

It was spacious but warm, with plants thriving on every surface and photographs of Angel Spring’s landscapes adorning the walls.

“Though I’ll need to appoint an Acting Chief sooner than we planned. ”

I crossed to her, perching on the edge of her desk. “The maternity leave discussion again?”

She nodded, her hand drifting to her still-mostly-flat stomach. “Seven months isn’t that long,” she said, her tone lacking conviction. “Dr.Stevens is qualified, but we really need to hire at least two more physicians before I step back.”

I captured her hand, bringing it to my lips. “We’ll find them,” I promised. “Money isn’t an issue. We’ll offer them salaries they can’t refuse.”

She rolled her eyes, but her smile remained fond. “Not everything can be solved by throwing money at it, Mr.Billionaire.”

“Most things can,” I countered with a smirk. “How do you think I got you to Angel Spring in the first place?”

Her laughter, bright and uninhibited, remained the most beautiful sound I’d ever heard. “You can’t buy loyalty or dedication,” she reminded me. “The doctors we hire need to believe in what we’re building here.”

“Like you did,” I said softly.

Her expression softened. “Like I do,” she corrected. “Every day.”

Standing, she stepped into my arms, her body fitting perfectly against mine as it always had. My hand spread protectively over her abdomen, where our child grew bigger each day.

“Did you ever imagine this?” she asked, voice muffled against my chest. “When you were holed up alone in this mansion, avoiding the town?”

I chuckled, remembering the solitary, angry wolf I’d been. “Never,” I admitted. “I was too busy nursing old wounds to imagine new beginnings.” I pressed my lips to her forehead. “Let’s hope the baby gets your sunny disposition instead of my grumpy one.”

She laughed, the sound echoing through the empty building that would soon fill with healing and hope. “I don’t know. I’ve grown rather fond of your grumpiness.”

Surrounded by our shared vision, I held my mate and felt the last shadows of my past finally dissolve.

FIVE YEARS LATER

The fundraiser was Sabrina’s idea, a gala to raise money for the new pediatric wing. I’d offered to simply write a check for the full amount, but she’d been adamant.

“It’s not just about the money,” she’d explained, bouncing our three-year-old son on her hip. “It’s about community investment. People care more about things they’ve contributed to.”

So here we were, the medical center’s cafeteria transformed into a ballroom with twinkling lights and elegant decorations.

The guest list included not only Angel Spring’s residents but wealthy shifters from

across the country, all dressed in their finest and opening their checkbooks for a cause barely on their radar before tonight.

“Daddy!” A small voice cut through the sophisticated murmur. I turned just in time to catch my son as he hurtled toward me, narrowly avoiding a collision with a server carrying champagne flutes.

“Hey, buddy,” I said, lifting him easily. At three, Sawyer already showed signs of shifter strength, his little body vibrating with energy that sometimes seemed impossible to contain. “Where’s your babysitter?”

“Run away,” he said with a mischievous grin.

“You ran away,” I corrected automatically, scanning the room for the harried elderly shifter we’d hired to keep him occupied. I spotted her searching frantically near the kitchen doors and gave her an acknowledging nod.

“You’re supposed to stay with Ms.Howard,” I said, attempting a stern tone undermined by my inability to truly be upset with him.

Sawyer’s lower lip jutted out. “Want Mama,” he said simply, pointing across the room.

Following his gaze, I spotted Sabrina, resplendent in a gown that caught the light as she moved between guests. She laughed at something Juniper said. As she tilted her head, the light caught on my mark on her neck.

Five years together, and she still took my breath away.

“Your mother is something special, isn’t she?” I said softly.

Sawyer nodded vigorously. “Mama fix people,” he declared with absolute certainty only a child could muster.

“That she does,” I agreed, suppressing a smile. “And she’s very busy tonight. So you need to be a good boy for Ms.Howard.”

He sighed dramatically, a miniature version of Sabrina’s exasperated expression. “Kay,” he conceded, as if granting me a great favor.

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I set him down just as the babysitter caught up to us, breathless and apologetic. “He’s quick,” she explained unnecessarily.

“Wolf blood,” I said with a wink at my son.

As they departed for the playroom we’d set up specifically for tonight, I returned to circulating among our guests.

