

TOBY: HERO WORSHIP

BASED ON THE STORY BY DRAGON TAMER, ADAPTED FOR AUDIO

BY SKULBLAKA_SHURTUGAL

[fade in, puppies barking in happiness, slight breeze in the background]

Terry: [calling above their noises] All right, everyone, settle down. Someone's coming.

[puppies slowly quiet down, save one or two short barks here and there]

[footsteps as two people walk forward]

Little girl (Tina): [excitedly] Look, mommy! Puppies! Can we have one, please?

Her mother: Sure, Tina. Why don't you pick one?

Tina: Oh, I'm so excited! [murmurs in concentration] Hmm...I'll take...this one!

[footsteps as they walk away]

[puppy sounds continue]

Terry: [half-happy, half sad] Well, I guess our kids are growing up.

Rex: [grumpily humphs] They couldn't have picked a warmer day to get new homes.

Terry: Oh, are you cold dear?

Rex: Cold? Me? Policedog Rex, cold?

[silence for a minute]

Rex: Maybe just a little...

Terry: [sweetly] Oh, Rex.

[sound of a hug]

Terry: Is that better?

Rex: Yeah, a little. Thank you, Terry.

Terry: [sighs] It just never gets easier. It's one of those things that's always so hard.

Rex: [confused] Hugging me?

Terry: No, having to see our pups go...away... [confused] Rex?

Rex: Yes, dear?

Terry: Would you watch them for a minute? I'll be right back.

Rex: [suddenly worried] What's wrong?

Terry: It seems our little Houdini has disappeared.

Rex: Again?

Terry: Again. See that hole in the bottom of the box? Seems he's dug his way out of it—literally.

Rex: [sigh] I'll go look for him.

Terry: Oh, no you don't. You stay here. Ever since you visited the school last week all the children know you. They'll want the pups more if they know their father is a police dog, especially Nome's best tracker.

Rex: Alaska's best tra—

Terry: Right, Alaska's best tracker. And a good nose won't be necessary for this case. I know exactly where he is.

[shuffling of feet as she goes away]

Rex: [grumbles] The things I do for family. [pause] What's up with you now, Toby?

[music cuts away the scene]

DRAGON TAMER WILL DO THE INTRODUCTION HERE.

[music fades to next scene, continues to a slightly heroic tune]

Toby: [bravely] And as Toby jumps up onto the tall mountain, he strikes a heroic pose! Just like his hero Balto, Toby has saved the day again! What's next for young Toby? What is he going to do now? Only he truly knows, as—

Terry: [away] Toby!

Toby: [surprised] Aah! Oh, hi Mom.

Terry: Toby, get down from there before you hurt yourself! You're supposed to be in the box, not on it!

[sound of a few boxes rattling]

Toby: I'm not gonna get hurt. I'm practicing.

[Toby lets out a wolf-howl]

Terry: [much closer, her voice almost pleading] Toby, please stop that howling. Humans won't want you if you do that all the time.

Toby: I don't want a human. I want to be a wolfdog like Balto.

Terry: [sighs] I should never have told you about him. Your brothers and sisters can enjoy a story, but you always have to try and live it.

Toby: Is that a bad thing?

Terry: It is when you're on top of a pile of crates—which doesn't look all that stable to me.

Toby: Dad always says stories are supposed to be learned from.

Terry: Toby, please. You know I just want a good life for you—which can't happen if you fall.

Toby: I'm not going to—

[footsteps in the distance]

Terry: I lived on the streets for a while once, you know, and it was terrible. I don't want that kind of life for you.

Rex: Your mother is right, son.

Terry: Rex?

Toby: Dad?

Terry: You said you'd watch the kids.

Rex: Yes, I did. And they've all found homes. All except...Toby, your mother is right. I've seen what life on the streets does to a dog. And it's not good.

Toby: I don't want to live on the streets, either. I just want to stay with Mom until I'm old enough to handle myself. Then I'll find a spot somewhere on the edge of town, just like Balto and his boat. See, I've got it all figured out.

Rex: [sighing irritably] Toby, I've asked you this before, but why don't you want to be a tracker dog like I am? It's a good job, you'll be helping people who really need it, and you're practically made for the job. You've got the best nose out of all your brothers and sisters.

Toby: No way. I don't want some hand-me-down legacy. I don't want to have my whole life handed to me. That's how Steele had it and look where he ended up.

