

A Wolf's Story

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The story of my original Balto wolf character Achak and how he grew up to be the wolf he is now.

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1 - Introduction to life

A Wolf's Story

Draco

Nome, Alaska, 1925. A place where, if you don't learn how to survive, you will soon die in the harsh arctic wilderness. Though in the case of one pack of creatures, a wolf pack, there is new life about to enter the world.

In a cave located on a cliff, far from the borders of the town, the wolf pack all gathered around the main cave of their alphas. They eagerly awaited the birth of their alpha female Olathe's pups. Their head alpha, Cheveyo, a huge black wolf was pacing anxiously, and nervously outside the entrance in front of them. His midnight black fur glistened in the early morning sun, and his bright amber eyes skimmed wildly across the rocky surface of the cliff. All heads suddenly turn to the cave as a glorious noise filled the cool morning air. The sound of puppies crying within the cave. Sniffing the air, Cheveyo, curious and anxious to see his mate and their new pups, entered the cave slowly. In the dim light that managed to get into the cave, the alpha wolf could make out the figure of Olathe on the large bed of hay and leaves near the back. Black tail wagging gently in greeting, Cheveyo ventured closer to the nest. As he did, he could now see the small figures of the three new born pups curled up at their mother's stomach, suckling. Ears going erect, the large black wolf studied his new offspring. After a few moments, a smile stretched across his dark face. He lowered his head to lick his mate's face, noting the tired look in her blue eyes.

Olathe was a beautiful silver colored wolf. She was gentle and wise, the other members of the pack often came to her for advise. Yet as an alpha, she was still dominant when she had to be, putting her authority first when needed. And when the pack was out hunting, she was graceful and swift as she ran beside Cheveyo, her mate.

After giving Olathe a kiss, Cheveyo looked back down to study his pups. Two were the silver color of their mother, one with black tips. But the pup that caught the male's attention was the one in the middle. It's fur was a deep black and, down it's spine, there was a silver stripe that ran from it's forehead to the tip of it's tail. It's nose was also slightly striped in silver. Since their eyes were still closed, it would be a few days before the parents would see what color the pups eyes were.

``Two boys and one girl...'' Cheveyo's head turned back to the female at her statement. She just looked back at him, smiling, her blue eyes seeming to sparkle, even in the dim light.

``Have you named them...?'' The alpha's deep voice resounded on the rock walls of the cave. Olathe lowered her head to point to each pup with her nose. Nudging the all silver one, she gave it a brief lick.

`` This is Ayashi, your daughter...'' Moving to the opposite end to the darker silver and black pup, ``Takoda, your son...'' And, with a smile, the female moved to the middle, black pup. ``...Achak. After his father.'' Achak...name meaning `spirit'. The alpha male's name meant `spirit warrior'. At hearing the name, Cheveyo smiled gently, and lowered his gaze to his son.

``Achak...Yes. Our little spirit.''

2 - Destiny

On the far outskirts of Nome, 1926, deep in the woods, it has been a little over nine months. Olathe and Cheveyo's pups had grown, though they were still not fully grown. Takoda was still smaller than his brother Achak, who had grown considerably over the last few months. His black and silver striped fur was healthy, and shown in the sun. The young wolf also had piercing blue on black eyes, which stood out from his dark fur. Ayashi, or Aya, as her brothers nicknamed her, was not as big as her siblings. She had been smaller, even as a pup. It seemed she would always be smaller than the other wolves. Although it didn't seem to worry her; she could keep up with her brothers, being as swift and agile as her mother. It also became apparent that Achak was going to be a dominant male. He had already shown his authority to Takoda, who almost immediately showed he was going to be a passive wolf, by rolling on his back and exposing his stomach in submission. Achak would never actually hurt his brother of course, just bare his fangs or glare if his gray sibling went too far with trying to play when he wasn't in the mood. Despite this, the two brothers were close, almost never going anywhere without the other.

Today, however, there was to be a treat for the three wolf pups. Their father and alpha male Cheveyo was going to take them off with him to show them their pack's territory. The young wolves needed to know the boundaries of their home, so they didn't get in trouble with the other packs if they got lost. Achak seemed to take the matter seriously, unlike Takoda and Aya, who were eccentric. Their tails wagging low but quickly in anxiousness, eager to get out further than the caves on the cliff. As they all headed out after eating, Cheveyo spoke to them.

“Now my young ones...I want you all to have fun on this excursion, but you must also be careful. We are not the only predators in this forest.” Ayashi paused in her wild running around with Takoda, and came up to lope beside her father.

“Do you think we'll see any today?” she sounded a bit fearful, disliking the idea of coming face to face with a bear. With her small size, she wouldn't stand much of a chance alone with a bear. But Cheveyo shook his head.

“Probably not today...most of them are at the rivers.” This information seemed to give the female much relief, as she once more ran off to explore with her brothers.

Nearly half the day was gone, and the four of them had still not seen the whole territory, and had stopped to take a break from all the traveling. There was a small fresh water spring that was running through the woods there, and Takoda, Aya, and Achak soon found themselves getting soaked from wrestling in it. Watching from a safe distance, Cheveyo smiled to himself as he observed. It was good for his pups to practice fighting, even in play. Suddenly, ears and tail going erect, the large black wolf looked off into the trees. He had smelt something. Something that wasn't suppose to be there. Golden eyes narrowing, the alpha looked back at his offspring. Could he leave them alone while he went and scouted? They were certainly old enough to be left alone...but this was their first time away from the caves! Getting another whiff of the scent, he knew he had to go. There was more than one intruder in his territory. It smelt like another wolf pack. Passing by the three adolescent wolves he glanced quickly at them, catching Achak's eyes.

