

A Dark Road



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“Sweetheart,” Naomi whispered as she looked at her son, concern evident in her voice. “What are you looking at?”

Blair had been sitting in the window seat, staring out, his usually vibrant and active body still. He turned back and glanced at his mother, forcing a smile for her benefit. “Nothing, Naomi. I’m just watching the landscape,” he answered, trying to keep her from worrying.

Despite the answer, Blair could tell she was worried. Since coming to this small mountain home three days ago, she was always watching him, trying to get him to talk, trying to get him interested in something. But Blair just didn’t have energy for anything; his natural curiosity quelled by recent events.

Coming over, Naomi sat down beside her son and glanced out the window. “It is beautiful here, isn’t it,” she said, not expecting an answer, but Blair nodded. It was desolate and cold, but beautiful in its own way. The snowy mountains north of Cascade and the empty road gave the place a sense of isolation and silence. “Like the grave,” Blair’s mind added.

“I knew it would make a good retreat. A chance for you to reconnect spiritually, come to terms with things. That’s why I asked Aaron if we could use it for a couple of weeks,” Naomi continued, unaware of her son’s thoughts.

Blair continued to stare out, saying nothing. His mother didn’t know that his spirit animal was a wolf and every night since arriving here, he could hear it howl mournfully, calling to him. On his first night at his cousin’s cabin, Naomi remarked that she had never heard an animal howling before and Blair glanced out the window, knowing it was his wolf, crying in distress for its partner, a black jaguar.

Blair knew he couldn’t reconnect spiritually. To reconnect first you had to be disconnected and Blair had one foot in the spiritual realm, dreaming nightly of blue jungles and a wolf searching for something that was blocked off by a copse of trees. It wasn’t a far stretch to imagine what the wolf searched for.

“I know you cared about him, and it’s important to mourn,” Naomi tried once again to talk about Jim, but Blair shook his head.

“Please, Mom, I can’t talk about this yet.”

Naomi sighed and reached out to squeeze her son’s hand before rising and walking toward the kitchen. Turning back, she looked at Blair, seeing the shoulders stoop as he turned back to the window and she shook her head, wiping at a tear, in part for Jim, in part for Blair. “He’s gone, Blair,” she whispered, her heart breaking for her child. She knew Blair loved Jim and was sure Jim had loved Blair. “It’s been three months. If he had survived-”

“He survived a helicopter crash and eighteen months in a jungle when everyone thought he was dead and his body hasn’t been found.” Blair tried to keep anger out of his voice. He knew his mother was only trying to help.

Naomi wanted to answer, to point out that Jim had been targeted by a crime lord, but she couldn’t bring herself to dash Blair’s hopes. Instead, she turned to the kitchen to make some dinner, her mind on what had happened three months earlier...

Jim Ellison held his plastic-wrapped shirts high as he walked out of the dry cleaners and started for his truck. He smiled, glad he actually had enough time to get out of work and pick up the clothes. Blair was going to be shocked when he saw that Jim had picked up his own dry cleaning, for once. It was rare that he ever made it out of the PD in a timely manner and fortunate that Spotless Dry Cleaners stayed open an hour later than most businesses to accommodate customers coming home from work. So, realizing he had time, Jim swung by.

Pulling out his keys he headed for the passenger door of his truck and was just unlocking the door when he heard a cry of, “Please, no,” and then two soft popping sounds – like shots from a gun with a silencer, his mind filled in automatically. Dropping his shirts on the hood of the car, Jim turned, focusing his hearing, and looking around as he reached behind him and unlocked his gun holster.

There was an alley next to the dry cleaner and Jim moved cautiously, making his way down the alley until he stood by a dumpster. Behind the dumpster, on either side of the alley, were side doors, one to the dry cleaner on the right and the other to a small restaurant. The

restaurant was closed for renovations and the workmen gone for the day, but Jim could hear voices inside. "He's dead," one man said.

"Good. You'll need to get rid of the body tonight. I don't want the workmen seeing any evidence of this."

"I'll get the van and dump the body in the freezer at Catchers. We'll weigh it down tomorrow night and sink it off the coast."

Jim didn't know who the two men were, but he did know Catchers was a mob-owned seafood restaurant on the docks. The feds bugged the place regularly but, because of its location, had trouble keeping visual surveillance. Realizing he had stumbled on a mob hit, he pulled out his cell phone and, crouching beside the dumpster, automatically dialing down his sense of smell, he hit the speed dial for Simon Banks, Captain of Major Crimes. Whispering, one ear to the restaurant to make sure he wasn't overheard, he told Simon where he was and to bring backup. Hanging up, he moved cautiously to the door and waited for it to open.

