



Penelope :
UNTAMED
HEART

ALLY BLUE

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Penelope

By

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This story stars Grim and Leon from [Untamed Heart](#).

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Penelope

Like so many important things in Grim's life, his obsession with Leon as a father began with violence.

It had happened last month, on the way home from a trip into town. They'd been to see a movie, something they hardly ever did. Didn't need to, not with Leon's money and knowledge of state-of-the-art electronics. But Grim had had a once-in-a-blue-moon desire to go out, so out they had gone. What Grim wanted, no matter how big or small, Leon gave him.

Grim didn't know what he had done to deserve a man like Leon in his life. But he woke up grateful every single day, he went to sleep grateful every night, and he spent every moment in between doing his best to show Leon how fiercely he was loved.

In any case, on that fateful night, Leon had been driving the SUV up the narrow, winding road to their estate in the hills outside Vancouver. There was a Jeep ahead of them, going way too fast, swerving back and forth across the center line. It had outpaced them eventually, but they'd caught up with it a few minutes later. It had run off the road, gone down the steep hill to their right and hit a tree.

Saw that coming, Leon had said. Their own fault. Worst fucking driver I ever saw. Probably drunk.

He'd stopped anyway, because Grim wanted him to.

They'd both scrambled down the hill in the dark, Leon grumbling and cursing the whole way and Grim clutching the giant Maglite Leon kept under the seat, because Grim swore he'd heard a baby screaming.

Turned out he was right.

The woman driving had climbed out of the car and was stumbling around the woods, muttering "oh Jesus, oh Jesus help us" while she picked bits of safety glass out of her hair. Blood ran down her face

and into her glazed eyes. Thank fuck she'd had the good sense to put her baby in a car seat, buckled in nice and snug in the back seat of the Jeep. Other than a few pieces of safety glass scattered over its blanket, the poor kid was completely untouched and wailing its little lungs out.

Because the Jeep's gas tank had been punctured, Leon had made Grim take the woman back to the SUV while he rescued the baby himself. Grim had led the woman up the hill and called 911 on Leon's cell phone, then paced and chewed his fingernails and prayed to deities he didn't believe in for Leon to *please please fucking please* come back up that hill now and not die in a Jeep explosion because he could *not* take it if that happened.

When Leon struggled over the crest of the hill with a tiny, crying baby cradled in his arms, something inside Grim had shifted forever. He'd stared, and stared, and stared some more, and he'd realized that having once seen a creature so small and helpless held safe against Leon's strong, solid body, he'd crave that sight over and over again until the day he died.

He'd known right away he'd have to do something about that.

Which was what eventually led him to this night, and The Surprise.

He hoped Leon wouldn't be angry. He'd never really been angry with Grim before—not like John used to get, anyway—but there was always a first time for everything. And this was kind of a big thing he had done, without even consulting Leon...

An attack of nerves made Grim's stomach twitch. Maybe he should just forget about it. Just call Mrs. McFarlane and tell her he wasn't going to do it after all.

But you already said you would. Sweet little Penelope is sleeping in the extra bedroom right now. You can't just give her back.

Grim sighed. He didn't really want to give her back anyhow. He wanted to see Leon hold her. Wanted to watch the tender expression

Leon only ever wore for Grim expand to include this one other living thing.

He had no clue why the thought of Leon as nurturer melted him the way it did. But it *did*.

The garage door opener rumbled beneath the floor, signaling Leon's return from the city. Grim leapt up from the sofa, heart pounding and mouth bone dry. He glanced toward the closed door of the guest suite tucked into the end of a short hallway on the other side of the massive living room. The noise below his feet stopped for a second, then started again as the mechanism lowered the garage door.

Bounding over to the stereo, Grim nudged the volume up a notch. Not enough to wake Penelope, but enough to cover the sound of her cries if she woke before he got to break the news to Leon.

He hoped.

Heavy footsteps clomped up the basements stairs. Grim whirled around, flung himself back onto the sofa and snatched up the nearest book just as he heard the door open.

"Grim," Leon called. "I'm home. Got that new wok you wanted. Oh, and I found that special pepper sauce too. Had to go to three goddamn specialty stores, but I found it."

Hearing Leon's voice, knowing what all he was willing to go through to make Grim happy, dissolved Grim's nervousness like sugar in hot tea.

Sitting up, he grinned at Leon over the back of the couch. "You're the absolute best, Leon. Thank you."

"Yeah, well, I hope you know I expect some stir-fry spicy enough to clear my fucking sinuses." Leon set a double armload of bags on the big wooden chopping block in the middle of the kitchen floor, then sauntered into the living room. "So. What've you been doing while I was gone?"

“Reading.” Grim held up his book.

Leon plucked it from Grim’s hands. Snorted at the cover like he always did, though his eyes twinkled and Grim knew he wasn’t really making fun of him. “*The Trembling Hills*. Seriously?”

“It’s very interesting.” Grim grabbed the book and thrust the back cover at Leon. “It’s set during the time of the nineteen-oh-six San Francisco fire, see?”

“Uh-huh.” Settling on the cushions beside Grim, Leon slid a hand into his hair, pulled him close and gave him one of those kisses that always made him feel like he’d been redeemed of all his sins. “Mmmm. What did you do besides read?”

Grim blinked, trying to clear his head. “What makes you think I did anything else?”

Leon shrugged. “I was gone for six hours. You can’t sit still that long.”