“I'll be right back...you stay here with your sister and brother..” he tried not to make it sound serious, not wanting to scare him. But Achak seemed pretty calm about it, though a little nervous. He had gotten a little whiff of the foreign smell as well. Nodding to this father and glancing at the direction the smell had come from, he watched as Cheveyo trotted off into the woods silently. It didn't take long for his two siblings to notice their father had gone, coming over to Achak. Takoda the water off his coat, it flying off

his fur and going off in every direction. Aya jumped away, unwilling to be drenched again.

“Where's father?” she asked as she glanced around, looking increasingly worried.

“He said he'd be right back...” replied Achak, who had moved to lay in a patch of sun coming through the trees to dry off. Seeming satisfied with the answer, Ayashi started exploring the perimeter of their resting place. As she went off beyond Achak's sight, he began to get a bit uncomfortable. That scent was much closer now, and there was no sign of Cheveyo. Takoda now seemed to smell it, as he glanced around them nervously, ears twitching back and forth, listening. His black tipped tail was erect, and he was slowly edging his way closer to his brother. Both of their heads shot around as Ayashi suddenly came shooting into the clearing. Achak jumped up, along with her, the scent was practically on top of them. This made him agitated, as the fur on back of his neck and haunches rising, and his pupils shrank. Ayashi scrambled over to her two brothers, panting. Takoda frowned worriedly at his sister, at the fear in her blue eyes.

“What is it, Aya? What did you see...?” Achak looked up as he heard the sound of something approaching. They were wolves, but the three of them had never seen these ones before. There were four of them, all looking about the same age as Achak, Takoda, and Ayashi. One, whom Achak guessed was the oldest and leader of the group, was a dark brown and white wolf with dark eyes. The other three wolves were either gray or light brown. The black and white one sneered at them, then glanced at Aya.

“Well, there you are, cutie...why'd you run away?” We just wanted to say hi.” Ayashi scowled at that, as did her two brothers, though it seemed to infuriate Achak. Takoda remained quiet, tail ridged. As the black and white wolf made a move towards Aya, Achak growled deep in his throat, stepping over his sister protectively, who had huddled down next to him.

“Stay away from my sister...” This seemed to make the gray and brown wolves stop, a bit fearful. Achak was big for his age, and looked quite intimidating as the black and silver wolf was all ruffled.

“Hey, Nayati, maybe we should-”

But Nayati didn't seem too worried, but he too had paused, looking back to his group.

“Don't be such puppies...” turning back to Achak, he grinned, showing his teeth. “And what if I don't, eh? What are you going to do about it?”

Achak bared his fangs as a warning. In a brave move, Takoda moved forward towards the other wolves.

“Why don't you all just go and leave us alone?” Nayati seemed to ponder this, even tilting his head a bit.

“Hmm, how about not...and I do this!” He lunged at Takoda, taking him by the scruff and flinging him down. But just as the black and white wolf was about to attack again, he found himself knocked harshly to the ground. Opening his eyes, he tried to get back to his feet, but quickly found himself shoved back down. Looking up, his dark eyes locked onto two very piercing blue eyes. The eyes of the very big, very pissed off black and silver wolf standing over him, white fangs bared, and ears pinned back angrily. Baring his own fangs, Nayati once more tried to struggle and get up, but was suddenly met with the other wolf's jaws around his throat. Quite surprised at that, Nayati kicked out with his back legs, but was only met with more pressure from Achak's jaws. The black wolf was not going to move from over him. Nayati found himself growing fearful, and he froze up at the powerful authority that the blue eyed wolf gave off. Another snarl from Achak moved Nayati to move his body from aggressive to passive, ears going back as he broke eye contact. Even going as far as trying to nudge Achak's muzzle, he was once more disciplined with a sharp snap to the face. Finally, after a few minutes, Achak lifted his head to glare down at his captive. It was truly an intimidating sight.

“If I ever see you near my brother or sister again...You. Will. Regret it.!” To emphasize his point, he snapped at the other wolf's face, which earned Achak a fearful grimace. Nayati swallowed. “Do you understand me...?” The defeated wolf below him nodded. “Now, get out of here...” Takoda, who had gotten up after his brother had body tackled Nayati, stayed away from the two, along with Ayashi, who

was looking on in awe. Achak moved off of Nayati, who got up slowly, remaining lower than the one who had defeated him, tail tucked between his legs. Watching Achak cautiously, the black and white wolf headed back towards his group, who had lowered their heads almost to the ground in equal submission at just seeing the force the black wolf had shown. Achak then snarled and made a small charge at them, causing Nayati to scabble away with a yelp with his pack.

Once the four wolves disappeared, Takoda and Ayashi ventured carefully towards their brother. Wagging their tails in a friendly way, Aya was first to make a move, nudging Achak under the muzzle in an affectionate but passive manner. Almost instantly the raised fur on the black and silver wolf settled, and his body relaxed. ``Are you two alright...?" The tail wagging increased as Takoda smiled.