It didn't take the man long to open the door and Jim immediately scanned the scene, noting two men and their locations, the first man in the doorway still holding a gun at his side, the second man in the restaurant standing over a body on the floor. Shocked, the first man gaped at Jim, standing just outside of the doorway, legs apart, gun at the ready and badge visible in his left hand. "Cascade Police," he stated loudly, Jim's eyes moving from the dead man on the floor to the man standing over the body and the man by the door. "Put your hands on your heads and get on your knees."

The man beside the body looked over at Jim, in shock. "What the hell!" he snarled as the man who had been heading out of the restaurant started to move, raising his gun. Jim instinctively swung his arm, letting his gun slam into the man's temple, taking down the perp by the door. The man staggered back falling as Jim pointed his Smith and Wesson at the man still standing over the body. It was then Jim realized who he was facing: Michael Fallone, a crime lord involved with drugs, prostitution and arms trafficking.

"Hands on your head, Mr. Fallone," Jim repeated the command. "You're under arrest," he added, noting the police sirens in the distance.

Within five minutes, two patrol cars were at the restaurant and ten minutes after that, Simon Banks, having heard Jim had arrested Fallone, arrived.

Michael Fallone and Victor Ramos were arrested, cuffed, mirandized and taken to central booking while CSU and the coroner worked the scene.

"We've been after Fallone forever," Simon told Jim as Fallone and Ramos were placed in squad cars for transport. "And you caught him." Pulling out a cigar and sniffing at it, Simon smiled, as Jim moved over to examine the dead man, crouching down beside the body to get his first real look at the victim.

"Simon," Jim called. "The dead man, he's a fed."

"What!"

Jim nodded. "I've met him once. I think his name was Jeremy Mays or Jeremy Martin, something like that."

Simon shook his head, the good cheer gone. "I'll call the feds and I'd better get hold of the DA; I don't want a jurisdiction war over this bust." He glanced again at the dead man. "Fallone will get the death penalty for this."

The jurisdictional war Simon predicted started three days later – and it was heated. Indicted for murder by the state, the feds wanted Fallone and Ramos tried under federal statutes for killing a federal agent. Beverly Sanchez, representing the Cascade DA, spent two days in court, arguing that the crime took place in Cascade, the criminals were caught, arrested and charged with the crime in Cascade and, as they had already been indicted by a grand jury, Cascade had jurisdiction. After the trial, if the feds wanted a crack at Fallone, well then they would find him in Starkville Prison. The judge had agreed and the feds left the courthouse less than happy.

Failing at the transfer, they then petitioned the governor for access to the trial information and witnesses, stating their desire to oversee the operation and, when the governor agreed, asking that Cascade PD cooperate, they demanded an office inside the PD. Interrogation Room 4 became their office where they had copies of all the forensic information, the coroner's report, and the ballistics reports. And it was almost daily that they asked to see Jim Ellison, the principal witness in the case, to ask the same questions over and over about what Jim had heard.

On the third day that Jim was asked to visit, he balked and Simon had to agree with him. Being called down to answer the same questions every other day was a waste of time and manpower.

Going into the conference room, Jim beside him, Simon glanced at two men sharing a large conference table. "Is there a question you didn't have answered by Detective Ellison?" he asked, angrily. "Because if there isn't, you're just wasting our time when we have other criminals to catch."

"Captain," Agent Mark Turner answered, his tone condescending. "You have to understand this is a very big bust."

"And Ellison is our prime witness," Federal Legal Counsel Dave Moser added, a bit more quietly. Moser was overseeing the legal aspects of the case and had pretty much wrapped up his end.

"That still doesn't explain why you are wasting our time or Jim's."

"We're just trying to keep an eye on things," Turner continued. "It would be a hell of a lot easier and safer, if you could keep Ellison off the street until the trial. We all want Fallone and Ellison is the prime witness."

"Ellison has a job to do," Simon answered. "So keep an eye on him from a distance," Simon snarled before turning, Jim following.

For the whole of the next week, Jim didn't hear from the feds in interrogation room 4 and was happily going about his job when Simon got a tip about an arms deal going down on the

docks. Jim went with Megan and the pair separated, searching the area. They were on opposite sides of the marina when there was an explosion near where Jim had been, several old boats exploding. And Jim was gone.

Blair had gotten the news from Simon that very day.

He had just gotten in from Rainier and was looking in the fridge, trying to decide what to make for dinner when there was a knock at the door. Calling out, "Coming," he went to the door and opened it. Simon stood before him. "Hey, Simon," he began with a smile. "Come on in, Jim—"

"Blair," Simon answered, reaching out a hand to grasp Blair's arm.

Blair looked up into Simon's face, his smile dying as he looked at Simon's tense features.

"What happened? What hospital?"

