My master lead me down the steps to the cage he kept in the basement. It was feeding time, and boy was I hungry. It had been a while since I had last eaten; the time in between bringing his victims home had grown further and further apart. I could always smell them from my bed in the garage, the scent of their fear hitting my nostrils and causing my mouth to instantly salivate. After every kill, my master would feed me.

I reached the bottom of the steps and felt the cold, stone floor underneath my paws. Something was different. Normally he would render his victims unconscious, either by strangulation or slipping something into their drink, only to wake when I started to bite. From inside the cage though, I heard a noise that I had never heard before—crying. Not the fearful cries of someone who was near death, but someone who seemed to be, *sad*.

Stepping around my master's legs, I locked eyes with a little boy huddled in a corner of the cage. Tears were running down his cheeks as he shivered with fright. "Please let me go mister," he whimpered. My master said nothing. *Why did he bring this little boy here*, I thought to myself. The other victims were always bigger, older. Not children.

My master unlocked the door to the cage and swung it open. It squeaked just like it always did. The boy covered his face in terror and began to cry harder. "Go on, git him," my master ordered, nudging me with his foot.

I didn't move. *What could he have possibly done to deserve this?* A little boy cowering in fear in a dark basement just didn't feel right. My master grew annoyed and shoved me closer toward the open cage. I let out a sharp *yelp*—he'd never laid hands on me before, but my reluctance to follow his commands sparked a new anger.

"I said *git*!" My master struck me with a swift kick, his boot making a loud *thump* as his foot connected with my rib cage. I began to whimper and lowered my head to the floor. When I followed my master's orders in the past it was out of obedience and hunger; if I did what he ordered, I was fed. *But this was wrong*.

Out of the corner of my eye, I saw my master reach to grab me with his hands. "Come here you dumb mutt." I snapped. Lunging at him, I clamped my jaws down on his right hand. He screamed, lost his balance, and tripped over backward. His head hit the floor with a loud *thwack* as I let go of his hand to attack again. Pouncing on his chest, I bit down on the soft tissue of his neck, tearing the skin as the metallic taste of blood filled my mouth. My master began to convulse and choke, drowning in his own blood. He desperately tried to push me off, hitting me with his fists, but his strikes grew weaker and weaker until his limbs finally dropped to his side.

I stepped off my master's chest, his body now motionless on the floor. I glanced at the cage and noticed the boy looking back at me. He had wiped the tears from his face, and now stared at me in shock from what he just witnessed. I sank to the floor and whimpered. It was the only thing I could think of to show him I was not a threat. He didn't move, but watched me carefully, as I scooted across the cage floor closer to him. I nudged one of his sneakers with my nose. He pulled back, and I moved forward again. This time I laid my head on his foot, continuing to whimper.

Slowly, the boy reached out to me with his left hand. I could feel his body trembling through his legs down to his feet. His hand shook as he reached out to me, though he seemed to be growing calmer.

Without even thinking, I jumped forward into his lap. He screamed at first, surprised by my sudden movement, but his screams began to subside as I excitedly licked his face.

I hoped he understood that he was now safe.