``We are unhurt..." Aya joined her brother in smiling.

``Thanks to you."

They didn't get to say much more before they heard the sound of something approaching again. Sniffing the air, the three young wolves turned at the familiar scent as their father came up. Takoda and Ayashi beamed excitedly.

``Father, you're back!" Cheveyo smiled back going to his charges. As he did he stopped, then lowered his head to sniff at the ground.

``This is the same scent from the other pack...what happened here while I was away?"

``Oh, you should have seen it father! There was these wolves that came and tried to pick a fight with us, and one of them attacked Takoda-" The large alpha seemed shocked by this. Who dared attack his pups?!

``Attacked Takoda?" instantly he was sniffing at his son, checking for injuries. ``What is the name of this wolf who attacked you...?" Takoda seemed a little embarrassed.

``His name was Nayati." Aya piped up again.

``Yes, but Achak jumped in and protected us, fought him, and chased him off!" Cheveyo now looked over at Achak.

``You fought the wolf?" Achak stepped up, nodding.

``They were harassing Aya, provoked us, and attacked Takoda, and I wasn't going to stand for it." Cheveyo looked at his second son a few moments, then smiled proudly.

``You will make a fine alpha someday, Achak..." To this Achak smiled back, tail swinging a bit. ``Now, lets head back to the cave. I think that was enough excitement for one day. I can show you more tomorrow..." As they began their way back through the forest, Achak came up beside his large father, curious about one thing.

``Where the wolves we saw today from the same clan...?" Cheveyo glanced down through the corner of his eye at Achak, then forward again.

``Yes, they were from the wolf pack called the Chogun clan...that wolf you fought earlier is probably the alpha's son." Achak pondered over this a few moments, then glanced over his shoulder at the direction the Chogun clan's scent had come from.

Nayati of the Chogun clan...May we never meet again.

3 - A Day To Remember

The sun was bright the next morning, but the weather had begun to turn cold again. Winter was on its way. It would not, however, stop this day's purpose for Achak, Takoda, and Ayashi. Their father Cheveyo was going to take them around the rest of their pack's territory. Takoda and Aya were not quite as excited today, still a bit cautious from their encounter with the four wolves the previous day. But their father gave them comfort in saying that those wolves wouldn't be back. Encouraged by the reassurance, Takoda and Ayashi forged ahead once they were off, exploring again. Achak also explored, of course, but remained closer to his father. The large black alpha was teaching him, telling him what to do if he got lost, or showing him how to see what time of day it was based on the sky. The young wolf took in all the information seriously, knowing it was important in learning to survive.

The day was danger free, as the four wolves trekked around the border of their territory. As promised, there were no sign of the wolves from the day before. Eventually though, Takoda and Ayashi got tired, unused to traveling long distances. Achak seemed fine, though a little weary, was still eager to know more. Cheveyo inwardly smiled at that discovery. Yes, Achak would, indeed, make a good alpha one day.

“Dad, can we go home, my paws hurt...!” Little Aya padded up to her father, Takoda soon after, both looking tired from the long day. A little ways away Achak rolled his eyes. Not that he was mad; if anything he was sympathetic towards his siblings. It *had* been a long day, and even his own paws were a bit sore from the walking.

Cheveyo gazed down at his two pups, then smiled crouching down a bit to their level.

“Yes, we can head home now, it's been a long day for you three, I'm sure.” Ayashi and Takoda nodded, tails wagging slightly in agreement. Straightening once again, the large black alpha started forward, back towards the caves. Achak was slightly disappointed in having to go back already, but followed obediently by his father. Soon enough his disappointment was spoiled as Takoda started to try and get his brother to play, biting at his legs and tail, making little growling noises to try and engage his bulkier, quieter sibling. At first the silver streaked wolf shook his brother off, not really in the mood for play. But when Takoda surprised Achak, and tackled him, it sent them both rolling over each other. When they stopped, Takoda ended up on top, being the lighter of the two, with Achak on his back looking up at his lighter colored sibling in surprise. But that seemed to cause the reaction Takoda had been looking for, as the black and silver wolf pawed at his brother's stomach, and biting at his legs until he was free. Darting off with Achak in chase, Takoda didn't get very far before being body tackled by the larger of the two. After tumbling a few feet, it was Achak that came up on top this time, smirking down at his brother. Takoda grinned back, tail wagging. Suddenly a weight plowed into Achak, though it wasn't enough to knock him over. Looking down, he saw Ayashi gnawing on his leg playfully, looking back up to him with her blue eyes. But that seemed just the right amount of time for Takoda to wiggle out from under his bigger sibling and take off again after kicking some snow at him. Ayashi then giggled and ran off after Takoda. Shaking the snow off his muzzle, the silver streaked black wolf gave chase once more, and once more quickly cornered the two.

“I've got you now...” Hunkering down on the ground, looking ready to pounce, he paused at hearing something approaching him. Before Achak even knew it, Cheveyo had charged up and tackled him, chuckling and pinning his son with a paw.