The fundraiser had already exceeded our initial goal, with pledges continuing to roll in.

My contribution still dwarfed them all, but Sabrina had been right, collective effort carried power all its own.

I paused near the enormous donation board, where gold stars marked major contributors.

The names represented a who’s who of shifter society, including several Song pack members.

Once, their presence in my home would have been unthinkable.

Now, it felt like healing, not just for me, but for all the factions Victoria’s manipulations had divided.

“Quite the turnout,” Marshall observed, appearing at my elbow with a tumbler of whiskey. He’d cleaned up well for the occasion, though he still looked more at home

in flannel and muck-covered boots than a tuxedo. “The Doc’s a miracle worker.”

I hummed in agreement, watching Sabrina charm a notoriously tight-fisted pack alpha into doubling his donation. “She makes people want to be better,” I said simply.

Marshall grinned. “She certainly worked that magic on you.”

I couldn’t argue. The reclusive, snarling wolf I’d been before Sabrina would hardly recognize the man I’d become. Father, mate, community leader. The chronic pain that had plagued me for years had faded to a mere memory under her care.

“Logan.” Sabrina’s voice pulled me from my thoughts. She appeared at my side, her cheeks flushed with excitement. “We’re over double our target. The pediatric wing is fully funded.”

I caught her hand, bringing it to my lips in a gesture that still made her blush after all these years. “Of course it is. You’re unstoppable when you set your mind to something.”

Her smile, brilliant and genuine, warmed me from within. “Come dance with me,” she said, tugging me toward the area cleared for dancing. “You’ve been skulking in corners long enough.”

I allowed myself to be led, aware of the amused glances from those who knew my preference for solitude. “I wasn’t skulking,” I protested mildly. “I was strategically observing.”

She laughed, stepping into my arms as the music shifted to something slow and romantic. “Call it whatever you want, Mr.Song. I still expect at least one dance from my mate.”

As we moved together, her head resting against my chest just above my heart, I reflected on our journey.

From the suspicious, wounded wolf who'd grudgingly allowed a sunny doctor into his territory to the man who now held fundraisers and led community initiatives.

The transformation still sometimes stunned me.

"What are you thinking about?" Sabrina asked, lifting her face to mine. "You've got that brooding look."

I smiled, tightening my arms around her. "Just how different everything is from when you first came to Angel Spring."

Her eyes softened with understanding. "Different in all the best ways," she murmured.

Over her shoulder, I could see our estate grounds through the wall of windows. Snow dusted the pines, glittering under moonlight just as it had that night years ago when we'd first dared to believe in forever.

"Do you remember the first time you called me grumpy?" I asked, spinning her gently.

She laughed, the sound still chasing shadows from the darkest corners of my mind. "Which time? It was my favorite term of endearment."

"Was?"

"Is," she corrected, rising on tiptoe to press a kiss to the underside of my jaw. "Always will be, my grumpy billionaire wolf."

Later, after we went home and Sawyer was tucked into bed with dreams of running through forests, we stood in our bedroom. Sabrina stepped out of her heels with a sigh of relief, rolling her shoulders to ease the tension of hosting.

“Successful night,” I said, loosening my tie. “You were magnificent.”

She smiled, mischief lighting her eyes. “Does that mean you’re not going to lecture me about overdoing it?”

I snorted, remembering the argument we’d had earlier in the week about her taking on too much. “Would it make any difference if I did?”

“Not a bit,” she admitted cheerfully, reaching behind herself for the zipper of her gown. “But I do appreciate your concern.”

I moved to help her, fingers brushing against the warm silk of her skin. The familiar spark of desire ignited between us, as potent now as it had been from the first. Five years, one child, and countless challenges hadn’t diminished what we felt for each other. Our bond had only strengthened.

“You know,” she said conversationally as the gown slipped to the floor. “The pediatric wing will need a full-time specialist.”

I recognized her tone, casual but deliberate. It was how she approached topics she knew I might resist. “We’ll find the best,” I assured her, distracted by the lace of her undergarments against her smooth skin.

“Mmm,” she hummed, stepping closer to loosen the buttons of my shirt. “And we’ll need to expand the maternity ward too.”

My hands stilled on her waist. “The maternity ward? I thought we upgraded that last

year.”

