

CHAPTER 84

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84 Ava: Doctor's Care Dr. Ellison never appears before me again. @ My new doctor is an older woman who smells like a mix of raw meat and chocolate chip cookies. Like a bunny-slaughtering, chubby grandma. It's an odd mix that makes my nose wrinkle a little. "Good morning, Miss Grey," she greets me, her voice gentle and sweet, belying her stocky frame. It only adds to the Disney grandma effect, still with a side of vicious killer. "I'm Dr. Annise Beaumont, and I'll be taking over your care from now on." She moves closer, and I flinch without thinking, tensing at her approach. The rational part of my mind knows she's here to help, but after the disastrous encounter with Dr. Ellison, I can't shake the sense of unease that settles in the pit of my stomach. I don't want to be touched by people who hate me. Dr. Beaumont seems to notice my apprehension, knitting her brows together as she watches me. "I've heard of your issues with Dr. Ellison. He's well known C 84 Ava: Doctor's Care to be a bit of a problem child. Too big for his britches after heading ng off to university. No need to worry, dear. I don't care what pack you're from. I'm just going to check your vitals and take a look at those wounds, make sure everything is healing properly." Of course. All important things a normal doctor would do. I force myself to relax a little beneath her ministrations. She leans over with another whiff of bloody cookie grandma scent, her fingers surprisingly deft as they press against my wrist to check for my pulse. Her gentle, almost maternal touch is unfamiliar to me. "Your heart rate is a little elevated," she murmurs, -more to herself than to me. "But that's to be expected, given the circumstances." She peruses the monitor beside my bed, clucking her tongue at my blood pressure. "That should go up with some medication changes," she says, before launching into a casual story about how her daughter had spent a day in the hospital the other day because of a grandchild—a toddler?-who'd been ill from some sort 13 217 84 Ava: Doctor's Care of tummy bug, horrifying all the shifter parents at daycare. Turns out, she'd eaten something she shouldn't, and there was no horrifying epidemic taking down little pups in the pack. Despite my initial reservations, I find myself drawn in by her soothing cadence, the tension slowly ebbing from my body as she works, carefully checking every wound on my face and neck before replacing each dressing. The first glimpse of the ragged wounds on my abdomen, angry and raw, has my breath catching in my throat. Vivid memories of the fight with Todd flash through my mind, and I have to squeeze my eyes shut to block out the images. "Easy now," Dr. Beaumont murmurs, her voice a gentle anchor pulling me back to the present. "Just focus on my voice, Ava. You're safe here." I force my eyes open, fixing my gaze on her face as she carefully peels back the soiled dressings. Her expression is one of calm professionalism, betraying none of the revulsion I would expect at the sight of my mangled flesh. 84 Ava: Doctor's Care "These are healing nicely," she comments, her fingers ghosting over the edges of the wounds, just shy of touching them. "They cleaned it up well. We'll need to keep them clean and change the dressings regularly, but you're on the mend. I know it probably looks awful to you, but it looks good." Dr. Beaumont works in silence for a few minutes, her movements sure and efficient as she applies fresh dressings to my wounds. When she's finished, she steps back, giving me an appraising look that makes me feel like I'm being evaluated on more than just my physical state. "You've been through quite an ordeal, hav

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en't you, dear?" she says at last, her voice laced with sympathy. "But you're a fighter, I can see that. And with the right help, you'll come through this stronger than ever." I open my mouth to respond, but she holds up a hand, effectively silencing me. "No need to say anything now," she says with a shake of her head. "Just rest and heal, Miss Grey. We'll have plenty of time to talk later. I'm going to reduce the frequency of your pain medication, and now that you're awake I'll have you swallow them as pills instead 84 Ava: Doctor's Care of giving them through the IV." I nod, because she pauses as though she's waiting for my input. "We run labs morning and evening, just to make sure everything's going well. Our healer, Vanessa, seems quite taken with you, so she'll be checking on you daily. Most of our healers are on par with doctors, but without the required licensing of the government. I'm not sure how it was in your old pack, but here, we work together. We're going to keep your antibiotics through IV for now, but you'll be able to go home on the pill form. Do you have any questions?" I shake my head, flummoxed by her no-nonsense summarization of my care. —"Okay. If you need anything, your call light is... Not here. Hmm." Dr. Beaumont takes a moment to check around my bed, picking it up from behind it somewhere on the floor. "Here. Nurses are around all day and night, as I'm sure you're aware. If you have any more questions, let them know, and I or my colleagues. can come chat with you, okay?" "Yes ma'am," I murmur, as she fluffs a pillow behind my 141 84 Ava: Doctor's Care head before patting my knee. "Oh, I almost forgot. I'm going to put in an order for a clear liquid diet. So, jello, broth, apple juice—You can place an order at dinner through the phone, which is... Also not here. Damn it." Irritation flickers across that matronly face, and I can see a hint of the wolf beneath. "They should have had this room prepped as if you were already conscious. My apologies, Miss Grey. Here's your phone, and again, let us know if you need anything at all. Ah." She snaps her fingers. "Make sure to get up and moving if you can. It helps with healing, and if you can get out of bed, we can get you off the catheter." Catheter? -I blink and lift the blanket, peering between my legs. Yep. Not sure how I managed to miss that. Huh. No wonder I didn't feel full to bursting the moment I woke up. Dr. Beaumont is gone by the time I look back up, and a nurse peeks her head in the door. She looks frazzled. 627 < 84 Ava: Doctor's Care "Hi, Miss Grey? You have a visitor." Comment @ R

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