“Who's got whom, now.” he watched in amusement as the younger under him squirmed and kicked, biting at his father's legs. It was all play of course, Achak enjoyed rough-housing, but since neither

Takoda, nor Ayashi could match up to him, Cheveyo often stepped up to fill in. Besides, it was good practice for him for when he would have to fight. Although the great black alpha was his father, he was also still the alpha, which meant he wasn't always free to play with the young wolf. That was when Kanook, the second in command, and Cheveyo's best friend came in. Kanook was a deep chocolate wolf with cream-colored markings and dark blue eyes that almost always shone with mischief. The older wolf was also Achak's adopted uncle, and often looked after him and his two siblings if his parents were busy hunting or anything else related to the pack.

After some good-natured rough-housing, Cheveyo gathered up his children and they all set off toward their caves again, and although the young wolves were beat by now, they still ran to greet their mother as she came out. Aya yipped happily and jumped up to lick at the silver wolf, who returned the affectionate gesture.

“You all had fun, then, I presume..?” glancing up at her mate, she nuzzled him as he approached.

“Yes, now they have seen our territory...” At that Aya had to pipe in.

“It's so big! My paws hurt from all the walking..” he pouted, her ears dropping tiredly. Olathe smiled at her daughter, turning to go into the cave with her.

“Why don't you go rest then, hm?” As they disappeared, Cheveyo turned to glance at his sons, one looking about to fall over asleep, being Takoda, and the other just as weary, but trying to hold out. It had been a very long day for them. Calling their names, the large black wolf soon sent them inside to sleep as well. Soon after, Olathe returned from inside, padding over to join her mate at a cliff. The sunset that was painted across the sky gave everything purple, red and pink hues, even glittering off the midnight black of the alpha's fur. Sitting down and gazing out at the sky, the female sighed. “It's beautiful, isn't it? Spring is nearly over...winter will soon arrive. It will be their first winter...” Their, referring to Achak, Ayashi and Takoda. A soft smile stretched across the black male's face.

“It will...And the caribou will be migrating again as well.” It wouldn't be long now until Cheveyo would take Achak out to achieve his first kill. He was sure the young silver streaked wolf would succeed; it shone in his bright eyes.

The two wolves sat together in silence, just watching as the colors in the sky blended together and darkened as the sun set behind the mountains. Tomorrow would be a new day, and for their offspring, even more adventure was to come.

The days had soon grown shorter as spring died, and winter was born to the land. The nip of the cold winds confirmed the season change, and a light snow often sprinkled, covering the ground and trees, and making them glisten in the dim sunlight. But as cold as it was already, nothing could dampen Achak's spirit today. Today, his father was taking him out for his first real hunt. The caribou were beginning to migrate, the perfect time to stock up on meat for the winter months ahead. The sharp winds played with the young wolf's fur, which was beginning to lengthen and thicken to keep him warm. His bright ice blue eyes scanned out over the cliff surrounding the caves, anxiously awaiting his father.

“It looks like your ready then..” Came the smooth laid back tone. But it was not Achak's father who had spoken. Kanook walked up next to his adopted nephew, looking out towards the river where they were to head that morning. Achak gazed up at his uncle, looking a bit irritated.

“Is my father ready? Shouldn't we go before we miss the crossing?” Kanook smiled patiently.

“He is coming, be patient. And do not worry, we will not miss the crossing, even if the sun rises high into the sky. There will be plenty of caribou for weeks.” But the older wolf could understand Achak's anxiousness. He wanted to prove himself, become a true member of the pack; not just the alpha's son. Light padding aroused the two wolves attention and they turned, seeing Cheveyo emerge from the cave with the other members of their pack. Olathe was going to be staying behind to watch Takoda and

Ayashi, who weren't quite ready for hunting yet. The alpha walked up to his son, seeing with pride as he noted the fire in the bright eyes. Achak was ready.

“Lets head out then...” yips and howls sounded at that. Everyone was excited. Following his father and Kanook, Achak stole a quick glance at the three staying behind. Olathe barked encouragingly at him, followed by Ayashi and Takoda, tails wagging. Replying back with his own bark, which had already deepened with age, the young black wolf ran to catch up with the pack.

The pack stayed together until they reached their destination, where they broke off into smaller groups. Achak stayed with Cheveyo of course, his nerves buzzing with anticipation. He could barely sit still, but forced himself to pay attention. His father was teaching him about how the pack worked in one unit, first surrounding their prey, then herding it away from the rest of its kind, then finally taking it down together.

“Now, Kanook will give a signal when he and the others are in position. They'll then chase out a few of the caribou from the herd. That's when we jump out and help attack. But be careful of their hooves and antlers, they're sharp, and they are capable of tossing you right into the air.” Nodding, Achak watched from their position in the trees as the caribou out in the open began to cross the river. They didn't seem very big now, but what his father had told them, caribou were very large, and often took a good few wolves to take down a full grown one. Some of the wolves had suggested he go after a young caribou, but how was he suppose to prove himself if he took down something he knew he could kill. No, Achak was going to help his father bring down a buck today. So they waited.

After a while, Cheveyo glanced around. What was taking Kanook and his group so long? They should have gotten into position by now. A light rustle from behind revealed a few of their group. They looked anxious and a bit worried.

“Leader, where is Kanook's signal?” Had something happened? Achak glanced around at the other wolves, now wondering that as well. Cheveyo frowned, his golden eyes scanning.

“Maybe we just can't hear them?” another wolf offered. But there didn't seem to be anything wrong...so where was Kanook's signal?