"Blair," Simon repeated, quietly.

"No," Blair shook his head. "No. Please Simon, what hospital?" he asked, his voice rising hysterically. He needed Simon to say a hospital.

Simon swallowed hard, his grip on Blair tightening, pulling the young man close to his chest. "There was an explosion at a pier right where Jim had been standing. Jim hasn't been found..." Simon paused, wiping at his eyes as Blair violently shook his head.

"Blair, CSU is still dragging the pier but, but it's not—" Simon stopped a moment trying to compose himself, but his next words came out as a sob. "Dear God, they don't think he could have survived. They think his body was washed out to sea."

"I have to get to the pier," Blair reached, almost blindly, for his jacket. "I need to be there."

Simon nodded. "I have a patrol car waiting downstairs to take us. Come on."

For a week Blair stayed by the pier, long after CSU gave up. The only times he left were when Simon came and made him go home. Technically, Jim was still considered missing, but as the days passed, Jim's return seemed less and less likely.

Slowly, the hunt had turned from rescue to investigation. The feds insisted it was Fallon's people acting to take out the primary witness. They ranted and raved, ignoring the fact that Jim had been more than just a witness to the Cascade PD in general, and Major Crimes in particular. Then they packed up and left, demanding that Beverly Sanchez turn the case over to them. She refused and Turner tried appealing to the governor, but jurisdiction had already been decided and they left, saying they would be back when the trial started.

...Blair listened to his mother leave the room and then sighed with relief. He wasn't really sure why he had agreed to come to this cabin; he wasn't good company and didn't want to be with anyone. But something had seemed right about coming to this location and he had packed a few things and followed Naomi out the door to this little hideaway in the Cascades. The trial would start next month and Blair would be back in plenty of time. He was going to sit near Beverly Sanchez and glare at Fallon, hoping looks could kill.

He stared out the window, hearing the howl of the wolf, louder this time, as if nearby, and then blinked. On the path before him was a gray and white wolf. It kept looking at him and then turning away, walking a distance and then turning back and whining impatiently. And just like that, a connection in his brain flared and Blair realized the wolf was calling to him to follow.

Blair, debating whether he was going crazy, grabbed his jacket. Whatever it was, spirits or his imagination, he would follow and see where it led. "Naomi, I'm going to take a walk," he called out and his mother came in from the kitchen.

"Do you want me to come with you?"

"No," he leaned over and gave her a kiss on the cheek. "I want to take a long walk. It will help me clear my head."

She nodded her understanding as Blair headed out the door, following the wolf.

He was rather surprised that the wolf didn't head for the wooded area or the hills, but moved off towards the road and he soon found himself walking down the shoulder of a deserted road, following SR52, heading west. "This is crazy," he muttered to himself, thinking he should turn back. He was seeing things and talking to himself and he wondered if maybe he was just a little unglued. But something inside him told him to go further, to follow the wolf where it led.

He'd had gone about four miles when the wolf stopped and moved down what appeared to be a winding driveway that led to a small two-story house, set back from the road. The wolf stopped short of the tree line, blocking Blair's path, and Blair found himself crouching and waiting, expectation building inside him. Something was here, something he needed to know about, and so Blair waited crouching in the twilight, squinting, trying to understand why he was brought to this deserted farmhouse.

He must have been there about a half an hour when a black SUV pulled up and Agent Mark Turner got out, carrying grocery bags and heading into the house. Blair knew this was one of the men who had been involved in the case; he had met the two feds who had taken over conference room 4. Understanding that something was wrong with the situation and he needed to be silent, Blair inched around toward the back of the house. Quietly, he made his way under the windows, trying to get a handle on what was going on and wishing he was a sentinel so he could hear what Turner was doing. Listening for noises, he moved under the kitchen window where he could hear Turner (at least he thought it was Turner) moving around in the kitchen, putting away food and microwaving something.

"Ellison will have to settle for a frozen TV dinner." Turner snarled. "There's no Wonderburger around here."

At the statement, Blair covered his own mouth to keep from gasping. Jim was here and alive.

Jim was alive!

A million feelings flowed through Blair and he dug his nails into his palms to keep silent as shock, relief, happiness, and then puzzlement, concern and, finally, anger swept through him. Beyond all else, Blair knew Jim, and was sure Jim would have told him and Simon if he

were going into hiding. That meant Jim was not here by choice. Turner must somehow have Jim locked up here, hoping to keep him out of harm's way until the trial. And God only knew how the sentinel was dealing with being locked up and fed processed foods for three months! Blair could wring Turner's neck for just that.

