

6 - Closing Another Chapter

(Willa)

I opened the windows to the first breath of warmer air. It still held the undercurrents of winter as if it was reluctant to loosen its hold even though Spring was coming to an end.

The air was refreshing and it let out the heat of the small cottage, the scent of freshly baked bread leaked out and mixed with the crisp morning air.

I paused to memorize this, to capture this moment and commit it to memory. The scent of my mom's baking, the refreshing air that filtered past the curtains into our home. I knew my son was out playing just beyond my eyesight with my dad.

I could pretend, no, I could have a moment at a time when everything was actually perfect. I savored those and tucked them away, they still seemed eating and few and far between.

When I lay in bed with my son, Emmett, I replayed those memories that I collected and savored in the feelings that I recalled when I cataloged them.

My parents and I moved not too far from the pack. Far enough away that no one would find us, not that anyone was looking, but we didn't know where else to go. The only life any of us knew was at the pack.

I always suspected that no matter how happy my parents claimed to be here, how happy I actually saw them be, they longed to return to where they both grew up. I knew they never had any intention of leaving until they were basically forced to at my hand, at Nolan's hand.

We moved to a cottage that was in my dad's name, passed down by my grandparents. We used to come here every so often growing up as a weekend getaway, but we made it home now.

It was situated in the first a few miles away from Centuri City, the city closest to my old pack. I needed an escape and I couldn't have asked for a better one.

I focused on raising my son as best as I could. I taught him everything that I knew, well as much as an almost seven-year-old could comprehend. His life was filled with the outdoors, time spent with family, and exploration. I couldn't think of a better life for a child even if this is not what I ever would have imagined.

He was supposed to be raised in the packhouse, being an Alpha was his birthright. That didn't matter that much to me, but I was constantly worried that he would feel like something was missing besides his father and another set of grandparents. I wondered who he would be if he grew up in the pack that I did that he would have been destined to lead.

I was angry for him, but I had to admit I was even angrier for myself.

None of those people knew my son, but they knew me.

The omegas that helped me set up those boring parties, the pack doctor that told me I was pregnant, Alpha Hugo who accepted me immediately and told Nolan he would be stronger because he found his mate. His now Beta Issac and Gamma Jack who I became close with.

All of them betrayed me.

Maybe not actually, but it felt like they did with their acceptance of Nolan's actions.

Logically, I knew that those that called the pack home wouldn't have left the pack and everything they knew because of what happened to me, but it still hurt knowing they all moved on now.

They didn't condone it maybe, but they didn't stop it, and that was too much for me to forgive. Not like they asked for my forgiveness, or ever would have the chance to.

I unclenched my fist and tried to breathe, Emmett was starting to notice when I slipped back into that dark place where I only felt rage and complete helplessness.

I'm not sure if the life that was stolen from him was better or worse than the life I gave him, but it was sure as hell different.

This was the only life he knew, but growing up with my parents and me but this little bubble of happiness couldn't last forever. Even if it hurt my heart to think of my sweet, curious, loving, boy being marred by the real world.

I knew better than most how much this world could do to you, even with the fates or The Goddess playing a role. The world was cruel and it didn't need a reason to be.

Every day recently I felt a tension building, I couldn't really place. I knew my parents would stay here forever if I asked, but I wouldn't, I couldn't ask that of them after they already sacrificed so much.

"Mama," Emmett tugged on my sweater, his soft green eyes that almost mirrored mine looked up at me.

"Did you wash your hands?" I scolded, prying his small hands from my clothing.

"Oh," He looked towards my dad and then ran to the bathroom.

"We have a few more things to add to the collection," My dad came up emptying his pockets.

The almost familiar mix of sadness and resolve settled over me. The feeling that you get when you know something is coming to an end and you can't stop it.

"Thanks," I collected the treasures with a nod and went to arrange them in our room. I went to work drying and pressing some of the furs and leaves. I saved the things they found that weren't duplicates. Everything went into his treasure box, and it meant more than ever now to be able to take something tangible back from this place.

I put Emmett to bed that night after we all had dinner together like always.

