

## Through The Howl of The Wind

by Simone Urie

It was a stormy night. The soft blue water had turned to a miserable gray. The waves slammed against the jagged rock of the sea bed. It was a battle, where mercy was an unknown quality. Not all the small or large creatures that were out that night were quite as resilient. Sadly, not all could defend mother nature's bullets, or at least not alone.

My small green home was a solid rock in a storm. Although, it was constantly being bullied by the salt of the sea, it stood strong. It's the perfect place for a person like myself. I can catch a glimpse of nature along with the sea. I always thought that my home in the forest and by the sea was a portal into nature's attributes. Then I could take these qualities and put them in one of my paintings to save the moment in time.

I had just been making dinner, and the smell of the garlic enveloped me. With the sizzling of my steak the outside world seemed to fade away. Although outside it was stormy and ruthless, my home felt like it was in a ray of sunshine. The fire crackled and snapped, with the flames dancing to its timeless, ancient, silent tune. I was lured to leave my stove to sit on the warm stone hearth. As I made my way across the room, the warm wood floor molded to my feet. I placed a hand on the hearth, and a warm and soothing feeling washed over me. Just as I was about to sit, a faint squeaking rose above the empty howl of the wind. I sighed — that must be the shed door loose again. Begrudgingly, I dragged myself to the door and threw on my old gray slicker and my gum boots. As I flung open the door, my sweet dream seemed to be popped in an instant by the stinging wind and rain.

I was out in the cruel harsh world. It was ready to crush a soft heart; thankfully my heart had been hardened enough to defend myself. The trees around me bent and lashed like whips, being moved by the wind. With forest swaying around me, I kept venturing around the old house to the shed, but to my surprise the door was closed. The bolt solid in its socket. The faint squeak I had heard in the house had now risen high over the sound of the wind. The world around me was moving so fast, a dizzy sensation began to fall over me. But something in the woods caught my eye. Through the wind and rain I could barely see it. I began to approach with great caution for I knew in Tofino there were a variety of unfriendly animals. My heart began to beat like a native drum, with a steady rhythm that quickened with time. I finally got close enough to see it. What I thought only moments ago could be a blood-thirsty beast, I now realised was a small wolf pup, its coat stained with red and brown. The poor soul could not have been more than six weeks old. She was trapped under a gnarled root that dared to surface.

I bent down slowly, examining her condition. With great caution, I reached out a hand. The small wolf pup then lowered her head timidly to allow me to give her a gentle pat on the head. I made my way down her back, following her spine. As my hand slipped under the root, I felt thousands of daggers catch the top of my hand. I then took my other hand and slid it gingerly

under her belly. Then using my hand as protection, I gave the cold little body a gentle tug. I saw the limp figure coming slowly closer, until the whole body had emerged from the wicked grasps of the root.

Then tucking the helpless little beast in my coat, I made my way back to the house. The world around me still spun but the little wolf had all my attention. The wind and rain pushed against me like it was trying to stop my heroic mission but I would not be stopped. I was filled with determination, a feeling I thought was long lost. I made my way up the paint-stripped steps of my front door. Then turning the old tired door knob, I swung open the door, then slammed it with the helpful force of the wind, as I made my first step into safety. I leaned against it, gasping in awe of what had just happened, and in awe of myself and my courage, for I never knew I had it.

I began to slip off my muddy boots. My feet were cold and wet but that was not what mattered, for what mattered was the little wolf. Gingerly I took one arm out of my coat, then with that hand I supported the little wolf. Then once free of my coat I walked across the warm wood floors but I felt like I was somewhere else. I reached for a soft wool blanket from the old tattered chair. Then brought the little wolf from under my arm. For the first time the little wolf and I were eye to eye. Wrapping the blanket around the shivering little body was the first chance I had to look at the little wolf. I sat down on the old tattered, orange chair by the fire. With the little wolf on my lap I could see the dirty open wound along her back. Her mother must have been killed or she was abandoned. I nudged softly at a rock stuck in one of the cuts. The little wolf cried out in pain. "S-s-s-sorry," I said, but the sound of my voice terrified me. For I had not spoken for so long, the sound was foreign. That one word had reminded me why I never spoke. Words from my mouth brought back pain and sorrow, not at the meanings of the words but at how people respond. My stutter had caught me once again in its trap, it forced me to live in the middle of nowhere with only myself for company, but myself was all I could bear. The reserve I once lived on was like at prison full of hate and cruel words. My own family thought that I was nothing because of my stutter, and my own people followed in their footsteps.