Her smile deepened, eyes sparkling with barely contained joy. “Yes, but I plan to be its most demanding patient in about seven months.”

For a moment, the words didn’t register. Then understanding flooded me with joy so intense it bordered on pain. “You’re. We’re. Again?”

She nodded, tears gathering in her eyes. “Another cub for our pack,” she confirmed. “I confirmed it yesterday.”

I lifted her, spinning her in a circle that made her laugh in surprise. “Put me down, you ridiculous wolf,” she protested, but her arms tightened around my neck.

When I set her on her feet, I dropped to my knees, pressing my face against her still-flat stomach. “Hello, little one,” I whispered, voice rough with emotion. “Your pack is waiting for you.”

Sabrina’s fingers threaded through my hair, her nails gently scratching at my scalp. “A family,” she said softly. “Something we both wanted but were afraid to hope for.”

Rising, I gathered her close, overwhelmed by this woman, this life, this future we were building together. “Not afraid anymore,” I said against her hair. “Not with you.”

Outside, snow began to fall, soft flakes drifting past our windows. Inside, warmth and love filled every corner of the home we’d built, the life we’d created from broken pieces and tentative hopes.

The grumpy billionaire wolf had found his forever in the arms of a sunshine doctor, and nothing could dim the light of our future.

Thank you for reading Billionaire Wolf Needs a Doctor.

Check out Tanner and Felicity's story in Billionaire Wolf Needs a Pilot .

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Fiona Bell will do anything to become a successful painter, even if it means working as a maid and practically being homeless. The last thing she needs is a distraction in the form of love. That is, until she finds herself trapped between two overbearing billionaires.

Alpha werewolves Huxley Cain and Derek Fox never expected to find a mate. That is until they meet her. From the moment they catch her sweet scent, they know she is the one to give them an heir.

They will stop at nothing to claim her.

She is theirs to protect.

Theirs to share in pleasure.

Theirs to claim together.

They will never let her go.

FIONA

I stood on my tiptoes and reached up until I could reach the top of the display case with my feather duster. Balancing on my toes carefully, I avoided touching the spotless glass with my fingers as I ran the duster across the top.

The last thing I wanted was to leave fingerprint smudges on the glass that I would have to clean again.

It was nearly four o'clock, and I was almost done cleaning the house.

I had a rare two hours booked at my school's painting studio, and I was never going to make it across the city in time if I didn't leave before rush hour traffic.

My reflection in the glass stared back at me. I paused, frowning at what I saw. Dark circles haunted my eyes and my hair was tied in a messy ponytail. The only thing I had going for me was a healthy pink flush across my bare cheeks from my physically demanding job as a maid.

My T-shirt was stretched out from washing with holes along the edges. The faded letters U and M of my university covered the area over my breasts.

The shorts I wore were tight and barely covered my bottom because they were already a couple of years old. I guess I had a late growth spurt and outgrew them in the last year. They were one of the few things I managed to take with me when my father cut me off and kicked me out of the house.

I was far away from being the pretty little socialite my father liked to parade around in front of his rich friends at parties.

The way he used to show me off like a piece of meat made it obvious that he wanted to marry me off to one of their sons as soon as possible.

I tugged on the edges of my shorts as I recalled how uncomfortable I used to be as the men, both young and old, would leer at my curvy figure.

There were other rich people's sons and daughters at these parties, but I never really fit in with any of them.

Every single party ended the same way, with me escaping as soon as possible and

hiding out in the library or out near the kitchens with the servants.

I stabbed the furniture with force with the feather duster as I recalled the last argument I had with my dad.

For the crime of wanting to go to art school and wanting to be a painter instead of marrying his chosen protégé, the man I had looked up to my entire life cast me out to the streets.

"Selfish little whore, just like your mother."

His parting words still stung even after all these years. At eighteen years old, I had been abandoned once again, just like my mother abandoned me shortly after my birth.

Blinking rapidly, I cleared away the tears that stung my eyes.

None of that mattered now. Not only did I survive on my own, but three years later, I was thriving.

I was going to graduate from U of M this year.

And I did it all by myself, paying my way through college by cleaning rich people's houses.

The only thing I needed to worry about was finishing school and getting my paintings into an exhibit.