Since Blair couldn't hear anyone else, he guessed Turner was talking to himself. "And if he doesn't like it, he can starve until breakfast," Turner continued. Blair could hear receding footsteps and guessed Turner was carrying a plate of food out of the room. The kitchen was quiet so Blair took a moment to peek in the window looking to see if there was anyone else in the house before sliding down the wall and considering the situation.

Blair doubted what Turner had done came even close to legal. It couldn't be any kind of sanctioned operation because Simon would have been told by the Feds if Jim were being hidden and, no matter what, both Jim and Simon would have told Blair. So Turner had to be working on his own, which made sense considering there didn't seem to be anyone else here. Turner had to be nuts locking up a police officer and faking his death so friends and family mourned him. And who knows how long this situation would go on. The trial had already been delayed twice by the defense attorneys and their haggling.

Sliding over, away from the windows, Blair moved by some bushes, wishing he had brought his phone. A quick call to Simon would end this, but he had left his phone back in the cabin. There was only one thing to do--get Jim out.

It was getting very dark. Turner wouldn't be able to see him as long as he remained outside of the house's light. Unfortunately, Blair wouldn't be able to see either, but Jim would. Kneeling down he whispered quietly, "Jim, if you can hear me, I know Turner's got you locked up and I'm going to get you out." As Blair said this, he moved around the house, noting the windows and trying to figure where Turner would keep Jim. The second floor of the house was completely dark but Blair could see no windows were blocked off, so he guessed the basement was probably the most likely place to find Jim. He gave a quick look around, hoping to find an outside entrance to the basement, but found none. Stopping, he considered what Jim would do in this situation. Jim would do some reconnaissance, locate and identify any weak points, come up with a plan, and then execute the plan.

Starting with the reconnaissance, Blair moved around the house. There was a front porch but Blair didn't dare climb on it thinking if it were as creaky as it looked, Turner would hear him. Moving around the perimeter of it, he could see lights on and the flicker of a television in what he guessed was the living room. He saw the shadow of a man come in and sit with a tray. So, if Turner was the only agent in the house, then he was accounted for. As he finished the circuit of the house, Blair noted near the end of the porch was a backdoor into the kitchen and a mudroom door next to it. Cautiously, he tried the doors. Both were locked and Blair pulled out his pocketknife planning to try and pick the lock on the backdoor. Before he could start, the wolf appeared, blocking the way to the backdoor.

Smiling at the wolf, and absently reaching down to pet it, though his hand went right through it, Blair worked on the lock to the mudroom. It wasn't a particularly strong lock and after about five minutes Blair jimmied open the door, slipping in and closing it. He moved slowly through the room, aware of looming objects, knowing if he knocked over anything, there would be problems. As light from the kitchen filtered into the mudroom, Blair eyes adjusted, giving him some sense of what was around him. He could see canned food stores, dried

foods, and some kitchen appliances; nothing Turner would have an immediate need for. Slowly, Blair made his way to the door that separated the mudroom from the kitchen. It was closed with a hook and eye and Blair slid his knife through the crack in the door, lifting the latch.

Opening the door, Blair made his way into the kitchen, turning and closing the mudroom latch before peeking through the doorway. Before him was a dining room and a small bedroom to the right of the dining room. Beyond that was a living room where Turner was eating while watching television. Blair could see a staircase leading up from the dining room and beyond that, in the living room, a doorway beside a large stone fireplace. Guessing that the door next to the fireplace led to the basement, Blair slipped back into the mudroom to wait, gently closing the door, hoping Turner wouldn't notice the open latch. Tucking himself into a dark corner, he decided to wait.

It was almost an hour and a half later that Turner came into the kitchen putting his tray down in the sink. "I'd better check on Ellison before I go to bed," he muttered. Blair quietly stood and moved over near the mudroom door watching as Turner disappeared through the door beside the fireplace. A few minutes later, Turner came upstairs carrying the tray from Jim's frozen TV dinner.

Blair watched as Turner cleaned up the kitchen and then went to the small guest room off the dining room, closing the door. Blair waited some time and then, holding his breath, crept through the dining room and into the living room, slipping through the door to the basement.

The stairs were wooden and Blair quietly walked down them and into the basement.

"Chief," Blair heard Jim call out. "Keep to your right, there's some hoses on the left and I don't want you to trip." As Jim said this, a light went on in the back of the basement, illuminating the part of the room where Jim was being kept.

Blair's eyes opened wide as he looked across the room. Jim was in a large cage near the back wall of the basement. It was obviously constructed with a mind to keeping someone locked up for some time. Inside the cage was a cot, sink and toilet. Above the overhead bars was a bare lightbulb and a light switch on the wall just behind the bars controlled the light. Rushing forward, Blair reached between the bars, his hand grabbing hold of Jim, holding on to him. "Jim have you been down here for three months?"