That's when they heard it. It made every wolf there's fur stand on end. A sound that sent chills down Achak's spine all the way to the tip of his tail. It was a gunshot. All the wolves were tense, ears and tails erect, facing towards the direction the noise had come from. The wild fear in every eye only increased the young wolf's nervousness, and now worry. Worried for his uncle, fellow pack, and his own group. If there were humans were here, and they had guns, that only meant danger. Another shot rang out , and a few wolves jumped or winced, lowering themselves down to the ground. But Cheveyo's fur just rose on his neck. Even more shots, and some birds flew out from the trees. Some of the caribou bellowed and quickened their pace through the river. No. Things were *not* alright! Those shots were coming from the other side of the river! Achak looked over in surprise as his father stood up. The other wolves noticed too.

“Leader? What are you doing?” With his black coat, the alpha would be seen relatively easy by the humans.

“Those shots are coming from the direction Kanook went off to...” A few collective gasps answered, even from Achak. The young wolf looked off to the other side of the river. Before he could think any more, his father growled. “You all stay here...” Achak's bright eyes widened. Cheveyo was going?!

“Leader! They'll see you!”

“It's too dangerous!” The warnings seemed to fall on deaf ears, as the dark alpha stepped out of the bushes. Jumping up, Achak finally found his voice.

“Father, I'll go too!” Golden eyes snapped to his form.

“No. You'll stay here with everyone else.” Rebellious blue eyes stared back at him. Achak had never

gone against his father's orders, but this was serious.

``Kanook and the others! They-"

I'll go and bring them back. I will not allow you to put yourself in danger. You will stay here and wait. Do you understand?" For a moment it seemed the silver streaked wolf would refuse. But then the wolf sat down back down, ears relaxing and tail lowering.

Yes, sir..." He remained where he was, lowering his gaze to the ground, feeling defeated. Cheveyo turned back around, slipping out of the bush and out towards the river. Achak and their small group took to surveillance, watching and listening for anymore shots or disturbances. But it was quiet now, save for the caribou. Then all of a sudden, a few minutes later, a barrage of gunfire rang out, surprising everyone. Achak jumped up, eyes wide in horror as he and the others could hear yipping and howling along with the shots. He couldn't just sit here and wait anymore! Not while his father, Kanook, and the rest of his pack were in danger. With a determined growl, the black and silver male shot out from the cover of the bushes, ignoring the shouts to come back, to stop. Achak wasn't slowing down now. Darting towards the river, he didn't even flinch as the caribou panicked at the sight of a wolf coming at them. Once across the river, fur soaked, but not about to stop, the wolf continued on towards the woods.

Slowing, only to catch a scent, Achak's nose wrinkled at the other smell; human. Humans, like his father said, had a distinct, bad smell. Once he finally caught up with his father's scent, he followed it to a small cliff, and looked down. To his horror, he saw his father and Kanook, cornered up against a rock wall, by two humans. Only one had a gun, the other that stood behind held a big stick. Cheveyo's dark fur stood up threateningly on his back and neck, golden eyes wild with fury. He stood in front of his best friend protectively. The chocolate colored wolf was crouched down, his fur darkened at his shoulder. Kanook had been shot?! But despite that fact, his lips were drawn back across his fangs, snarling along with the black alpha. It was a side of his uncle Achak had never seen. Kanook, with his usual friendly, laid back, yet mischievous personality made it seem the wolf didn't have a mean bone in his body . But then again, Achak had never really given it much thought; Kanook was second in command for a reason. But, snapping out of his thoughts by the cocking of the gun, the young wolf thought desperately. If he didn't do something fast, that man would kill his two family members! As the gun came up to aim, something in the black and silver wolf came to life. With an angry snarl, Achak launched from the cliff with a great leap. The human below didn't even have the change to figure out what was happening before the weight hit him, and knocked him to the ground. The second human gasped, dropping his big stick. Maybe it was the site of a n over-average sized young wolf with his white fangs dug into his partner's neck, bright blue eyes blazing. Blood dripped from the man's neck, as he hung limp in Achak's jaws. Dead. The angered wolf didn't care, dropping the body with a thump to the cold ground. Glancing over to his father and uncle, who both seemed to be in shock with surprised looks on their faces, his own softened. It was then that Cheveyo spoke up.

``I told you to-"

``Cheveyo, he saved our lives just now...don't discipline him for it." The black alpha looked ready to say something else, but stopped, then suddenly charged for his son.

``Get down!" Achak did so, ducking down to the ground as his father shot over him with a snarl. Turning, he saw that it turned out that his father had pounced on the other human, who had been about to bask him with that big club-like stick.. Kanook limped over.

``Leave him...we should leave." Cheveyo snarled a bit more at the human he now had pinned under him, earning him a frightened yelp. But then getting off and joining his friend and son, looking to Kanook.

``Can you walk?" Kanook tilted his head, [putting on one of his typical lazy grins. ``Tis but a flesh wound. Still got three legs to get me back. I'm fine." Achak didn't quite know what to think about the conversation, but agreed that they needed to leave. All of them taking off back towards the river, they didn't give the cliffs a second glance.

Halfway to the river, Kanook stopped. "I told my group to run and meet up at the old caves. I shouldn't keep them any longer." Cheveyo nodded.