A loud gurgle came from my stomach, reminding me that I skipped lunch. Ugh. I had to grab takeout on the way too. I had to finish cleaning up and get out of here.

I put in my earbuds and turned up the volume. The pounding beat of the music in my

ears set the perfect pace for cleaning the rest of the room quickly. I sang along and shook my hips as I began to vacuum the room.

The giant bed in the center of the room was the toughest part to clean. It had to be wide enough for at least four people and the top of the mattress was strangely high, coming up to my tummy. I would need a step if I wanted to crawl up there.

My cheeks flushed as I suddenly realized why someone would need a bed like this. The bed was too high for someone as short as me, but it would be at groin height for a tall man. It was the perfect height for fucking. Not that I had any real-life experience with sex, but I had seen things online.

I shook my head and tried to get the perverted images out of my head. It was no business of mine what or who my boss did in his free time. It would be naive to think that a man with his wealth wouldn't have women throwing themselves onto his bed.

Thankfully, I had never met my boss, or else the images in my mind would have been even more awkward. I had no idea who my employer was or what he looked like. Even though I had worked for him for more than three years, my only point of contact was with his personal assistant.

The mansion I cleaned gave away no clues. Everything was obviously expensive, from the multistory floor-to-ceiling windows overlooking the city below, to the infinity pool on the roof.

Even with all the luxury, the home was cold and sterile, strangely empty of all personal touches. Except for the custom bed in the master bedroom, of course. It could have been yet another home featured in those magazine articles about the mega rich and famous.

Getting down on my knees, I used the hose attachment on the vacuum to reach deep

under the bed. My favorite song began and I swayed my hips as I vacuumed to the throbbing beat in my ears.

All I needed to know was that he was loaded and paid well for a clean home.

It was better this way.

There was no awkward conversation or pretending to listen and feigning concern about how hard it was to be so rich and powerful.

This way I could get my work done as quickly as possible. Best of all, I didn't need to care about what I looked like as I crawled around on my knees and bopped along to my favorite songs.

Suddenly, the vacuum cleaner lost power.

I frowned. That was strange.

It was then that I noticed the shadow that fell over the side of the bed.

Make that two shadows.

I froze. My hands shook as I plucked the earbuds out of my ears.

"Don't stop on our account."

The deep voice startled me. This was the first time I had ever run into another living person while cleaning this house. Now there were two strange men here. Suddenly, I remembered that I was on my knees with my ass in the air, and I was wearing a very short, very tight pair of shorts.

What must they think of me? My cheeks grew hot. I couldn't believe this was happening. This was not how I wanted to meet my boss and his guest.

I jumped to my feet. Eager to hide my barely covered ass, which was prominently on display, I spun around quickly.

To say the two men were gorgeous was an understatement.

My breath caught in my throat as I admired their masculine features.

Their slate colored suits molded to their muscles in all the right places.

The one with dark hair carried an edge of danger to him, while the one with sandy blond hair quirked his lips in a sexy smirk.

His eyes twinkled as he read my reactions like an open book.

Unfortunately, I was so focused on the twin sets of blue wolf-like eyes staring at me with hunger, that I failed to see where I was stepping.

My foot caught on the edge of the fur rug next to the bed.

I stumbled. As I fell, my arms flailed clumsily like a chicken flapping its wings in an attempt to regain my balance.

Tall, dark, and dangerous grabbed me, pulling me to his chest. I caught my breath and sighed at the warm, musky scent of the man holding me. To my surprise, the other man pinned me from behind, pressing the length of his hard body against my back.

Even as my heart hammered in my chest, I melted against the strong muscles cushioning me. In their overwhelming embrace, I was protected. I was safe.

I already thought they were huge from a distance. Now that they were up close, pressed against me, their size was almost beastly. Never in my life had I felt small or delicate like one of those waifish girls in the fashion magazines, but next to them, I was like a toy doll.

Their hands settled on my hips and waist. Heat spread from where their bodies touched mine, shooting straight to my core. I let out a whimper in desperate need. Despite my fear of their huge size, it all felt so right.

Never before had I ever felt this way. The sensations surging through my body were overwhelming and out of my control. There was nothing I could have done to stop the chain reaction I had to them.