Jim nodded as Blair examined the lock. A chain had been wrapped around the cell door and then padlocked. Additionally, Jim was wearing a thick leather collar that was padlocked with a long chain to a loop on the wall. "Where are the keys?"

"Turner has them. Listen Chief, don't bother trying to get them. Just get out and call Simon. "

"Are you sure, I could-"

"Blair, he's unstable. He did this on his own. I don't know what he would do if he saw you. I think he's capable of anything. Just get out and call for help."

Blair nodded. "Okay, I'll head out and find a phone-"

“Wait,” Jim tilted his head listening and then added in a strained whisper, “Hide, quick! Turner is checking the perimeter before bed. He’ll be coming down to check here next.”

Blair looked around desperately seeking a hiding place and then moved to the other side of the basement and crouched down in a corner where some old boxes were stacked. Sliding them in front of him, he watched as Jim flicked off the one light socket he could reach and basement lights flicked on as Turner came down the stairs. Walking across the basement, he looked at Jim sitting back on the cot. Reaching out, Turner jiggled the lock, checking it before looking over at Jim.

“I was in Cascade checking on the trial today, Detective. Everyone thinks you’re dead, even that hippie student who lives with you. He’s taken off on a vacation. I guess he didn’t care about you as much as you thought. You might consider not leaving everything to him in your will. He was obviously using you.” Jim didn’t react to the statement and Turner shrugged. “Another month and Fallon’s trial will start and then we’ll let the DA know you’re alive and in protected custody.”

“You know Turner, I’m going to look forward to visiting you in prison,” Jim sneered.

“Kidnapping a cop,” Jim shook his head, not finishing.

“You’re not kidnapped, you’re in protective custody. Nobody is going to get to you here Ellison and everyone thinks you’re dead so no one’s even looking for you.” Blair gritted his teeth hearing the man gloat.

“You’re insane, Turner,” Jim growled. “I know how protective custody works and this is kidnapping.”

“I feed you, I do your laundry, I even give you books. I can make the case I’ve taken good care of you,” Turner answered before spinning and going up the stairs, the lights at the front of the basement going out. “See you in the morning, Ellison, because you’re not going anywhere,” Turner laughed.

When the lights went out Jim reached through the bars and switched on the lightbulb overhead. Blair could see Jim tilt his head listening and after a moment called Blair over. “Things have quieted down but he’s not sleeping yet,” Jim warned as Blair came over. “How did you find me?”

“We’re connected, Jim, sentinel and guide, watchman and companion, whatever. Naomi asked me to go with her to a cabin about five miles from here, and for some reason it felt right. And then I followed a wolf,” he glanced at Jim, hoping Jim would believe him as he added, “it was my spirit wolf, and it led me here.”

Jim couldn’t argue; as much as he hated the spiritual side of the sentinel “stuff”, it had led Blair here. And though he didn’t want to admit it, the jaguar had been around as well. “Don’t try and get the keys, just get back to the cabin and call Simon. Tell him what’s going on.” Jim tilted his head listening for sounds. “How did you get in?” he asked quietly.

“The mudroom door.”

“Good, the backdoor and front door are wired somehow, I overheard him working through the manual and talking to himself about it, so go out the way you came in.”

Blair nodded, silently thanking the wolf for his guidance as he looked around, hoping to find some way of getting Jim out. He didn't want to leave him alone here. Jim realizing what Blair was thinking, motioned with his hand for Blair to go. "Don't worry about me. I've been down here for three months; another night won't kill me. Just be careful and quiet. Turner is completely unglued, I don't know what he'd do if he found you. The reason he's been able to stay here three months is because they have him on a psych leave. Jeremy Martin was his partner and the survivor's guilt put him over the edge."

"Are you safe?" Blair whispered, fearfully.

"He needs me to testify, so yeah, I'm safe but I don't know what he would do if he found you. So, be careful and quiet going out. And stay alert."

Blair nodded and headed for the stairs. The sooner he got back to the cabin, the sooner Jim would be free. Quietly, he tiptoed past the guest room off the dining room and then through the mudroom door. He hugged the wall as he moved around the back of the house, thinking the brush would give him some cover when he crossed the back, but the wolf was there, again blocking his way. Hugging the wall he slid down and, trusting his spirit guide, waited.

A few minutes later, Turner opened the guest room window. Blair, just below him in the bushes, held his breath, amazed Turner couldn't hear how loudly his heart was beating as Turner looked out across the back of the house. Finally, he lowered the window and Blair could hear him climb into the bed. He stood, noting the wolf was nowhere in sight, and headed back to the road.

Despite the fact that it was night and practically pitch black, the road seemed lighter to Blair and he hugged the shoulder, walking quickly back to the cabin, already going over how he would proceed.

