

# **The Banished Beta's Saving Grace**

## **Chapter 2: Grace**

I dread the morning of my 12<sup>th</sup> birthday. I know my father is getting more and more angry and if I don't have my wolf on my birthday, it will set him off. Over the last two years, his anger and aggression have increased and the pack is suffering for it. Everyone walks on eggshells with my father now. No one comes to the packhouse any longer and I'm thankful because I don't want anyone to see what he does to my mother. His abuse of her has gotten worse over the past year. I'm terrified that one day he will kill her.

The door to my room slams open, and I jerk up out of bed. "Well?" My father says without any preamble.

I just shake my head, no. He stalks toward me. "You worthless excuse for a daughter. You are nothing to me."

He raises his hand to hit me and my mother comes flying in, out of nowhere, putting herself between me and him. His backhands her, his hand slamming into her cheek. Her head whips around, spit and blood flying from her mouth. He sneers down at my mother as she turns, steadying herself in front of me.

"Move." He says. She doesn't respond, but she doesn't move.

He stares at her a moment before turning to me. "Get out."

I look at him, not understanding what he means.

"Get. Out. Of. My. Packhouse! If I ever see you on my pack lands again, I will kill you myself." He says before stalking out of my room, slamming the door.

"Mom? What did he mean?"

My mom is quiet for a couple of minutes. "Pack a bag. Pack light enough to be able to carry it, but enough to get you through for a weekend. Pack anything you can't live without. I'll be back in five minutes."

Five minutes later, my mother comes in with her own bag. I had thrown my favorite clothes and a couple of pictures into my overnight bag.

"Let's go. Quickly and quietly." My mother says, taking my hand and leading me down the stairs. She stops every few steps to listen before pulling me behind her and continuing our way down the stairs. When we get to the bottom, rather than going out the front door, she takes me down a hallway and out the omega's entrance.

Once we're outside, we begin jogging toward the forest line. My mother sees some of our border patrols and pulls me behind a tree. When they pass, she moves on until my father's Gamma steps in our way.

"Where are you going Paige?" He says as my mother stops in front of him and pulls me behind her.

"He banished her, Jack. I can't let her leave on her own. I won't. Are you going to stand in my way?"

He looks at my mother then at me before shaking his head. He reaches into his pocket and pulls out some money. "Get as far away as possible. Get on a bus or rent a car but get far away from here as quickly as you can. He may have banished her, but he won't let you go easily. I'll cover for you as long as possible."

"Thank you, Jack." My mother says before hugging him quickly. He says something in her ear, but I can't hear what it is. Then, my mother grabs my hand and we are running again. We're only a mile or so from the pack borders when the howl goes up.

Immediately, my mother hands me her bag. "Get on my back." She says, then shifts into her wolf. I climb on her back and she takes off. My mother may not have been born an Alpha female, but she has been mated to an Alpha wolf and been a Luna for over a decade. Not only that, but she is determined to keep me safe. She runs as fast as she can.

It's 10 miles to the nearest human town. My mother runs through rivers and streams whenever possible to help try to throw the pack off our scent. When we are right outside the town, she shifts back, and I throw her some clothes. We run into the town and find the bus station. We find a bus that is leaving in 15 minutes and she buys two tickets.

We get onto the bus and sit in the back, sliding down as low as possible in the seats. It's not until the bus doors close and we start moving that we both breathe a sigh of relief. We stay low in the seats until we are well away from the city.

At the first bus station, my mother pulls us off the bus and we buy tickets to another destination. This continues through three more bus stations, changing destinations midway through our journey.

When we finally get to a place where she decides we can stay, it's the middle of the night two days later. I'm exhausted and there is only one motel in this small town. We crash on the bed and I fall asleep immediately. I realize, somewhere in the back of my mind, that my 12<sup>th</sup> birthday present was escaping from my father, and I know it's the best present that I've ever been given. For today, my mother and I are safe.

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Mom decided that we could stay in this small town. She said that we were not on any pack territory and although there are packs around, in this part of the Appalachian Mountains, they stay to themselves.

My mother enrolls me in school and she gets a job at the only diner in town. She finds a place for rent, what the humans call a mother-in-law apartment. It isn't much, but it is safe and I don't have to wake up to my mother healing from bruises or worse every morning.

It's nearly a year before it starts. Every day after school, I go to the diner and sit at the ice cream bar. I do my homework while I wait for my mother to finish her shift. She works double shifts every day, so that we will have enough money in case we ever have to run again.

On this particular day, everything is normal, until suddenly, my mother drops her tray and doubles over in pain. Her initial cry alerts the owner, who is also the cook. He comes running out and sees her on the floor, writhing in pain.

"What happened?" He asks.

I am already at her side. "I don't know, she just doubled over and cried out."

"I'll call an ambulance, we need to get her to a hospital." Benny, the owner says.

"No!" My mother says. Looking at me, she says, "Sweetie, go get me a glass of water, I'll be okay in a minute." I can see the effort it takes for her to even get those words out.

"Mom, no, Benny is right."

Benny looks at my mom and something passes between them. "Go get your mother a glass of water."

I don't know what my mother tells Benny, but when I come back, he's got my mother sitting up. I bring her the water and she drinks it down. "I'm okay."

"Paige, I can handle one evening. I'll call someone in. Go home and rest."

Mom nods and Benny helps her stand up. "Grace, take your mother home and get her into bed."

I go collect my things and before I leave, Benny gives me a to-go box for dinner. "Let me know if she needs anything overnight." He says before I help my mother back to our apartment.

When I get her into bed, my mother takes my hand. "Sit down Grace, we need to talk."

I sit down next to her on the bed. "Sweetheart, do you understand what happened today?"

I shake my head, no. She takes my hand and I can see the tears in her eyes. "The important thing is, I think you are safe from your father now. I think that he has stopped searching for us."

She isn't looking at me, she's staring at our hands, clasped together. "But, he has taken another lover." She looks up at me. "You understand what this means?" I shake my head.

She swallows, fighting tears. "It means that your father is cheating on our mate bond. When that happens in a mated relationship, the person being cheated on can feel it. It feels like you are being stabbed with a knife over and over. From what I've heard, the feeling continues as long as the cheating continues, meaning every time that your father is with another woman, I will feel it. I can only guess that this will become more and more frequent. I need you to understand because I don't want you to worry."

"But what will happen to you?"

She looks down at our joined hands again. "The longer it goes on, the weaker I will become, until one day, my wolf will give up and we will die."