Rex: [very angry] Toby—

Terry: All right, that's enough! [pause] Toby, if you want to stay with me, I'll make you a deal. I'll let you stay longer if you promise me that if you find a home you're happy with, you will stay there.

Rex: [almost in a whisper] You're making a deal with our son?

Toby: Like that's ever going to happen.

[sound of boxes rustling as Toby jumps down]

Toby: [cont.] Okay, it's a deal.

Terry: Good. Now let's go home. It's getting dark.

Rex: [sniffs] And I'm guessing there's a storm coming; I can smell it.

[footsteps as they walk away]

Toby: [to himself] I can smell it, too. Eh, who cares? I bet Balto can smell storms too—he probably smelled this one over a month ago! Yep, Balto's the best!

[music fades to next scene]

Terry: Rex?

Rex: What is it?

[a telephone rings, and a man in the background sounds like a police officer. Apparently this scene is in the police chief's house]

Terry: I'm worried about Toby.

Rex: Yeah, so what's new?

Terry: I mean, I'm really worried about him. Rex, when will that pup come to his senses? Do you think he ever will? I don't want for him to grow up being like me, living the streets and not knowing where his next meal will come from.

Rex: Something tells me that he actually has got some sense in him. He's right about one thing: having everything hand-fed to you is no way to live.

Terry: Don't you want for our son to live a good life?

Rex: Of course, Terry. I want that for our son just as much as the next dog. But in the meantime, a little challenge will be good for him. When the time comes, he'll find his place.

Terry: [crying] But what if he doesn't?

Rex: Then...his place will find him. We just have to be sure he gets by until then, and doesn't get into trouble.

Terry: Do you really [sniffle] believe that?

Rex: Absolutely, Sweetheart. Kids have a way of rising to the occasion—especially when they get the right help.

[doggy door creaks open]

Rex: [cont.] Now, you'd best get home before he wakes up and decides to get into mischief.

Terry: Knowing him, that's just what's happening right now.

[music fades to next scene]

Pete: [in the distance] Hey, twerp!

Toby: [happy] Oh, hi Pete. How are you?

Pete: [closer, footsteps announcing his arrival] So did you get a home yesterday?

Toby: [cheerfully] Nope.

Pete: [mocking] Aw, that's too bad. But I guess nobody wants a twerpy mutt like you.

Toby: [joyfully] I escaped. I decided I want to grow up to be just like Balto!

Pete: Humph! That old half-breed? The one who raced in the serum run, and supposedly saved the town?

Toby: [in an increasingly biting tone] Not "supposedly." He *did* save the town. Besides, what's wrong with being a sled dog? Your dad was.

Pete: [angrily] *Don't* bring up my dad. Why don't you go stick your head in a garbage can?

Toby: [annoyed] Because then I'd have to room with you. [snapping] You'll see!

Someday you'll see that it doesn't take a purebred to be somebody.

Pete: Ha! We'll see.

[footsteps as he walks away]

[cut to next scene]

Toby: [dramatically] And Toby runs as fast as he can, feeling the wind against his fur, the snow in his eyes, the cold ice underneath his feet—ich, that's pretty cold! Okay, then, never mind.

[cat meows in the distance]

Toby: Ah, and what is this? It is *Steele*, Balto's arch-enemy! And Toby creeps up to the corner, listening, waiting for a sign that Steele is unaware of his position. He is ready to pounce, and— Ha!

[shuffling of stuff, numerous things, then thnoking of heads]

Luna: Ow! What do you think I am, a goat?

Toby: Oh, I'm so sorry! I thought you were Steele.

Luna: Steele? Have you lost your *mind*? What would give you a crazy idea like that?

Toby: Uh... [embarrassed] My imagination runs away with me sometimes.

Luna: Somehow I guessed. [pause, then in a softer voice] What's your name?

Toby: Toby. And who are you?

Luna: I'm Luna.

Toby: Wanna play with me, Luna?

Luna: [hesitant] Promise not to use me to practice your mountain goat impression?

Toby: [as if he didn't hear her] You wanna play Balto?

Luna: Is that what you were playing when you whacked me on the head?

Toby: Will you *drop* that already? [frustrated] You don't have to be a bad guy—er, girl. You could play —

Luna: [quickly] Can I be Aleu? You know, the daughter Balto had who looked even more like a wolf than he did?