As he came up the path to the house, he could see Naomi at the window watching for him. Hurrying in, he hugged her, his smile bright and then went for the phone. On the third ring it was picked up.

"Hello," came a gruff voice. "This had better be good."

Glancing at the clock and realizing it was after midnight, Blair chuckled. "Simon, it's Blair," he chirped, happily.

"Sandburg?" Blair could actually hear Simon focus. "Are you alright?"

"I'm fine and so is Jim, I found him."

"You found Jim? Where the hell has he been and why hasn't he called?"

"That Fed, Turner, has him locked in a cage in a basement near where I'm staying. He's calling it protective custody. What he's doing is kidnapping. You can't call it protective custody if you keep someone in a cage with a cot, sink and toilet for three months."

There was silence on the other end of the phone and Blair could hear Simon take a sharp breath. "Okay, Sandburg, slow down, and tell me again what's going on and where you are."

Blair gave Simon the information and directions and, after hanging up, turned to Naomi, hugging her again. "Thank you, Mom. If you hadn't arranged this I wouldn't have found Jim."

"It was meant to be," she answered, smiling and thinking some spiritual connection had brought them here. "How about some dinner while we wait for Simon? You might need your strength later." Blair nodded, feeling hungry for the first time in three months.

They ate a vegetable stir fry and talked about Jim, how he must have endured living in a cellar for three months, speculating on what would happen to Turner and then the pair sat at the window watching and waiting for Simon.

At three in the morning, two cars pulled up: Simon, Megan, Rafe and H getting out of the first car, Joel and two state troopers getting out of the second car. Blair opened the door and they all came in. Blair again told the story of walking down the road (he skipped the part about the wolf) and seeing Turner's SUV. He talked about following it and hearing Turner talking to himself about Jim being locked up in the basement.

Simon turned to the state troopers. "Detective Ellison has never been listed as in protective custody and, as far as I know, Turner was acting on his own, not with the backing of the FBI. That makes him a kidnapper and he should be charged with unlawful detainment."

The two state troopers looked at each other, neither comfortable with the idea of charging a fed with kidnaping, but they nodded their agreement. "We should contact the FBI," one suggested.

"I agree, but I think we need to get Jim Ellison out first, before he disappears again."

The troopers agreed and Blair grabbed his coat, getting in the car with Simon and directing them. At the turnoff for the farmhouse they stopped, leaving their cars just inside the turnoff and proceeded on foot up the driveway. Simon, Blair and the state troopers went to the front door, Joel and Megan the mudroom door and Rafe and H the kitchen door. Giving the other two teams a couple of minutes to get in place Simon waited, Blair bouncing beside him. After a few minutes Simon nodded and one of the state troopers pounded on the door calling, "State Police."

Lights went and Turner appeared at the door, gun and badge in hand. He was wearing a robe over a pair of boxers and tee shirt as he frowned at the trooper.

"Good evening, sir. I am here to execute a search warrant."

"Search warrant, for what?" Turner demanded, trying to sound imposing. The effect was neutralized by his face losing all color when he noticed Blair and Simon standing behind the troopers.

"We are looking for Detective James Ellison," the trooper continued.

Realizing that they knew Jim was here, he nodded. "He is here in protective custody."

"Can we see the paperwork authorizing protective custody, sir?" the trooper answered.

"It's um...it's at my field office."

"My partner will contact the FBI office but we will need to see Detective Ellison," the trooper insisted, sliding a foot in the door and unhooking his holster. "Please step aside, otherwise we will be forced to charge you with obstruction."

Turner looked at the troopers, his eyes wide, as he stepped back into the living room, the troopers entering, Simon and Blair following. "Please, put your weapon down," one of the troopers requested, indicating Turner's gun, still in his hand. Taking another step back, knowing that at least three guns were trained on him, Turner placed it down on the coffee table. Immediately, one of the troopers walked over and pulled the magazine from his gun. "Where is Detective Ellison?" he asked.

Turner looked over at the trooper. "I want to speak with your superior before I compromise Ellison's safety."

"You have five officers from Major Crimes and two state troopers here," Simon snarled, his eyes narrowing as he placed one restraining hand on Blair to keep him from attacking Turner. "We are all concerned about Detective Ellison's safety. Now take us to Ellison."

Turner, realizing they wouldn't back down, nodded and turned to the door by the fireplace, opening it and flicking on the lights. They all trooped down the stairs to the cage where Ellison was sitting on the cot.

Seeing the cage, Simon demanded, "Give me the keys."

"Not until I speak with someone in charge," Turner snarled, trying to sound authoritative.

Unfortunately, he was up against Simon Banks who did have authority and knew how to wield it. "Get the keys or we will get bolt cutters."