It was true. A side effect of years of primitive living, Grim supposed. These days, since he no longer had to hunt and fish to survive, he tended to do a lot of housework and gourmet cooking. He still split wood in the winter, to stoke the big stone fireplace in the living room, but there was very little need of it this time of year. When he ran out of actual work to do, well, he and Leon were surrounded by miles of forest to explore.

Hmmm...

“I went for a walk,” Grim declared. And it wasn’t even a lie. He’d trekked about seven miles altogether to fetch Penelope and bring her back home. It would’ve been even longer if he’d walked down the road instead of taking the path through the woods.

“A walk.”

“Uh-huh.”

One corner of Leon's mouth twitched. "That's all?"

Grim bit his lip. He'd always been a good liar, until Leon came along. He'd never been able to lie to Leon about anything important.

Well, you have to tell him about Penelope anyway. Might as well do it now.

Gathering all his courage, Grim dropped his book, wound both arms around Leon's neck and plastered his most winning smile across his face. "Actually, my walk had a purpose."

"Did it, now?" Leon kissed Grim's nose. "What purpose was that?"

"I... I got you something."

Leon's pale eyebrows went up. "You did? From where? There's nothing around here but trees."

Grim chose not to answer that yet. He pushed on Leon's shoulders. "Let me up, I'll go get her."

Leon's arms dropped away from Grim as if weighted. His face went an unhealthy shade of gray. "'Her'? What the fuck do you mean, 'her'?"

Leaving *that* question hanging for the moment as well, Grim pushed to his feet and hurried toward the guest room. His knees shook, his palms were damp with sweat and his stomach kept trying to escape by taking a flying leap up his throat. He swallowed hard. *I will not throw up, I positively will not. Later, maybe. Not now.*

He eased the bedroom door open. The single lamp he'd left on cast a dim light over the room. Tiptoeing over to the bed, he peered into the basket sitting atop the hunter green quilt. To his relief, Penelope was still sound asleep. Good. He wanted her to wake in Leon's strong embrace. He knew from experience that it was the most wonderful way in the world to wake up.

“Come on, sweetheart,” he whispered to the precious little bundle.
“Let’s go introduce you to your new daddy.”

Lifting the basket as gently as he could, Grim carried it into the living room. Leon stood, eyes going wide. “What the hell’s that?”

“Shhh. You’ll wake her.”

“Oh Jesus Christ.” Leon eyed the basket with extreme trepidation as Grim bore it to the coffee table and set it down. “What have you done?”

In answer, Grim reached into the basket, scooped up the tiny ball of black and white fur and cradled her carefully in his palms. “This is Penelope. I got her from Mrs. McFarlane at the farm a few miles away. She’s yours.”

Leon blinked, then burst out laughing. “Oh my God, it’s just a fucking kitten.”

Penelope opened her crystal blue eyes and let out a very affronted mew. Grim frowned. “Of course she’s a kitten. You don’t like dogs.”

Chuckling, Leon grabbed Grim’s face in both hands and kissed him. Penelope hissed and batted her white-dipped paws at Leon’s chest. “I thought you’d gone out and bought a black market baby or something.”

Startled, Grim stared into Leon’s amused eyes. “What? Why would I do that? We’d make terrible fathers.”

“Damn straight. But don’t think I didn’t notice the way you looked at me when I was holding that baby we rescued last month. And when you get an idea into your head, there’s no telling what you’re gonna do with it.” Grinning, Leon lifted Penelope from Grim’s hands and cuddled her against his chest. “But this? I can live with.” He tickled the white splash on Penelope’s round little belly with one finger. “Oh, you’re a sweet girl, aren’t you? Yes, you are. Did you know your Daddy Grim is a very unpredictable person who keeps Daddy Leon on his toes? Did you know that, huh?”

“Mrrrrrow!” Penelope wrapped her fuzzy front paws around Leon’s wrist and attacked his tickle-finger with tiny kitten teeth. Her back paws kicked at his palm.

Leon winced, but let her gnaw to her heart’s content. “Ow.”

Grim watched with a smile on his face and a full heart. “I knew you’d love her.”

“She’s a cute little thing, all right.” Leon looked up, and what Grim read in his eyes made the most beautiful romance novel ever written seem stale and dull in comparison. “Thank you, Grim.”

“You’re welcome.” Moving behind Leon, Grim slipped his arms around Leon’s waist and rested his cheek against Leon’s hair. He laughed when Penelope stretched backward and mewed up at him from the crook of Leon’s elbow. “Hello, Penelope. You like being held by your Daddy Leon? I don’t blame you. I like it too.”

Leon hummed and leaned back into Grim’s embrace. “So, is watching me hold a kitten an acceptable substitute for seeing me with a real baby?”

A smile curved Grim’s lips. It was weird sometimes, how well Leon understood him. But he wouldn’t give it up for anything.

Lifting one hand, Grim rested it on Leon’s cheek, tilted his head up and sideways and claimed his mouth in a slow, deep kiss. Leon opened to him with a low moan that sent a full-body shiver sliding over Grim’s skin. He rarely took the aggressive role in their relationship—it had taken him forever to get past his fear enough to even try—but when he did... Well. Maybe the relative novelty was what made it so exciting.

When the kiss broke, Grim drew back enough to study the familiar face of the man who’d become his lover, his teacher, his protector, his friend, even (in a way) the father figure he’d never had.

He smiled. “It works for me. Happy Father’s Day.”

