

# A Good for A Good

by Holly T.

In the middle of a frozen forest there stood a wolf, alone and afraid in the freezing winter night. Ahri, whose fur was a gentle shade of gray, looked like she had been dusted in powdered sugar from the snow. She had been on the run for a few days now, trying to distract her mind from the horrible night before, but the memories kept replaying in her head over and over like a broken record. Ahri winced as the memory came flooding back to her yet again.

Fenris was her adoptive father, the pack's alpha, had gotten angry with her that night. He believed that humans were dangerous and destroyed everything the wolves' loved and stood for. Ahri disagreed. "Ahri, all they do is kill and hunt us... for fun! Should I remind you again about what happened to your real mother?" he growled at her.

Ahri was not convinced and refused to believe. Fenris would never understand why she respected humans so much. She replied, "Yes, but don't we do that sometimes, too? And besides, there are always bad humans and good humans like there are always bad wolves and good wolves. Father, isn't that basically the same thing?" The minute the last word left her mouth, she knew it was the wrong thing to say.

Her father's eyes burned with anger, his voice came out slow and dangerous, "*Do. Not. Call. Me. Father!*" he spat, "I don't understand why my wife decided to take you in that day we found you in the snow. I don't want to hear another word about the humans from you. *Understand?*" The words stung, though she was used to them from the many conversations before this. Ahri nodded slowly, blinking back tears. She slipped silently away, into the shadows of their cave. Ahri didn't even wait for their daily hunt to get away. Once out of the cave, Ahri flew out into the forest fueled by her anger and frustration.

Ahri snapped out of her trance and stared through the dancing branches of the trees. The clearing where she stood was one of the only few spots in her pack's forest that wasn't covered in trees, but some dead logs were scattered around the area and made for good spots to think. The moon occasionally peeked between the clouds, and its reflection made the snow blindingly white. She liked to come out here at times like this. She shivered and sat down on one of the gnarled logs. Ahri was used to being alone, cast out from the pack multiple times for trying to convince other wolves that not all humans were killers or destroyers, but more like saviors and protectors. Of course, no one believed her but she had her reasons. If only they knew....

Then, out of nowhere, two silhouettes came into view. Ahri quickly got to her feet and ruffled the snow, covering her tracks. She dove behind a pile of snow in between two pine trees.

*Probably scouts from my pack*, she thought. Ahri did not want to get caught; she wasn't ready to face Fenris yet. But soon she discovered there was no wolf scent that usually accompanied the scouts. Instead, Ahri smelled... death. Her eyes widened in fear and excitement when the two figures came into view.

One was a human boy and the other was a human girl. Even though she believed that humans were good, that did not stop her from remembering the day her birth mother was murdered, when she was just a cub. Flashes of a rifle, the gunshot, laughter and the agonizing whimpers of her mother, then, a kind face appearing over her trembling body-her savior. As the man wrapped her in his coat, she could smell a pack nearby but the warmth of the coat lured her back deep into the warmth. The man took her home, tended her wounds and nursed her back to health. After a month, when she was strong enough, the man took her back into the wilderness and set her free. She is forever grateful to that kind man. These thoughts flitted across her mind as she watched the boy and girl make their way through the clearing. She blinked the memories away. Ahri realized these humans were harmless. The girl was very pale and had her eyes closed. Her head rested on the boy's shoulder. Something was wrong with her. The boy looked tired and was struggling with the weight of the girl, he could barely walk. They both had sandy colored hair and wore thick clothing and boots. Their clothing seems to weigh them down further into the deep snow. Why would these two children be out on a night like this? Ahri had no idea.

"It's okay Lexi, we're almost home," the boy whispered to the girl. He didn't sound very reassuring. "It's only a few more miles away. We'll be okay..."

Ahri figured the girl must be Lexi. Ahri could tell Lexi was dying. They needed to get home quickly, especially if the scouts were out looking for Ahri. These two would be an easy target. Ahri was slightly tempted to kill them herself, partly for revenge for her mother partly to impress the pack, but she stopped herself, *that isn't right, nothing innocent should be killed*. She knew that from experience.

The boy made it halfway through the clearing before he collapsed from exhaustion. There was no way they were ever going to get home. Ahri tilted her head and thought, *should I?* After a split second, she decided to help them to prove that she was right. Not all humans are bad. Not all wolves are bad. A man selflessly saved her now she must do the same. "A good for a good," she muttered to herself as she leapt toward them with a plan to bring them to safety.

**Word Count: 984**