Grimacing, Turner turned and, with a trooper following, headed upstairs, returning minutes later, carrying the keys.

Jim stood as Turner, with trembling hands, held out the keys to Simon. "It's about time you got here," he stated, and Simon smiled.

"He made it look like you were killed," he indicated Turner being handcuffed and charged with kidnapping and unlawful imprisonment.

Jim nodded. "I know. He told me," he answered, thinking back three months to when he was first grabbed...

Simon had gotten a tip about an arms shipment coming in at the Bayside Marina and had sent Jim and Megan to check it out. They had gone out there, but found nothing. Finally deciding to split up, each taking one side of the dock, they had moved off. Jim headed down the north side, Megan the south. He was very near the end of the dock where some old battered boats were tied to the pier when something hit him in the neck. Reaching up, he pulled a dart from his neck. He tried to call out, his muscles already seizing up as a fast-acting agent paralyzed him, when he felt a push and he fell into the water. Unable to move, he started to lose consciousness and was going under when he felt a hand around his neck holding him up and moving him away from the pier and toward a small boat. The next thing he knew, he woke up in a cage in a basement. He was on a cot with a chain hooked to a

collar around his neck that looped through the bars and hooked to the wall. He sat up and looked around, tilting his head as he listened to the noises in the house. Upstairs he could hear a person talking to himself as he watched the news.

"They all think Ellison is dead." Jim recognized Turner's voice. "No one will be looking for him. This will work out well. I'll bring him back for the trial and he'll put Fallon away and I'll see to it that Jeremy Martin's death is avenged. It's the best I can do, Partner," he continued, quietly, talking to the air or whatever ghosts were in his head. "I'm sorry I wasn't there to stop Fallon but I'll avenge you, Jeremy, I promise."

Jim sat back as the door to the basement opened and Turner came down. "You're awake, good," Turner smiled.

"Want to explain this?" Jim shook the chain. He already knew the answer but he didn't see any reason to let Turner know that.

"Consider this protective custody," Turner answered. "Hopefully, there won't be too many trial delays. But don't worry, I'll take good care of you."

"I want to talk to Blair Sandburg."

"No can do. I faked your death; it wouldn't do to let anyone know you're alive. People might start looking for you."

"You can't just hold me here."

"I think I can and you've got all the comforts of home, so make yourself comfortable," he answered, mockery in his voice. "I'll bring you down some food in a while." He headed upstairs.

As soon as Turner was gone, Jim got up and examined the cage door. The cage was locked and a chain and padlock had been added. Additionally, a collar was locked on his neck and chained to the wall. Turner was making sure he didn't go anywhere.

Sitting back down, Jim bided his time. He would have to get the drop on Turner, get a weapon or get word to Blair or Simon if he wanted to get out. Days passed, weeks passed, but Jim could tell his captor was still very cautious, the isolation making him even more unstable. He was never given anything but a plastic knife or fork. If he tried to keep one, Turner threatened to use the dart gun and then, while he was out, remove it. He had not been allowed out of the prison even once, so there was no getting the drop on Turner. He had to wash using water in a bucket, shave with an electric razor that was immediately confiscated, change clothes in front of his captor and hand over his dirty clothes, and he was refused a shower. He tried talking to Turner, hoping to convince him to do the right thing, but soon realized Turner was beyond rational thought.

"Turner," Jim had tried. "I know how hard it is to lose a partner. When I lost Jack, it was like losing a brother."

"Pendergrast," Turner answered, nodding. "I looked up your record."

"This isn't a solution," Jim continued, waving a hand at the cell.

"You don't understand," Turner said, fidgeting in front of the cage, his eyes on the floor. "I was supposed to be with him. I was his backup. He had asked me to meet him at that restaurant at six. I was late. Do you want to know why?" Turner's voice shook with emotions. "Because I got caught in traffic leaving the Federal building. There'd been an accident," he waved a hand. "If I had moved faster, left earlier, taken a different route, my partner would be alive. So, I have to make sure no one gets to you, Ellison."

"But what about my family, my partner, my friends? Shouldn't they know I'm alive?" Jim whispered.

"They'll find out soon enough. You'll be able to go back to them, but my partner won't come back," Turner started for the stairs. To some extent, Jim felt sorry for the agent. He knew how hard it was to lose a partner. He had lost Pendergrast and buried his men in Peru. But Jim was far more concerned about his friends, especially, Blair.

So, Jim waited, biding his time. Something in him knew he would somehow reach Blair. It would take time, but it would happen. Then, four days ago (what he guessed was three months into his captivity) he dreamt of a blue jungle and Incacha, the Chopec shaman, appeared in his dreams. "Call to your guide, Enqueri," the shaman advised. "His spirit guide will lead him to you."

