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About 1000 words

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THE BEAST

by Hannah Dolan

It snapped and snarled, pacing behind the cage door. Waiting to be set free. Hunger showed in every motion, a killer waiting for the hunt.

Dr. William Carter had brought back a creature long extinct, or a semblance of it. The dire wolf. But unlike the prehistoric creature, what stood before him was a twisted, nightmarish version of the pictures in textbooks.

The dire beast was twice the size of a regular wolf. Its eyeteeth curved out of its mouth. Long, sharp claws that clicked on the concrete floor. The carcasses of the beast's parents laid in the back of the cage. Upon seeing them for the first time, the beast had immediately attacked.

At one point the doctor had considered shooting the beast. He pointed the gun at it but couldn't pull the trigger. He created this creature, he couldn't destroy his work. It was proof of his genius.

His phone buzzed, General Sadler had arrived.

He walked to the stairs passing whiteboards and desks filled with his research and lab equipment.

He came out of the basement and walked to the door, unbothered by his rundown house. His work left him little time to focus on such menial things like cleaning and upkeep.

Dr. Carter opened the door to the general and three soldiers, “Thank you for coming, General.” He held out his hand.

The general took it, “This better be as good as you say. I’m too busy to have my time wasted by a rejected scientist.”

The doctor clenched his jaw, “This way.”

Dr. Carter lead them to the basement. As they walked down the stairs, the sound of the dire beast’s claws against the floor stopped.

The five men approached the cage.

“I wouldn’t get too close.” Dr. Carter said.

The men stared at the beast. And the beast stared back.

“Is it trained?” General Sadler asked.

“Not exactly. He tests at a higher intelligent level then most canids, though. With the right motivation, training shouldn’t be difficult.”

“What’s behind it?” The general eyed the dead wolves.

“His parents.”

Sadler looked shocked for a moment before curling his lip in what must have been a smile, “A natural born killer.”

“Yes, sir.”

The dire beast had remained unmoving, waiting to see what the newcomers had planned for it.

“So, will you use him?” Dr. Carter asked.

“We would have to see how well it responds to handlers and training, but it looks promising.” The general looked at the doctor, “How quickly can you make more?”

“Finding resources on my own took some time, but that part could be sped up with your aid. Mating and gestation, including the alterations in the womb, takes about seven months.”

The general was silent. The beast began to salivate.

“We will take it and provide you with the resources you need.”

“I will be recognized for my achievements, correct?”

“Your work will remain confidential indefinitely, Doctor.”

Dr. Carter shifted in place, glancing at the cage’s switchboard a few feet away.

“What will I get paid for him?”

“You will get paid after you make more.”

“No.” Dr. Carter’s shoulders tensed, “I want half of the payment up front. You cannot take my work without giving me proper credit and then not pay me. He is a scientific breakthrough and I will be recognized for it.”

“You gave us permission to come and take your breakthrough. And as far as I can tell I’m looking at a disgraced scientist who lost his license and began to conduct illegal experiments that are a threat to public safety. So, if you want to continue your work as a free man, then you will remain quiet and unpaid until I say so. Do you understand, Mr. Carter?”

The doctor looked at the general and then at the dire beast. “Yes, sir.”

General Sadler turned away. Dr. Carter walked to the switchboard and opened the cage door.

The dire beast leapt onto the closest soldier, teeth disappearing into his neck, claws shredding his back. They both fell to the ground. The beast stood, the soldier did not.

“What the hell did you do?”

“I will be recognized for my work.” Dr. Carter said.

In seconds, the beast ripped the other two soldiers apart.

“Are you crazy? You just killed us both!”

The beast faced the two men, leaving the mutilated bodies behind it. Sadler backed away, while the doctor remained in place. The beast ran at the general, but before he could turn to run, it had grabbed his leg and flung him across the floor. Sadler screamed as the beast jumped on top of him and began to tear into him.

Dr. Carter watched the brutal display of power, “You are magnificent.”

The dire beast turned to him, gore dripping from his muzzle. It began to walk towards Dr. Carter, bloody claws clicking against the ground.

It lunged at him, ripping at his arm. Dr. Carter fell, crying out as the beast tore muscle and bone, leaving the doctor’s forearm on the ground.

He tried to push himself away, but the dire beast had jumped on him, claws digging into his chest pinning him in place.

“I made you. I gave you life.”

The beast stared down at the man. Drool and blood dripped onto the doctor’s face.

“But you don’t care.” Dr. William Carter looked at his creation, the product of his own hubris, and smiled, “You will show them what I was capable of. When they come looking for the general, they will find bodies and they will find you. They will see my brilliance.”

The beast opened its mouth.

“They won’t be able to ignore my work.”

As the creation killed its creator, he laughed.