Toby: Yeah, I know her. But I was thinking you could play Jen—

Luna: [insisting] I want to be Aleu.

Toby: Okay, you run off and hide like you've run away, and I'll try to find you.

Luna: Count to thirty, okay?

Toby: Okay, thirty it is. My eyes are closed.

Luna: Okay, here I go.

[footsteps]

Toby: [loudly] One...two...three...four...five...six...

[music fades to next scene]

Luna: [far away, exaggarating] Balto, Balto! Oh, save me, Balto!

Toby: [in a soft voice] And Balto rushes to find Luna, in a canyon cornered by bears. He rushes to the canyon, and there she is!

Luna: [about the same voice] Balto! Save me!

Toby: I am here, Luna! Let me jump onto the canyon wall...

[shuffling of crates]

Toby: [cont.] And jump to your—whoa, *aah!*

[Luna screams. Boxes shuffle, huge wreck]

Toby: [coughs] And Balto [coughs] saves the day again...oh, never mind. [calls] Luna! Luna, where are

you? [pause] Oh, man. Don't tell me I crushed you. Luna? Luna!

[quieter] Please be okay.

[sniffs as Toby searches for a few seconds]

Toby: Luna?

[shuffling of crates]

Luna: [quietly] Ow...

Toby: [hopeful] Luna!

[crates shuffle even more]

Toby: [cont.] Hang on, I'll get you out of there!

[Toby's voice stresses to indicate he's pulling]

Luna: [groans in pain] Stop, please. It hurts. [whimpering]

Toby: I'm getting you out of here. [stressing for a few seconds] It's no use.

Luna: Toby?

Toby: Don't worry. I'll get you out. [pause] I'll go for help. Just hang in there.

[shuffling of feet as Toby runs out of the alley]

Toby: [calling] Help! Help, my friend's hurt! Hurry! [pause]

[running paws, some "What's wrong?"s]

Toby: [cont.] Oh, great! [shouting again] Help! Please, help me!

[running feet come closer]

Dog 1: What's wrong?

Toby: My friend's in trouble. She's right over here!

[running as they go back to the alley]

Toby: [cont.] She's underneath all those.

Dog 2: My word, what were you doing?

Dog 3: It doesn't matter, let's just get her out of there!

[shuffling of crates as dogs get them away, some barks or pants]

Dog 4: Found her!

Toby: Luna! [gasp] Oh! Is that—

Dog 2: Looks like a real heavy crate is on her back legs.

Dog 5: Ouch. That can't be very comfortable.

Dog 4: Come on, let's get her out of there!

[shuffling again]

Dog 6: How did this happen?

Toby: [stomach in a knot] Uh...

Dog 6: Come on, dogs! Faster, faster!

Dog 3: Almost got her out!

Dog 1: Hey, where did that other dog go?

Dog 4: What?

Dog 1: The one who led us here. Where did he go?

[music fades to next scene]

[very faint whimper from Luna]

Toby: What's going on up there?

[human voices are rather faint]

Doctor: Is this your dog?

Mr. Calvin: Yes, she's ours. But...what on earth happened to her?

Doctor: I don't know. Some dog came here and wouldn't stop barking, then led us to that empty lot by the harbor. That's where she was, half-buried under a pile of cargo.

Mr. Calvin: How is she?

Doctor: Both back legs broken, I'm afraid. And there's some damage to her spine. There's probably some internal injuries, but with the shape she's in it would be too risky to investigate that.

Toby: [gasps] And it's all my fault.

Connie: Is she going to be okay?

Doctor: Yes, she should be fine. But she'll have to stay here a few weeks until she recovers.

Mr. Calvin: Thank you, doctor.

[hollow footsteps as the family leaves]

Toby: [sadly] It's my fault. She's hurt and it's *all my fault*.

[sound of window creaking open]

Taya: [hopping into the room] I thought they'd never leave.

Luna: [weakly] Hi, Mom.

Taya: How do you feel?

Luna: Like...an accident.

Taya: What in the world happened?

Luna: I...was playing and...got into an accident.

Taya: Are you all right?

Luna: I don't feel so good.

Toby: [to himself, as they're talking] If they find out I'm responsible, they'll be so mad at me. And why shouldn't they, after what I've done? I can't let word get around that I did this. [sighs] Well, at least I'll apologize to her.