"How?" Jim asked.

"Use the power of your bond as sentinel and guide. He is a shaman; he will call to his spirit for help and his spirit guide will answer his call."

The next night, Jim dreamt of a jaguar calling to a wolf and he had had the same dream every night since.

Until Blair found his way to this small farmhouse...

Jim's attention snapped back to the present as Simon angrily snatched the keys from Turner's hand and unlocked the cage and the collar. Standing, Jim offered Simon his hand in gratitude, but Simon pulled him into a quick hug.

"For a while, I thought we'd lost you Jim," he whispered, his voice cracking. "We were sure you'd come walking through the doors of Major Crimes and when you didn't," he didn't finish but took a deep breath and turned to the troopers who were reading Turner his rights. "I guarantee he had no right to do this," he informed the troopers, his voice cold. "But you had better call the FBI field office and let them know we have one of their agents in custody."

The troopers nodded as they left the basement, Turner handcuffed and in tow. Upstairs, Joel, H, Rafe and Megan all hugged Jim as one of the troopers called the FBI and the other called CSU. Despite the fact that Jim was free and there were witnesses, they would need evidence of what had been done to Jim.

Epilog

Four months later, Jim sat in the court and testified to what he had heard and seen by the dry cleaning store that fateful day. With Jim's testimony and the evidence gathered by the coroner and CSU, Fallon and Ramos were convicted of murdering a federal agent.

Two days after the verdict was delivered, Turner cleared out his desk at the bureau. Though the incident was kept quiet (mostly to protect the bureau's reputation and Turner's superiors, who allowed Turner to be part of the investigation despite the fact that they knew Turner had become unstable), he was under indictment for unlawful imprisonment and a plea agreement was in the works.

Jim had actually had a hand in the plea agreement. He hadn't pushed for jail time, understanding that Turner had cracked under the strain of losing his partner and was suffering "severe emotional disturbance." In a meeting with the bureau's director, his legal counsel, Moser, and Blair, Jim had sat down at a conference table in the Federal building as Turner was brought in, under guard, a lawyer at his side.

The man had lost weight since Jim had seen him last and looked lost. Blair, Jim's pacifist friend, had almost growled when he saw Turner, but Jim placed a hand on his arm, calming him as he looked over at Turner.

"Detective Ellison," Turner said, quietly. "Thank you for getting Jeremy's killer. Your testimony was crucial."

"Were you planning on keeping Jim locked up in a basement for seven months?" Blair blurted out and Jim squeezed his arm.

"Your partner is right, Detective," Bureau Chief, Adams, agreed. "We did not support or condone his actions." Jim nodded his understanding, he had heard this before. The bureau was trying to distance themselves from Turner. He glanced over at the man as he took a seat, a guard behind him, his lawyer beside him.

"We have spoken with Ms. Sanchez in your DA's office and she has offered Former Agent Mark Turner a deal. With your approval, Mr. Turner will plead guilty to unlawful imprisonment and will lose both his job and pension. He will be required to attend weekly counseling and will be on probation for a year." The director paused and glanced at Jim. "Ms. Sanchez will not sign off on this without your approval."

Blair glanced at Jim. He knew Jim wanted to let the case go. Personally, Blair thought Turner was getting off too lightly but Jim felt some sympathy for the lost man. And honestly, looking at Turner now, Blair couldn't help but feel some sympathy for the man too. Not that he could forget how much he hurt for the three months that Jim was missing.

"Chief," Jim said softly, and Blair nodded his agreement. Looking over, first at Turner and then at Director Adams, Jim nodded. "Okay, I'll let Beverly Sanchez know I'll go along with the sentence."

"You have the bureau's apologies," Director Adams turned to Turner and lifted an eyebrow.

Slowly, Turner and looked at the director and then Jim, for the first time actually meeting Jim's eyes. "And I'm sorry, Detective," Turner added.

Jim nodded and he and Blair left the federal building, stopping by a small diner some blocks away.

"You know he deserved at least three months in jail," Blair said, after ordering some lunch.

Jim considered that a moment. "If he went to jail, it wouldn't be the same, Chief. Because he was in law enforcement, he'd be tortured. He'd have to live in fear of his life and more. That didn't happen to me."

"I know and I know you're right, but he caused us so much pain."

Jim nodded, reaching a hand across the table to land on Blair's. "And I'm sorry about that. Truth told, I was worried about you, the whole time."

Blair smiled. "I knew you were missing, but truthfully I couldn't accept that you were dead. I didn't feel it and I think I would have."

Jim considered this for a moment, saying nothing. There really wasn't a need to mention the one thing that both men could not deny. They had discovered there was a spiritual connection between the two and, despite the fact that neither understood the connection, both found it comforting.