

## Chapter 6 His True Colors

Willow's POV

Once at the ceremony, Dad found a place where I could stand alone, yet he could get to me in case of trouble. He had to stand onstage for the ceremony, showing the group leaving the leadership posts. Samuel got on stage to say his vows, and I realized something. I didn't see him in the same radiant glow I used to. He used to look like an angel with a golden aura around him. Yet, at that moment, he looked like the shady door salesman selling snake oil.

Next was the naming of his mate as Luna and officially adding her to the pack. Since the day in the ocean, I had learned that she was the daughter of an Alpha of another pack. A pack that was hoping to create an alliance with Waning Moon. So not only was she beautiful, but she was strong and intelligent as well. She would have known how to be Luna with little training needed from Victoria.

Just as I thought it was time for us to leave the ceremony, Samuel decided to get on stage one last time. "My pack, thank you all for coming here today to celebrate this amazing start of a new year. I especially wish to thank Willow for joining us today, you little hermit."

Dad immediately jumped off stage and blocked anyone's path to me. "What is he going to do this time," I asked while gripping the back of Dad's suit jacket.

"I don't know, Willow. But don't move unless I say so."

"You saved me from going to your home to tell you what I'm about to announce. As of this moment, you are banished from Waning Moon Pack!" The crowd cheered with such thunderous glee, yet the ringing in my ears drowned them out. My world was spinning as I dropped to my knees.

"Willow!" My Dad turned around to grab me and held me tight. It was gone. My life was shattered. Samuel had decided to kick me out of the only home I had ever known. "If she is banished, then I'm leaving as well," growled Father.

"Oh no, you don't." Samuel decided to use his new Alpha voice to order Martavis. "You are to remain in Waning Moon Pack to train your replacement. I'll allow you to say goodbye to your daughter, but that is all I'll allow."

Father glared at Sam before he turned his attention back to me. "Willow, we need to go. Come on, you need to stand up." When I didn't move, he just picked me up and ran with me in his arms to the house. Once inside, he set me down on the couch. "I'm sorry, my little moon child. If I knew he was going to do that--"

I felt so numb at that moment, unsure how I should feel. "Dad, what did I do wrong? I'll apologize for whatever it was that I did. But I don't know what I did wrong."

He held my face in his hands, and his callused thumbs rubbed my cheeks. "You did nothing wrong, Willow. This is all on him. Samuel is the one in the wrong here." Father then kissed my forehead before he went to my room. I wasn't sure how long he was in there, but when he returned, he had my backpack and a duff bag full of my things. My life was whittled down to just two little bags in mere minutes. Looking at them, it felt like someone was clenching my heart.

Dad escorted me outside, and we got into his car. Before he could pull away, however, a few warriors stopped him. "Mr. Hawkwood, where do you think you are going? You were instructed to stay on pack lands."

"I'm taking my daughter to the airport. I'm going to see her off myself and then return. If you don't believe me, you are welcome to follow me." The warriors looked at each other before they backed away from the car. Dad then drove off at a high speed, like he couldn't get off pack territory fast enough. Once at the airport, Dad left me to sit on one of the benches as he went to a desk to buy me a ticket.

When he got back with my ticket envelope in hand, I looked up at him. I could tell that for the first time in all the years I had known him, he was fighting back tears. "Where are you sending me, daddy?"

"You remember your Aunt Cassandra? She has a son about your age named Timothy. They are part of Evercrest Pack, and I'm sending you to stay with them."

I shook my head slowly. "No, Dad, no more wolf packs. I'm done with wolves. I don't think my heart can take another banishment."

He dropped down to his knees and hugged me tight, sniffling as he couldn't hold back his pain anymore. "I understand. No more wolf packs. But remember, this old mutt will always love you."

I immediately wrapped my arms around his shoulders and snuggled into his neck. "I love you too, Dad!" Dad pulled away first, wiping the tears away from his eyes.

"Come on, you need to go check in with security. I asked someone to show you how to find your gate."

With that, he gave me a bundle of cash he got out of the nearby ATM before sending me on my way. Father watched me go through security until I was out of sight. I stayed in constant contact with him through my phone until I got onto the plane and had to shut it off so that I could save battery. Finding the only flight leaving so soon out of Maine wasn't easy, and it came with multiple stops. The first plane took me to Charlotte Douglas International Airport with a three-hour layover.

The second plane was to the Dallas International Airport, which took three hours. Waiting for the final aircraft was going to be my problem because it didn't leave until the next day. It was seven at night, and the plane wouldn't take off until ten the following morning. So I used some money Dad gave me to get some dinner and a cord to charge my phone. It wasn't great, but I slept at my gate there in the airport. I didn't have the money to waste on getting a hotel room somewhere, much less a taxi to take me back and forth.

After one of the hardest sleeps in my life, I waited for a breakfast place to open up so I could get something to eat. I munched on my sausage, egg, and cheese sandwich slowly until it was time to board the plane. That was another three-hour long flight to get to Boulder, Colorado. Once at the final airport, I looked around the lobby for a familiar face.

"Willow, over here!" I looked left and saw a woman running towards me. She wrapped her arms around me tightly. "Oh, you poor thing. How are you holding up?" I was finally able to get a good look at the woman who was talking to me. It was Aunt Cassandra, Dad's twin sister. She had the same black hair, dark brown eyes, and upturned nose as Martavis. The only real difference was the streak of neon pink hair next to her bangs. Seeing her in person really hit home that I was no longer allowed to go back to Maine. So I hugged my aunt tight and bawled into her shoulder.

She patted my head while stroking my back, telling me it was okay to cry. When I finally calmed down, I saw Timothy holding a small sign with my name on it. "Hey, Willow. Ready for some lunch?"

"Hey, Tim." I rubbed my eyes as I nodded. "Yeah, I guess I could eat. What do you guys have around here?"

"Do you like New Orleans food? I know just the place." Timothy's enthusiasm made me chuckle softly. It reminded me of when Dad was excited about something. It wasn't hard to imagine either, as Timothy had black hair and brown eyes, though his eyes weren't as dark in color.

"Yeah, I wouldn't mind trying something new."

"Great, let's get in the car then." Timothy grabbed my duff and walked out to the parking area. Aunt Cassandra held my hand until we got to their Subaru. They drove me to an outdoor mall called Pearl Street Mall. After parking, we walked around until we got to a place called the French Quarter Brasserie. The food there was good. However, I was sure it would have been better if I had been in better spirits.