[hollow footsteps]

Taya: Oh, I'd better go.

Luna: Okay, Mom.

[sound of the window opening as Taya leaves]

Toby: I'll wait until tonight—but I *will* apologize.

[music fades to next scene]

Toby: [whispers] Luna? [pause] She must be asleep...Please wake up. Luna?

Luna: [murmurs] Ugh...Toby? What are you doing here?

Toby: I snuck in. I wanted to apologize to you, and I couldn't risk being seen. I...I don't think I could face your family after what I did.

Luna: [yawns] Aw, come on, Toby. It wasn't so bad. Heck, it doesn't even hurt that much.

Toby: Probably because you're on pain-killers. And have you *seen* those bowling pins bandaged to your legs? Or that brace on your back? What kind of dimwit do you think am?

Luna: [chuckles] How many kinds are there?

Toby: Luna, this is serious! [quickly lowers his voice again] I could have killed you!

Luna: Yeah. But you didn't.

[pause]

Toby: Well, I'm sorry anyway. Still friends?

Luna: I'm not sure. Being your friend has so far been pretty dangerous.

Toby: [quite loudly] Luna!

Luna: Ssh! [in a whisper] I'm joking, I'm joking. We're still friends, on one condition.

Toby: Anything.

Luna: [almost desperate] Don't leave me here. They haven't had a lot of business today, so I'm the only one in the room. It's like solitary confinement. Promise you'll come back every day.

Toby: With all the visitors around? Not a chance.

Luna: Then drop by when nobody's around. Just like right now.

Toby: [smiling] Okay, it's a deal.

Luna: [yawns] Well, the doctor says I need to get plenty of sleep. Good night, Toby.

Toby: Good night, Luna.

[music fades to next scene]

Toby: [panting as he walks] Ah, here I am.

Luna: [above the grate] He's a big fan. Every time we play it's always Balto, Balto, Balto. [giggles] I still haven't clued him in to my little secret.

Balto: What, you're embarrassed?

Luna: No, I just don't want to tell him yet.

Jenna: I know what you mean. It's more fun to keep secrets, isn't it?

Balto: [chuckles] I hope you haven't been keeping any from me.

[rustling]

Luna: Oh, you'd better go. I think somebody's coming!

[hollow footsteps, window opens, window closes]

Toby: Wonder what that was all about? Eh, oh well.

[music fades to next scene]

Luna: Okay, my turn, my turn!

Toby: Hey, easy Luna. We agreed, remember?

Luna: Oh, come on, Toby. We're playing a trivia game. That's all you've been wanting to do since I got my casts off.

Toby: Which was only three days ago. You're still healing.

Luna: [irritated] Whatever. You got a question?

Toby: Okay. Let's see...oh, this is a good one! What breed of dog was Steele?

Luna: That's easy. Steele was a husky.

Toby: Ha! No, he was a malamute!

Luna: Really? I thought for sure he was husky.

Toby: Nope, he was a malamute.

Luna: You sure? Where did you find that out?

Toby: From a very reliable source.

[footsteps]

Luna: I could have *sworn* he was a husky.

Toby: If you can prove it to me, I'll apologize.

Luna: I'll believe it when I see it.

Steele: Excuse me?

[Toby and Luna squeal, startled]

Steele: Do either of you kids know where I can find Balto?

Toby: Uh...I don't know. Never met him.

Steele: What about you?

Luna: Me?

Steele: Yes. I understand he visited you while you were in the hospital.

Toby: Say *what*? Luna?

Luna: Uh...where did you hear a story like that?

Steele: Things get around. After all [chuckles] it's not every day a big hero like him visits a little girl at the vet.

Luna: I don't think it's really your business.

Steele: [irritated] I can see this is getting us nowhere.

[shuffling]

Luna: Hey, put me down!

Toby: [growling] Let her go, or I'll beat the tar out of you!

[growling]

Steele: Stay out of my business, brat. [grunts, and Toby's growling stops] I've got things to take care of.

[shuffling of feet]

Toby: Oh, no you don't! [pants as he runs, but it quickly dwindles down] Man, that guy's fast.

Pete: [walking up] Hi, runt.

Toby: Pete! Look, I know I'm never going to hear the end of this, but I need your help!

Pete: [pause] Did you get knocked on the head or something?