"I think it's time," I said out loud for the first. My parents stopped where they were putting the last of the things away from the kitchen.

They looked between each other and sat down across from me at the table in the kitchen that served as pretty much everything for us these past few years.

"Darling?" My dad asked, taking my mom's hand in his.

"I think it's time for me to move on, for us to move on, just Emmett and I."

They looked between each other again and my mom shifted in her seat. Neither of them said anything, waiting for me to go on.

"I appreciate everything you've done for me, for us. Everything that you have given up," My voice broke and I tried to steady my emotions, "But I know that you need to go back to the pack and I need to do something, anything. Emmett has had such a great life but he needs to be with other kids. You both know as well as I do that he can't grow up here isolated."

My mom nodded, wiping her eyes.

"Are you sure?" My dad asked, his eyes seeming to mist over as well, "We are more than happy to..." He trailed off.

"I know, but I can't ask that of you. Emmett needs to start school soon and I need to find my own path outside of all of this." I gestured to nothing and everything knowing they understood.

I needed to find my own path outside of my past that loomed over me no matter how much time passed between us. I still felt the sharp sting of betrayal some days as if I just heard those words from him that he spoke publicly rejecting me as his mate, his Luna, and the mother of his child.

Lola, my best friend, got in touch after I left her a detailed, tear-stained, note explaining everything that happened before I left. She was the only one I knew where we went and we kept in touch through letters almost weekly. The service here was shit but I tried to call her whenever I drove into the small town closest to us for groceries or new clothes for Emmett.

She was the only reason I knew that Camilla was made Luna and as far as the pack knew, he accepted her because of her pregnancy. They saw him as some martyr that gave up his fated mate for the sake of his child. Lola was reluctant to talk about it, but I needed to know, not like it gave me much closure.

As much as I mostly liked my life at the moment, it didn't take away that pain that was now a constant part of me. The life that was ripped out from under me and the choices that I didn't have.

"It's time," I reigned in my spiraling thoughts knowing they were going to that dark place, "I want to do things too, figure out what I want outside of being Luna, of being a mother." I looked at my hands.

I was always great in school, most subjects at least, but I never really thought of life after high school. I figured I would stay in the pack, and maybe get a job there, or go to college eventually.

Now I had time to figure out what I wanted to do for myself, what I enjoyed and that was something that still felt foreign.

I wanted to do something that was stable for Emmett, interesting for me, and more importantly, made money. I was determined to have Emmett live the best life I could give him, and that included his mom enjoying her career, whatever that may end up being.

"Okay," My dad said, pulling me back to the present, "What do you want to do?"

I shook my head once, what did I want?

"I would like to go to the city for a few days, try to find a job and a place to live. I saw a year last time I was in town that offered open enrollment for college classes, I want to check it out." I responded more resolutely than I felt.

"That sounds good," My dad rubbed his chin.

"If that's okay with you, I want to go by myself. Once I'm settled, with Emmett, then you can return to Blue Ridge," I rarely said that name out loud and I was surprised to find that it still affected me.

"We don't have to-" My mom started.

"But you should," I cut her off, "I won't be far, you both can come to visit as much as you want. Emmett and I will be expecting that of course," I held her with a smile that felt forced.

"We will, as much as we can." My mom responded.

That stung a bit. I knew what I wanted to do for our future but the fact that she agreed so easily meant she wanted what I feared. She wanted to go home back to the pack I doubted I would ever set foot on again.

Part of me wanted them to get it, to stay here where things were simple and easy. But I knew that we all needed this change as much as it would test me.

I glanced back to where Emmett slept in the bed off the kitchen, the one that we shared. His chocolate brown hair, his father's hair, was tousled and laid over his forehead over his slightly pink cheeks ushered by sleep.

I didn't want to disrupt his life, but this would be good for him after the initial shock of change.

"I can leave tomorrow if that's okay," I decided.

"That's okay with us, take your time," My mom patted my dad's hand but her voice was shaky.

I heard them talking that night as I lay awake thoughts swirling in my head.

I felt as if I'd lived so many fragments of a life and I wanted something that felt like it could last.