I should have pushed them away. I should have screamed. They were too big. I should have been scared. They were too close, invading my space. But my body was warm and pliable while they held me. My limbs felt sapped of strength.

I brought a hand up to the muscular chest in front of me and flexed my fingers.

Something primal in me wanted to dig my nails into his muscles.

Instead, I pushed my palms against him, but it was useless.

Neither of them budged an inch. Stuck between their hard chests and strong thighs, it was like pushing against a brick wall while being pinned in place by a boulder behind me.

The man behind me leaned down and buried his nose in my hair. He took a long deep breath and exhaled. His breath tickled the hairs on the back of my neck. My inner muscles clenched in need at the sensation.

"She's the one, Hux. She smells delicious." His low voice sent shivers up my spine.

Hux. Mr.Dark's name was Hux. It suited him.

"That's because she's ready for breeding." Hux's voice dripped with lust. He ran a thumb against my bottom lip. "A juicy, ripe peach that's ready to be eaten. So plump and sweet, I can't wait to take a taste."

"No!" This wasn't right. No matter what my traitorous body wanted, I couldn't let my first time be a quick and dirty threesome with my boss.

I squirmed out from between them and held my hand out as if I could will them to stay away.

"There will be no tasting of anything or anyone," I blurted.

My voice cracked with panic as the words rushed out.

Hux barked out a deep laugh. "Our little rabbit's a feisty one, Derek." His eyes glinted with delight. "The chase is going to be so much fun."

My eyes flew to the other man. Derek grinned. A flash of fang peeked out from between his lips. There was something beastly about him. I blinked quickly. My eyes must have been playing tricks on me.

He ran his gaze up and down my body, stopping pointedly at my too-short shorts. His tongue ran across his bottom lip. I cursed at myself for choosing to wear them today. If I had remembered to do the laundry last weekend, I would have had clean clothes, then none of this would be happening.

I glanced between the two huge men to the door behind them. There was no way I

could make it past them to my escape route.

I was trapped. A helpless rabbit ready to be ravaged by two savage beasts.

Read OWNED BY THE BILLIONAIRES

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The Doms of Darkness series begins with Alex and Amanda's story in Sold to the Master Vampire.

ONE CLICK TO GET Sold to the Master Vampire for FREE

A master vampire takes what he wants, when he wants it.

The moment I saw her, I knew I had to have her.

The perfect pet.

Mine to tame. Mine to pleasure. Mine to protect.

A woman I could mold into my future queen.

But she's not as helpless as she seems.

Will she take her place as my mate?

Or will she lead me to my destruction?

I pushed my half-eaten chocolate raspberry mousse cake away and collapsed against the back of my seat.

"I can't possibly eat another bite." The café where we had staked our claim smelled like dark roasted coffee, sugar, and cigarette smoke.

I looked out the window and gazed lazily at the fashionable men and women walking down the street. They were so lucky to live here.

"You're such a lightweight, Amanda. Gimme." Meghan reached across the table and grabbed my plate. "I never want to leave Paris," she mumbled around a mouthful of mousse.

I don't know how she did it. We met at the hostel last week, and ever since then all we had done was sight see and eat.

My new best friend and I had a plan to eat our way across the city before moving on to the next country on our Euro trip, where we were going to do the same thing all over again.

While most tourists came to Paris for luxury shopping, we were here for the food and whatever tourist traps we could sneak into on a backpacking budget.

Suddenly, Meghan let out an ear-piercing scream. Her fork clattered to the floor, and she knocked over her cup of coffee. She clutched at her throat. Panic filled her eyes.

"Meghan!" I tried to reach across the table, but my arms moved like they were filled with lead. Her mouth opened and closed, but no words came out. Blood sprayed out between her fingers. The mist of blood splattered onto my face.

I jerked awake, falling back to reality from my dream of a life that didn't exist anymore.

Every muscle and bone in my body ached from sleeping on the cold concrete floor.

My stomach threatened to turn itself inside out from the smell of piss, blood, and vomit.

Screams from several cells down the hall from mine bounced off the stone walls in a never-ending echo.

There was a sickening thud and then it was silent.

My cellmate covered her ears and rocked back and forth with her head between her knees. I stood up on my tiptoes and peered out of the tiny street-level window in our cell.