Not until I had completed my course of bitter thoughts had I realised that the little wolf had not been bothered by my stutter, for now the little head was resting on my knee with her eyes closed. Her shivering had subsided and was replaced by a soft rhythmic rise and fall of her chest. I glanced at her wounded back. I would not allow these wounds to hold her back like my stutter.

Gently I slipped my hands under her dirty belly and lifted her from my knee onto the armchair where I had sat. Then I walked across the same warm floor, that I had only minutes ago, but I felt different than I had only moments ago. Could it be the little wolf? As I turned to see the little body resting on the orange arm chair by the fire, a peace washed over me like the waves of the sea.

I went into my little kitchen cupboard and pulled out a small metal tub. I put a pot full of water on my old stove. As the water began to bubble and the pot rattled but the little wolf still slept, I took the sloshing pot off the stove and poured it into my little metal tub. I then filled it with some cold water so as not to burn my little wolf. I then walked away to the bathroom to find some soap and a towel.

When I returned to my living room-kitchen, I found my little wolf had woken up from her slumber. She had not ventured from the old arm chair but she yawned sleepily. I smiled to myself as I watched and placed the soap and towel in the kitchen by the little metal tub. Then marching across the room to my little wolf, I could feel the warmth of the fire as I unwrapped my little wolf and slid her under my arms. Conscious of her wounds on her back, I slowly lowered her into the warm water. The little wolf showed no restraint. The water lapped over her wounds, washing away dirt like bad memories. She quite enjoyed the water by walking and moving freely through it. Then dipping my hands in the warm water and lathering them with soap, I began to wash the matted dirt from her belly then worked my way up to her back. The blood and dirt washed away and the soft skin was no longer sensitive, for I had removed all the rocks and wood.

My little wolf was clean. I then took her from the bath and dried the dripping body with a soft towel. After wrapping her wounds, so that there was a bandage going around her middle, I made her a bed by the fire. She had a large pillow with many blankets. My house was filled with a horrible odor, for my dinner, the once desirable steak, had now turned to a small burned flat piece of meat. I gave it to the little wolf, for my hunger had subsided.

That night I was in bed, sorting through all of my paints, when I heard another one of the little wolf's cries. I left my room to go tend to her. She kept on crying no matter how hard I tried to comfort her. For the only thing I had not done was speak or read to her. I went back to my room and fetched my old Peter Rabbit book. I brought it back to my little wolf, who still cried. I sat down next to her by the warmth of the fire. "T-t-t-the Story of P-p-p-peter Rabbit," I stuttered, and placed the book down with a disappointed sigh. My little wolf looked at me with big blue eyes that stood out against her now gray coat. I must try again, for the little wolf. I began to read only with one stutter. I read well into the night next to my little wolf who had fallen fast asleep. The empty howl of the wind had subsided, my clear fluent voice filled my small home.

The next day the little wolf and I went out into the forest. She trotted at my side but I did not see a mother wolf. That night I read to my little wolf again. By the third week of our friendship, my little wolf's wounds had healed and her bandages came off. She had grown to twice her original size, all just from love and food. She was a gorgeous sight. Her ocean blue eyes and gray coat, but most of all she was a kind and soft-natured little being.

Every morning we walked through the forest or by the sea. I talked to her with no stutter, and as time went on I even went into town for the first time: and when I returned home, she was there, my little wolf. I had always thought that I did not belong in my community, but my little wolf proved me wrong.

One morning a pack of wolves gathered around my home like they were looking for something. I knew they had come for my little wolf. I let her go, but my heart was happy. Every morning my little wolf returns, we go for a walk and I talk. I am very thankful to the little wolf who helped me find my voice.