Toby: Some creep just grabbed Luna and took off! I tried to stop him, but I was too slow. You've gotta help me! Please!

Pete: Eh...no.

Toby: *Please!*

Pete: Sorry, runt, but I don't know who it was or what he smelled like, so you're on your own. [walking away] Besides, I don't have time to waste on dumb pups. Sayonara.

Toby: [shouting] What good is being a purebred if you're too much of a snob to help someone?

Pete: [faintly] Get lost. [pause] Wait a minute...

Toby: [hopeful] What?

Pete: I'm *not* sorry.

Toby: [to himself] Stupid pig. Thinks he's so much better than me because he's older and I'm part...

[excited] Bloodhound! I'm part-Bloodhound! [sniffing] Don't worry, Luna, I'll find you soon!

[music introduces next scene]

Luna: Put me down, you big jerk! Let me go or I'll bit you!

Steele: I think you have better things to dig your teeth into, princess. Now shut up or I'll tear you apart and leave you for the birds.

Luna: Where are you taking me?

Steele: None of your business.

Luna: What's going to happen to me?

Steele: None of *my* business. Now—

[sounds of Luna being dropped in a garbage can. She oomph's]

Steele: [cont.] You can go ahead and bark. In fact [growling] I suggest you bark as loud as you can. Yell for help, and keep doing it. And remember, I'll be close by. [growls again]

[footsteps as he walks away]

Luna: [gulps] Here goes nothing... [screaming at the top of her lungs] Help! Let me out of here! Let me out! Help! Anyone? Get me out of here! Help! Help me! Please! Anyone?

[footsteps]

Luna: Is someone there?

Balto: Luna? What are you doing in there?

Luna: Oh, it's you. Some creep grabbed me and threw me in here.

Balto: Hang on, I'll get you out. [some grunting] There. Sorry about the rough landing. Are you okay?

Steele: Oh, she's fine.

[Balto and Luna gasp]

Steele: But you won't be, wolfdog.

Balto: Steele. [growls] I might have guessed.

Luna: Steele? You mean...that's *really* Steele?

Steele: In the flesh, no thanks to this half-breed. [growling] And I'm back to take care of some... unfinished business.

Balto: [whispering] Luna, get out of here.

Luna: But—

Balto: [louder] Now, *get out!*

[dramatic music]

Toby: Ah, *finally*. Looks like I've found the scent. Okay, Toby. [sniff] If you care about Luna, you will latch onto this long enough to lead you to—

[sound of dogs fighting]

Toby: [amazed] Huh?

Steele: You *ruined* me! I was the lead dog until you came along and got in my way!

Balto: You were willing to let innocent children die just to satisfy your pride. I didn't ruin you, Steele. You did.

Toby: *Steele!* Well, I guess he *was* a husky, then. But that must mean...

Balto: I don't know how you survived that last fight, but I'm going to let you hurt anybody else, anymore.

Steele: Ah, very heroic. But then, last words usually are. [growls and lunges]

Toby: [surprised, and horrified] Oh, no! Balto...!

[dogs fighting]

[sound of Steele throwing Balto against the wall]

[brief silence]

Steele: Now to finish it.

Toby: No!

[cruching sound. Steele howls as Toby grasps his tail. He throws Toby against the wall as well]

Steele: Well, well, well, what's wrong with this picture? Back for more, are you? I'll teach you to get in my way, you little flea-bitten—

[sound of Balto lunging. He lets out a battle cry. Dogs fighting again]

Dog in the street: There he is!

Steele: What?

[dogs barking]

Steele: Shoot. I'll be back for you, half-breed.

[he runs away, dogs chasing after him]

Luna: Toby, are you all right?

Toby: Luna! I'm fine, are *you* okay? Did he hurt you? Where did those dogs come from?

Luna: [chuckles] I'm fine. He wasn't trying to hurt me; he just wanted to use me as bait to get Balto. I decided since everybody's heard of him, somebody should know he was back in town.

Taya: [approaching] I never thought it would come to this. Never.

Luna: Hi, Mom. This is Toby, the friend I've been telling you about.

Taya: Oh, yes. The one who put you in the vet's office.

Toby: [all of a sudden scared] Uh, yes ma'am. I didn't mean to do it, honest.