It was futile, of course. Time had no meaning in this place.

Once the vampires figured out how to get rid of the sun, it became impossible to tell how much time had passed.

Even the moon disappeared without light from the sun.

With nothing to light up the inky black sky, eternal darkness took over the world.

Keys jangled, and a metal door screeched in the distance. The hairs on my arms stood up in warning.

Not again.

I crawled back to the far corner of the cell and shrank down into the shadows as low as I could. I wrapped my arms around my knees and buried my face in my knees. If only the stone walls would swallow me up, so I could disappear. Silently, I prayed that they would ignore me and walk past my cell.

Heavy footsteps clomped down the hall, closer and closer.

I made out two sets of footsteps. The guard who watched over the prisoners walked with a shuffling gait.

The customer looking to buy a human from the merchandise on display in the dungeon walked with steady, sure steps.

The human captives here were being sold off to vampires like cattle to be slaughtered. Whose turn was it going to be today?

The footsteps stopped suddenly. Male voices mumbled too softly for me to make out what they were saying. They were standing on the other side of the door.

I held my breath until my head pounded. Maybe if I kept perfectly still, they wouldn't see me.

"That one."

No, no, no, no.

The squeaky lock turned, and my cell door swung open with a groan. The guard came in first, followed by another vampire, who I guessed was today's buyer.

I darted my eyes around the room, looking for an escape route, but the two demons blocked the only way out of the room. The space closed in on us. Their large bodies took up all the room in the tiny cell.

The buyer was stylishly dressed, in a well-tailored gray silk suit that must have cost more money than I had in my bank account.

His strong features were closed, revealing nothing about him.

If I didn't know that he was a monster, I would have said that he was the most beautiful man I had ever seen.

The burly guard grabbed me by my arms and hauled me to my feet.

I struggled, but it was less than useless.

In fact, my resistance seemed to excite him.

The demon tightened his grip painfully around my arms and flashed his fangs in my face.

The smell of raw blood and decay was overwhelming.

I was smelling the scent of his last meal.

A captive just like me. My stomach turned violently.

I wrenched myself out of his grasp and threw myself against the wall.

"Filthy whore!" The vampire guard growled and raised his hand to hit me. I squeezed my eyes shut, but the painful blow never came.

I opened my eyes and saw the guard's feet floating above the ground.

The buyer had one hand wrapped around the guard's throat.

The buyer flashed his fangs and his copper eyes glowed as he squeezed the guard's neck.

Bone and tissue ground together, the noise echoing in the cell.

Even though vampires didn't need to breathe, their flesh still bruised and their bones still broke.

The guard clawed uselessly at the hand around his neck.

"You do not ever touch what is mine," he rasped around his fangs.

He threw the guard to the other side of the room.

My heart thudded at his strength and speed.

His movements were quick, almost too quick to be seen with the human eye.

The guard must have weighed over two hundred pounds, but the buyer tossed him aside like a crumpled ball of tissue without messing up his expensive suit.

Despite his refined and regal exterior, there was no doubt that he was a warrior. A killer draped in fine silk.

"I-I'm sorry, Master Diamantis." The guard started to get up, but one look from the master vampire had him down on his knees again. The guard kept his eyes on the ground and bowed his head to the floor as he spoke, "She is to your satisfaction, Master?"

The master vampire paused to examine the goods he was buying. He swept his eyes up and down my body. Crossing my arms, I hugged my stomach. Though I could not imagine why. What he saw must have satisfied him.

"She will do. Have your sire arrange the settlement with my men."

"Yes, Master, anything you command." The guard cowered and bowed his head in subservience and backed out of the cell. Without giving me another glance, he backed out of the cell. He tripped over his feet, eager to get away from the powerful vampire.

I was all alone with the buyer now. Fear chilled my blood. I looked up into the cold, stony eyes of the vampire who bought me.

The vampire who was now my owner. My master. He was going to own and use me, and I was going to obey.

Or at least that's what I was going to make him think. As soon as I had a chance, I was going to make my escape.

GET SOLD TO THE MASTER VAMPIRE FOR FREE!

GET THE COMPLETE SERIES: Doms of Darkness (The Complete Series: Books 1-4)