

WONDER CITY STORIES

**VOLUME 3:  
TRUST No. # 1**

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**EPISODE #84**

ALL LIES LEAD TO THE TRUTH

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## ALL LIES LEAD TO THE TRUTH

"I told Watson I was angry with her finally," Megan said, fiddling with a wrinkle of her jeans.

Pearl's eyebrows rose with attention. "And how did that go?"

Megan sighed and let her head fall back in her chair. "She asked me why."

"And?"

"I told her, just like we practiced," Megan said, still looking up at the ceiling. When Pearl didn't answer, she said, "I said because I felt like she could have done more to help me. That everything I remembered since the point where the company got bought and the 'company therapist' started working on everyone was that I felt abandoned and alone."

Pearl nodded. "How did you feel telling her that?"

"Terrible," Megan said, annoyed that there were tears welling up in her eyes, *again*. "I mean, I usually expect her to be able to predict what I'm going to say. Or expect it, or something. But I caught her by surprise for once, and I've never seen her look so hurt."

"That was the outcome," Pearl said. "How did it feel to say it?"

"Oh, I..." Megan paused, trying to remember that split-second. "Relieved?"

"It *has* been something you've been talking about for a while now," Pearl prodded.

"I guess so," Megan said, sighing. "But it was all so miserable afterward."

"What did she say?"

"She thought about it for a bit, and then apologized to me," Megan said, squirming miserably in her seat. "She said she'd felt all along that she wasn't doing enough, and she was sorry that I'd felt that way too. She said she'd hoped that it was just the... the projectors making her more self-critical."

"Did you two talk at all about what you wished she'd done for you?" Pearl said.

"Yeah, kind of," Megan said. She wished the dogs were in the office today, and decided to ask, "Where are Mulder and Scully?"

"My wife's got them out for a walk," Pearl said. "I can ask her to bring them back before the end of our hour, if you like."

Megan ducked her head and thought about saying no, but she decided to take Pearl at her word. "Yes, please."

"Just a moment then," Pearl said, and she quickly sent a text on her phone. "All right. How did Watson take that?"

"She... didn't even point out the problems with the things I said," Megan said. "I mean, I know, from what I can remember, that I wouldn't let her stay with me. The only person I let stay with me was Simon. He was the only one I let near me, and only because I'd forgotten he was human!" Megan clenched her hand on her knee. "But she didn't point out I wasn't making any sense, that I hadn't *let* her do anything for me, that she couldn't *possibly* have intervened for me at work or anything like that. She didn't *demolish* my *points*, which is what I *expected*. She just nodded, and sighed, and apologized more."

"What happened then?"

"We both, uh, cried," Megan said uncomfortably. "Which she never does. And hugged. And ended up having a kind of date night, watching movies and ordering in food. Which we've never really done either."

"Most people I talk to have a very different tone in their voice when talking about things like that," Pearl said. "How are *you* feeling?"

"We're not date-y people," Megan said, puzzled. "Either of us. I mean, I don't think? I don't *feel* like I do things like that? Used to do? Maybe I do now?"

Pearl studied her face for a moment, then said, "You've never really talked about going on date nights or anything like that with Watson. Do you remember how long you and Watson have been a couple?"

Megan did know this—she'd had a conversation with Watson about it. "A little more than two years, though we really don't have an anniversary or anything."

"And you don't feel like you've ever had a quiet evening at home with her, watching movies and ordering in food?" Pearl said.

"I guess we probably did," Megan said, shrugging. "I mean, we must have, right? It's a thing even people who aren't dating do. This just had a really weird feel to it. Like she was trying too hard? Doing something uncharacteristic? I mean, she brought me flowers yesterday." She knew that sounded strange and ungrateful. "Do I seem like someone who would like flowers?"

"Are you?" Pearl said.

Megan ducked her head. "I guess I do. I just... it's not part of how I think I'm supposed to be? I mean, I was butch, right? Before everything? That's what I want to get back to."

Pearl gave her a slightly exasperated look. "Megan, being butch doesn't mean you have to eat steak three meals a day and bathe in engine grease. Is this really about Watson?"

"Yes! No. I mean, since our talk, she's been weird."

"You keep saying that. How do you mean?"

Megan grasped for words. Pearl's phone buzzed and blessedly interrupted for a moment so she could try to think. Pearl got up and let the dogs in.

Scully immediately pounced onto the sofa and put her head in Megan's lap. Mulder had to run around the room a bit, staring at the ceiling suspiciously before he would consent to allow Megan to rub his floppy brown ears.

She felt better pretty much immediately. They reminded her of bleak, dark, cold evenings when the only person in the world who seemed to love her was the big golden wolf she'd managed to remember was her best friend.