"Alright, we'll all meet across the river then. Be careful."

"Ah, you and Achak as well..." With that they each went off in their separate directions again. As Achak and his father reached the river, it had started to snow again, spotting their fur with white. Pausing to get a drink at the river, the sound of a howl coming from the woods made them look over. That's right...their group was still waiting. Cheveyo turned to his son a moment.

"I'm going to go talk to them for a bit, you stay here and wait for Kanook and his group." The blue-eyed wolf nodded obediently, watching as his father went off towards the woods. Taking a seat for the moment, the young wolf then looked back to the water, reflecting on the day's events. He had been so excited to find out his father was taking him out to join in the pack's hunt, only to later have it spoiled by the humans. Kanook had also gotten hurt at the cliffs. He himself had finally made his own kill, although it wasn't the way, or the creature that he wanted.

As the black and silver wolf sat near the bank of the river waiting for his father to return, he started getting a growing uneasiness...like he wasn't alone. When a gust of wind blew by...Achak froze in his spot. The smell carried in the wind...it was-A shot suddenly hit the water next to him. Too close for comfort, and causing him to jump up and whirl around. Standing there was the human he, his father, and uncle had let live. The man was also carrying the gun, and looked mad. There was no shelter out here in the open! Maybe he'd be able to get to the woods if he ran...Backing up through the chilly waters, the hunter advanced.

"I'll get you, you dirty little beast...You killed Jake!" The gun was raised, and Achak took that as a signal to turn and haul his furry tail to the woods. As soon as he started running though, shots rang out, hitting the ground next to him. Starting to zig-zag, he hoped the pattern would help him evade the shots. But just as the wolf thought it was over, another shot rang out, and a hot pain shot through his back leg. Stumbling at the pain, shocked, he fell, rolling a bit in the thin layer of snow. Shaking it off and getting back to his feet, he panted heavily from the run. The human had stopped his chase, now standing a few yards away, gun aimed right at him. The silver streaked wolf wondered how he was going to get out of this...injured, he doubted he would be able to get to the shelter of the woods in time. The human smirked. "Got nowhere to go now, ya little beast..." The gun was cocked. Ice blue eyes widened, then closed tightly, his whole body tensing awaiting his fate, his imminent death. But then a snarl, and--
"ACHAK!"

The shot pierced the air.

Silence. Was he dead? No...he hadn't felt any pain...

"What the..." at the voice, Achak slowly opened his eyes. There was a large shadow covering him, along with the strong smell of blood. Droplets of crimson red dripped onto the white snow, staining it with its rich color.

"Achak...You're alright now, don't be frightened." The young wolf gasped.

"...F-Father!" Cheveyo...His *father*...had just jumped in and in front of his son just in time to protect him from the threat. But in doing so...he had...Achak stepped forward around the alpha, gasping again as he saw the blood soaking his father's chest. Forgetting all about the hunter, the blue eyed wolf began licking at the wound. The great black male coughed, and the ground was once more speckled with red. Feeling his legs give out, Cheveyo sunk to the ground. With a startled yelp, Achak tried to support his bulk, but it was no use. And the quiet atmosphere was once more broken by the familiar noise of a cocking gun. Slowly, the young wolf turned. The man was aiming at them again, looking triumphant.

"Looks like I'll get to kill two wolves in one day..." He pulled the trigger...but nothing happened, just a soft 'click'. The human made a surprised choking-like noise, looking at his weapon. Then came the very

welcomed sound of wolves from their pack's howls. They were approaching their fallen leader and his son, hackles raised, eyes wild, and fangs bared. Slowly, the hunter backed up, dropping the gun into the snow, then turned and ran. A few of their pack mates gave chase.

Now with that threat gone, Achak turned back to his injured father, nudging him with his muzzle. Cheveyo's dulled golden eyes opened a moment tiredly, and he took a raspy breath.

"Come on father, we have to go now..." The stained ground under the alpha was spreading rapidly, and it was beginning to scare the younger wolf, causing his voice to shake. "Please, you have to get up..." Moving to Cheveyo's side, he pushed, trying to get his father to his feet. Why wasn't his father not even trying?! Tears started stinging his bright eyes. "Father! We have to go home now!"

"...Achak..." if not for their good hearing, the weak voice of the black wolf would not have been heard.

"...I'm not...going home with you..." His son shook his dark head, ears going back in disbelief.

"Achak...listen to me..." The silver streaked wolf closed his eyes, holding back tears, but listened. "I'm so proud of you...you've grown into a strong and caring wolf. I feel at ease...leaving the pack to you, my son. Take care...of your siblings and mother...and tell your uncle I'm sorry..." the dull golden eyes closed, and coughs racked the large wolf's body.

"Father!" This couldn't be happening! His father was...was dying!

"Grow strong...Achak...and become a great and wise leader..." with a fond little smile, a sigh was the last thing to leave the older wolf's body....then nothing. At first Achak didn't want to believe it, tail tucked in beneath him, he nudged at his father's face.

"Father...?" Nuzzling the body, he laid down next to it, and buried his face in the silky jet black fur. But there was no reply, or movement. The black and silver wolf couldn't hear the once strong beating of the other's heart within his chest. "...F-father..." Now realizing the impossible had happened, the salty tears ran down his black and silver colored face.