Taya: It's all right. I know it was an accident. My daughter has told me a lot about you, and I'm glad I finally have the chance to meet you face-to-face.

Balto: Well, that's taken care of. Everyone okay?

[a bunch of yes's]

Balto: Well that's the first good news since Steele showed up. What happened back there anyway? I mean, I remember him standing over me, but then he was mad at a certain *someone* for some reason.

Luna: Toby?

Toby: [embarrassed] Well, uh, sir, I saw you fighting, and I...bit him on the tail.

[laughter]

Luna: You didn't really, did you?

Toby: Uh...yes, I did.

Taya: I thought I finished him off last time. Maybe I shouldn't have come back to Nome.

Luna: What do you mean, Mom?

Taya: Come with me, Luna. [sighs] There's something I need to tell you.

[footsteps]

Toby: Mr. Balto?

Balto: You can just call me Balto. I never liked that mister stuff.

Toby: Well, I just wanted to say, *you were amazing!* I've always wanted to meet you! The way you took on Steele like that was totally awesome!

Balto: [solemnly] It wasn't the first time, and I'm afraid it won't be the last. Steele's hated me since before the diphtheria epidemic.

Toby: Since before? But I thought he hated you because you showed Nome what a stinker he was.

Balto: That just added to it. He's hated me ever since I first set foot into this town.

Toby: Why?

Balto: Because I'm part-wolf.

Toby: But I thought that's pretty neat.

Balto: [chuckles] Well, most dogs around here hated me for being a half-breed.

Toby: I know what that's like. My brother—well, my half-brother, really—hates me for that. His dad was a husky, like my mom, but he died in a sledding accident.

Balto: Oh, that's terrible.

Toby: And he's been pretty bitter about it ever since. Then my mom met my dad, who's a

bloodhound. So now Pete thinks he's so much better than me just because I'm a mix. That's probably why I've always looked up to you: you're part-wolf, and I thought since I'm not a purebred, everyone would respect me.

Balto: I'm afraid you're wrong about that. Being part-wolf doesn't make you popular at all. I can't tell you how many times I've had to break up fights that started because someone was picking on my kids for being part-wolf, and they're less wolf than I am. [pause] A friend of mine once told me that there are journeys a dog can't make alone, but a wolf can. Maybe it's the same for other mixed-breed canines.

Toby: Hmm...You know what, you're right.

Balto: [laugh] And you're not just saying that?

Toby: No, you're really right. When Steele grabbed Luna, I couldn't keep up with him. But I was able to sniff him out and track him down that way.

Balto: And you showed up just in time, too. [pause] I should get going, but if you ever need help with Pete, or even anything else, I'll see what I can do.

Toby: [excited] Really? You'd do that for *me*?

Balto: I'd be happy to!

Toby: Wow! Thanks! I've got to find Luna. See ya! [runs away] I can't *wait* to tell her about this!

[music fades to next scene]

Toby: [calling] Luna? Luna! Where are you?

[voices in the distance]

Toby: Luna?

Taya: ...should have told you earlier, I know, but—

Luna: I still don't believe it! Why didn't you tell me?

Taya: I didn't want to tell you because...well, because I wanted to forget it myself. [sigh] I shouldn't have come to Nome. I should have known Steele would come back and there would be trouble.

Luna: So why *did* you come back?

Taya: Because of your father.

Luna: [crying] Oh, I see. And I guess he's also the reason you didn't tell me that the dog who almost destroyed Nome is my own grandfather?

Toby: [gasping whisper] What?

Taya: I know how you feel. After all, he's my father, too.

Toby: I can't stand this. I've gotta leave. [walks away] This can't be real, this can't be real, this can't be real, this can't be real, *this can't be real...*

Taya: I know it's not a pleasant thought. But you *do* have a proud heritage.

Luna: Yeah, I know. I've got one grandpa who saved the town because my other grandpa just about destroyed it!

[cut to next scene]

Luna: [confused] Toby, what's wrong with you?

Toby: [like waking from a dream] What? What do you mean?

Luna: [confused] You were just baring your teeth at me.

Toby: Oh, sorry Luna. I guess I'm ju—

Luna: What's eating you?

Toby: Nothing.

Luna: Toby, you tell me this instant what the problem is!

[pause]

Toby: [slowly] You remember after Steele kidnapped you, your mom took you away to talk with you?

Luna: [disgusted] Don't remind me.