Pearl waited for the dogs to settle down and said, "I had just asked what you meant by 'weird.'"

"Yeah," Megan said, stroking the silky red hair along Scully's back and sides. "She seems... depressed, I guess. Folded in on herself. No, *collapsed* in on herself. She's sleeping a lot more, almost constantly, and hasn't gone to her office for a few days. She forgot to feed the cats one day. Poor things were circling me like ducklings until I figured it out. She *never* forgets *anything*." Megan ran her fingers Scully's smooth forehead and the dog squinted happily. "I... got worried enough I called her sister."

"They have, as I recall, a sort of fraught relationship," Pearl said. "Why her sister?"

"Because there's no one else?" Megan said. "No one else who really knows her. I mean, maybe Zoltan does, but he hasn't moved back in yet. And maybe G..." Megan added doubtfully, recalling murkily that both she and Watson had had relationships with G, and neither had gone swimmingly. Her relationship with G had ended suddenly, given what she could remember and what Watson had told her, when G moved to Europe. She wondered if Watson still had G's contact information. Where had she been when the invasion really set in? Mulder nudged his head under her hand, indicating that she'd stopped petting him. She began again, and said, "Watson doesn't have a lot of friends. That I can remember, anyway."

"What did her sister say?" Pearl said, looking concerned.

"Death was... sarcastic," Megan said, recalling the sharp, awkward phone call. "But then she always is. She said if I was calling *her* I must really be worried. At the end, she did thank me for calling though."

"Do you know if she followed up?"

Megan couldn't put her face in her hands because both of them were occupied petting the brown mutt and Irish Setter that were draped over her considerable lap, but she wanted to. "I heard the yelling from the first floor. I don't know how therapeutic it was, or what was being said. I had to leave to catch the bus to come here."

Pearl sighed. "So, if I'm hearing this right, you had your talk with Watson, had a date night afterward, and she brought you flowers a few days later. But she seemed depressed enough that you called her sister, with whom she has a problematic relationship that, if I recall correctly, you don't entirely understand."

Megan rubbed Scully's head and said, "Yeah, that's about it, I guess. I mean, I went up to her apartment most of those days, 'cause she wasn't coming down. I think going for the flowers was the only time she left the house."

Pearl tapped a finger against her thigh, then said, "You called her sister because you thought at least Death would be able to get a reaction out of her, didn't you?"

Megan hadn't really focused on that, but immediately felt sheepish anyway. "I... guess so."

"Watson sounds like she needs a therapist of her own," Pearl said bluntly. "I can only go on what you say, of course, but you've never given me cause to think that she would do this to be deliberately manipulative. The situation is distracting you from figuring out your own feelings about it. Which is fine and valid! You've spent a long time having your feelings altered, and reclaiming how you actually feel is important, hard work. It's fine to take a break from it. Just don't lose track of it in the midst of this other emotional work."

"I feel like it's my fault, though," Megan said mournfully. Mulder stood up and turned around, running his body against her chest as he did so, and then settled back down. Scully nuzzled her hand. "Like if I'd never said it, things would be fine. I mean, it wasn't hurting anyone for me *not* to say it."

"Except you," Pearl pointed out. "You have been talking about how angry you've been with Watson since almost our first session this year."

Megan was furious with herself for the tears that suddenly came down as she said, "Well *maybe that would be all right*. It's not like I'm capable of doing *anything* anyway! But she has a career and an office and does good work helping people, and I feel like I *broke* her."

"You did nothing of the kind," Pearl said. "And it *wouldn't* be all right for you to keep hurting. Megan, this is a pattern for Watson — we talked about it before. G was angry with her for not doing more to help *her*. Watson *agreed* that she could have done more, but didn't until *you* started agitating to help G." Pearl cocked her head, trying to catch Megan's eye. When she succeeded, she added, "Not everyone has your admirable inclination to just jump into other people's disasters, Megan. But it's okay to be angry when someone doesn't help you. Some people *did*, like Simon. Some people *couldn't*, like your mother, being captured and all. And some people *should* have. But this is something you and Watson need to continue to work out together. If together is how you want to do it."

"I do," Megan said, wiping her eyes with the back of her hand. "I... I love her, as stupid as that sounds."

"It doesn't sound stupid," Pearl said gently, handing over a box of tissues. "It's the first time you've told me that, though. How often — and how recently — have you said it to her?"

Megan mopped her face with a handful of tissues and stared down into Scully's doleful brown eyes. "Oh." She laughed ruefully through a hiccoughing sob. "I guess I'd better stop for flowers on my way home."

Mulder gave a little bark and Scully thumped her tail. It was like they understood every word sometimes.