Emerging at a run from the trees, but stopping at the sight before him, Kanook was frozen in place. The mighty black wolf...his *best friend!* Laying on a crimson stained ground...and the sobbing Achak at his side. Slowly, the other wolves emerged after their co-leader, each with the similar expression of shock, pain, or sorrow.

Finally raising his head, his face soaked with tears, Achak sat up, head hung, with tears still running freely down his young face. But then he raised his head, and the most mournful, heartbroken, yet beautiful howl sang through the air, piercing every wolf's heart. For today was and would always be remembered...

The day Cheveyo: Leader, father and mate...died.

4 - Change of Heart

Nome 1926, a light snow was falling. It was quiet, but life still went on, hidden. Quickened paw-falls through the snow, then claws against rock. A young, out of breath voice rang out through the cave.

“Leader!” The scout's brown fur was spotted with snow as he waited outside the pack's caves, his breath making smoky white fog. “Leader?”

“What is it, Nuka?” Came the deep, mellow voice from the cave.

“I've spotted intruders entering our territory!”

“Intruders? Of what kind?”

“Human sir! And being pulled by dogs.” there was a moment of quiet, then the sound of shuffling and soft clicking of claws. The pack's alpha, Achak, stepped out into the open, the snow already spotting his black and silver fur with white.

“Humans you said? You sure...?” the scout blinked, then nodded.

“Yes, sire! Positive!” Bright blue eyes narrowed, looking out towards the woods.

“Show me.” Nodding, the scout nodded, turning to lead his alpha to the lookout cliffs.

At the cliffs, the brown wolf looked out a moment, then turned to Achak.

“There, leader, coming straight from the north...” Moving aside so the bigger wolf could step up and look, Achak did so, looking out in the direction pointed, then his eyes narrowed again. He had seen.

Humans...and their...pets. The silver streaked wolf hated both. The humans for invading their land, blaming wolves for things for crimes they didn't commit But above all, he hated them because...they had killed his father. Since then, he had turned cold towards the human race, the hatred blinding reason. With dogs...he didn't necessarily *hate* them, but they still working under man, willingly. Slaved, was more like it, to Achak. Dogs pulled those sleds for them, hauled, aided in hunting for them...protected. It made the black wolf scoff. The humans had clouded their minds. Nothing would change the image humans had created for him.

As the sled pulled closer, Achak could made out several of the dogs, and their `slave driver'. There were seven dogs together, hooked up evenly with straps. As they got closer, the alpha could see that in the lead was a red and light cream colored dog. Female. She looked sleek, yet muscled in the right places for the work. But there was something about her that the black and silver wolf couldn't place. Her scent...it was unlike the other dogs.

They were passing below the wolves now. Achak watched with mild interest, but mostly contempt, as they female stopped, sniffing the air a moment. The other dogs seemed either confused or worried. They all followed the female's gaze as it landed on he alpha and a few other wolves that had now gathered around him. As the pack gazed down at the domestic dogs, who all became frightened at the sight of them, the lead female stood still, eyes holding not fear...but, interest? Captivation? Achak gazed right back at her indifferently, his bright piercing ice blue eyes cold. After a moment of staring, Achak broke the contact and turned around to his pack, motioning them to leave. He wanted nothing to do with the dogs and human, and definitely didn't want to put the pack in danger. Once they were out of site of the intruders, Takoda trotted up to his alpha and brother.

“Achak?” It was clear in his voice that the gray wolf was worried.

“We'll keep an eye on them until they pass through the territory.”

“You don't think they'll be any trouble, do you?” Achak looked to this sibling, stepping over to him.

Takoda didn't like fighting. He was passive and peaceful, and would try and avoid it any way possible.

Ayashi was the same.

Nuzzling his brother, ice blue eyes locked with golden in reassurance. ``Don't worry...'' A tail wag. Everything would work out. He'd make sure of it.

He had decided to do it himself; patrol after the sled. It took a bit to catch up to it, but Achak was in top shape, and eventually caught up, but stayed a good distance from the group for now, since it was out in the open. Staying downwind, the alpha started observing the intruders again. Something had changed since last he'd seen them. The red female dog was no longer in the lead. In the lead now, there was a smaller lean gray and white dog. And by the looks of how it would wander and weave, the dog didn't know what it was doing at all.

Pathetic... Achak thought as he watched on. The female was behind the gray dog, and was looking none too happy about the new position arrangements. Her dark eyes were just barely containing her rage. She would snap or snarl at the lead dog's legs. But the silver streaked wolf's interest perked when the gray dog then slowed to a stop...then laid down in the snow! Achak wasn't sure if it was defiance or if the dog was just lazy, but the female clearly didn't care, and jumped the other, biting his neck. That seemed to do the trick, as the dog leapt up and shot off again...but in the wrong direction. And no matter how much the human shouted and tried to redirect the dog, it was off course. It wasn't long before the team stopped to rest since it was getting dark. Thankfully it was near a wooded area, so the black and silver wolf could stay out of sight and still keep an eye on the sled team.

