Hasty Prejudgment

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Long ago, in the embrace of a plain where spring breezes kissed the wheat fields, the hearts of two young souls were bound together by a pure and guileless love. Their modest home was brimming with light, and their laughter was the sweet music of the village—until spring gifted them the fruit of their love in the form of a little boy. Yet fate demanded a heavy price for this blossoming. The young mother, like a candle extinguished by a passing breeze, closed her eyes to the world at the very moment of her child's birth and departed.

A heavy, dark grief descended upon the man's shoulders—a sorrow that made the village sky feel low and turned the walls of his home into a cage filled with agonizing memories. Unable to bear the pitying glances of the townsfolk and the whispers of the wind in the alleys, he held his newborn to his chest like a fragile treasure and, accompanied by his loyal, sturdy dog, whose amber eyes always gleamed with affection and devotion, sought refuge in the unknown heart of the dense forest.

Deep within the woods, where ancient trees towered toward the heavens and silence was broken only by the rustle of leaves and the song of birds, the man built a wooden cabin. In that green solitude, the infant was his reason to breathe, and the dog was an unassuming guardian who paced like a shadow around the cradle, keeping the world’s dangers at bay with watchful eyes.

One morning, autumn knocked on the cabin window with its cold claws, and a thick fog wove like a gray curtain among the trees. The man took his heavy axe and whetted its steel blade against a flint stone until its sharp edge glinted in the pale morning light. Before leaving, he cast a loving glance at the sleeping baby and the dog resting peacefully beside the cradle, then vanished into .the chilly forest mist to gather firewood for the coming winter

Hours later, as the sun faded behind leaden clouds, the man returned to the cabin carrying a heavy bundle of wood. Yet he was still a few paces from the wooden porch when the sharp scent of iron and blood in the cold air sent his heart into a frantic pounding. His loyal dog lay panting and wounded on the porch planks; his muzzle and white teeth were drenched in blood, and right .beside his trembling paws lay a torn, crimson scrap of fabric from the baby's little shirt

In an instant, time stood still and the blood froze in the man's veins. A tempest of rage, terror, and grief surged through his mind. He slammed the bundle of firewood onto the ground, raised the sharp, gleaming axe above his head with trembling hands, and prepared to end with a single .blow the life of the beast he believed had torn apart his wife's only keepsake

Yet in that very fraction of a second while the blade hung suspended in the air, his gaze locked onto the dog's amber eyes. In that exhausted, half-dead stare, there was no trace of ferocity or fear, only an ocean of affection, pleading, and anxiety, as if urging him to look inside the cabin. At that exact moment, the faint cooing of an infant drifted from behind the half-open cabin door, .shattering the heavy silence of the forest

The man's hands shook. Fury gave way to shock, and the heavy axe slipped from his numb fingers onto the wooden porch. Frantic and breathless, he pushed open the cabin door and .followed the trail of blood toward the bedroom

On the threshold, he beheld a sight that shook his entire being: in the corner of the room lay the mangled, lifeless carcass of a massive gray wolf in a pool of blood, while on the other side, in his .wooden cradle, his little baby lay safe and sound, waving his tiny hands in the air

The man rushed back to the porch and fell to his knees before his wounded, faithful companion. Hot tears streamed down onto the animal's furry face, a creature that had fought the savage predator to the brink of death to keep the sole light of his life alive. The man embraced the dog with all his might, bound his wounds with his own shirt, and in the stillness of the forest, for the first time in months, his tears fell not out of sorrow, but out of gratitude and love, a love that, this .time, had been saved from death through patience and seeing the truth