Watching, the wolf followed with his eyes as the red female stalked around camp, clearly irritated about the day's events. She was looking for something it seemed...or someone. The gray and white dog. And sure enough, as she found him, it was clear who was dominant between the two, a fight soon broke out. And Achak noted that the gray dog and the female both fought fiercely, each getting in their own hits and attacks. Just as he thought it was getting mildly interesting, the human decided to come and try to break the two dogs apart. That was a disaster waiting to happen in the alpha's mind. He knew exactly what was going to happen here. When angered, any creature is unpredictable, and could lash out at anything or anyone. Sure enough, as the man grabbed the female by the scruff to pull her away from the other dog, she whirled and snapped at him with a snarl. With a yelp, the man pulled away with a grimace of pain, the dog's fangs having gotten through the leather to draw blood. But now it seemed that the female noticed just what she'd done, because her mood changed once more. Her dark eyes widened in realization and horror, her tail curling in under her. Having been freed, she backed up, keeping her widened eyes on her master, lowering down to the ground.

The silver streaked wolf watched on as he heard the human make a sort of hiss, looking from his bleeding hand to his lead dog. Then he moved forward and grabbed her by the scruff, and threw her down, even kicking her. That surprised Achak somewhat, but then thought better. Humans were disgusting, thinking they could attack anything and everything they wanted. He would never feel any different about them, and no one would ever change his mind. The female yelped as she was attacked, scrambling back up to her paws before darting off. To Achak, this was all in the man's wrong, for being blinked to the ways of his dogs. For a few more moments, nothing happened in the clearing; the man tended to his hand was soon boring the wolf. As far as he was concerned, the alpha knew the human deserved the wound. Turning around, the dark wolf was about to leave when he saw more movement. The scrawny gray dog was being hooked back up, along with the others. Were they just going to leave? Was the man not going to wait for the female to come back, though he doubted she would? Listening and watching again, he blinked. The sled started forward--they *were* leaving! With a scoffing snort, the large wolf scowled. He couldn't believe what he was witnessing, but then again he could. Now that the sled was moving out again, it wouldn't be long until they crossed the border of his territory. There was no need to follow them anymore. Turning around back towards where he'd come, Achak padded off silently.

However, half-way back, the alpha male paused. For some reason, he had the sudden urge to go

back. But why? Why, all of a sudden, was this bothering him? Thinking about it a moment he figured it could have been that female from the sled team. She had been surprisingly...intriguing. Something different. Shaking his dark head, he growled a bit to himself. But she worked under humans! Achak wanted nothing to do with them at all. Torn now, the wolf didn't even notice how the snow and wind had picked up and thickened. His thick coat protected him from the harsh environment. *But that dog will freeze out in this weather...*, he thought, looking back out over his shoulder, where'd he'd just been, and wondered what to do. He hadn't been this unsure and torn since he was a pup! But after another few moments, the alpha turned around, a bit hesitantly at first, then took off at a lope, following his tracks back.

Following the female dog's faint, but unique scent, Achak eventually found her. She was curled up in the snow, apparently sleeping, or just exhausted and freezing. Slowly making his way over to her, the wolf took this time to study her again. She wasn't even the size of an average sized wolf! And compared to himself, the female seemed very small. And that unique smell surrounded her as well. The silver and black alpha wasn't quite sure how to explain it. There was something....wild in it. But it was being almost masked by the domesticated dog scent. The dog's appearance wasn't all domestic either. Her paws weren't shaped the same way the other dogs' were, and neither was her tail. It didn't curl like theirs. Though the rest of her body was pretty much the same, Achak somehow knew she was...atleast partly wild...like himself. His thoughts were interrupted by movement. The female had shuddered. *The weather...* Like he had figured before, the dog was freezing. Without much thought of what he was doing, Achak lowered himself down next to the other. Inching closer, he wondered if she would wake. But she didn't, she must have been too tired, cold, because she just took a deep breath...then relaxed. This dog just kept intriguing the wolf. Was she not even bothered by his scent or presence? Well, she had just been abandoned by her `pack'...What would she do now? Pushing the questions away, Achak lowered his head to rest over the female's neck, unconsciously trying to warm her. For reasons even he, himself, wasn't aware of....he wanted to save her.

For a few hours more, the alpha male stayed, as the snow and wind kept up. It didn't effect him much. As the wind finally calmed again, Achak eased himself to his paws, shaking the snow off his black coat. Gazing down at the form he had kept vigil over the last few hours, he still felt confused as to his motives. But for now, he needed to go. The dog wouldn't be in any danger now. And her own coat could protect her well enough now. The wolf has an alpha, leader, and had a pack to think about. That and his family, who were probably worried by now. With that thought, Achak turned and took off without a sound, soon disappearing into the white flurry. Who knew if he'd ever see the female wolf-dog again...but something told him he would.

A few days later, there was somewhat of a ruckus going on outside. Claws, many, on the rocky ground of the cave.

``Achak...?" Ayashi. Then another voice.

``Brother, there's...someone here." Takoda. Achak turned at that.

``Intruders?" Again, claws clicking on the hard ground. Kanook padded in looking slightly amused.

`` Oh, no, not intruders...I suppose. In this case it would be *intruder*." Achak's eyebrow raised at that. What was his uncle talking about...what was so amusing? Following Kanook and his siblings out, he went to the edge of the cliff. A breeze blew past, carrying with it a familiar scent. Looking out and down, Achak's piercing blue eyes locked onto the `intruder'. Just as he'd seen her, the other seemed to catch his, and the figure turned to face the cliff.

It's her...She came...