Toby: Well, see, I had a really great talk with Balto and he said he'd help me with Pete and all. I went to tell you and...heard what you and your mom were talking about.

Luna: [worried] You did?

Toby: I really didn't mean to, honest. It just...

Luna: Happened, yeah. [sighs]

Toby: [unable to stop himself] It just freaks me out, talking to someone whose grandpa has been Nome's most wanted since 1925.

Luna: [angry] Yeah, well try actually *being* that someone! Not to mention talking to someone who's eavesdropped when you and your mom have been discussing family issues!

Toby: [hurt] Luna, I told you it was an accident

Luna: Yeah, *sure* it was! [angry sighs, then a deep breath and crying] I'm so sorry, Toby. I shouldn't be mad at you. It's just...well, I don't really know who I am anymore.

[weeps]

Toby: [softly] Maybe I should go.

Luna: I'll see you later?

Toby: Of course.

[music fades to next scene]

Rex: Son?

Toby: [solemnly] Hi, Dad.

Rex: I've noticed you stopped playing with your friend Luna.

Toby: So?

Rex: So I decided to talk with her parents to see what was wrong, and apparently it's a problem on both ends.

Toby: Yeah, I know.

Rex: You know, Luna's had a lot to deal with ever since she found out that Steele is her grandfather. And you didn't exactly make it easier for her when you stopped playing. Did you know she's almost completely stopped eating?

Toby: [sort of surprised] Really?

Rex: [sighs] Son, it's no more right for you to ignore her just because of her grandfather than it is for Pete to ignore you for being half bloodhound.

[footsteps approaching slowly]

Toby: Yeah I know, but it really creeps me out.

Rex: Well, there's more to the story than you realize. That's why I brought someone here to talk with you.

Copper: Hello, Toby.

Toby: Oh, hi. Who are you?

Copper: I'm Copper, Luna's dad. It's nice to meet you, Toby.

Toby: [nervous] Oh. Uh...hello.

Copper: I guess you've already heard about Steele being Luna's grandfather. And I'm sure you realize it's not her fault.

Toby: Did you know who her mom was before this whole thing?

Rex: Son! Where are your manners?

Copper: No, I understand. And yes, Toby, I knew. I knew about her before she ever came to Nome. The plain fact is I knew—or had guessed at least—before she found out *my* secret.

Toby: Your secret? [murmuring] Seems everybody has them nowadays.

Copper: Well, it's not a secret exactly. It's just that dogs don't make such a big deal about it as they used to. Take a look at my paw.

Toby: It's larger than normal... You're part-wolf?

Copper: Yep. You already know about Taya's father. Well, meet mine.

Balto: Right behind you.

Toby: Wha...Balto? Wait a minute.

Copper: I believe you've already met.

Toby: You mean that you're Luna's *other* grandpa?

Balto: Yeah, I know it's kind of strange. It made me feel like Lord Montague until I got used to it.

Toby: Who?

Balto: It's a story the humans tell. Never mind. On *this* subject, I never imagined my grandkids would

have any connection with Steele, but people are always judging me because of my parents, so I guess I've got no place judging anyone else. And you know, Taya's a good dog. You'd never know she was Steele's daughter.

Toby: So let me get this straight. *You're* Copper's dad, and *Steele* is Luna's mom's dad?

Copper: That's right.

Toby: So...what does that make Luna?

Copper: It makes her very confused. Toby, I know it may not seem like it, but you're in an important position right now. You and your father are the only ones outside of our family who know our secret. We didn't want it to get out at all, for fear that Taya would be chased out of town. But now we have to trust you, because you're the only friend Luna has who knows.

Toby: So what am I supposed to do?

Copper: Well, first it would mean a lot to me and my dad if you wouldn't let this mess up your friendship with Luna. And please don't let it get around. Try not to even think about it when you and Luna are playing. Just think of her like you used to. Believe me, it's no easier for her than it is for you, and she needs a good friend to help her through this.

Toby: Well...[confident] Okay. In fact, I think I'll go and see her right now.

[footsteps as he walks away. Bonk, and he whimpers]

Rex: Watch out for the gate, it's shut.

Toby: [nasally, holding his nose] Thanks Dad, I noticed.

[footsteps]

Copper: Well, I'm glad *that's* over with.

[music fades to next scene]

Toby: Luna?

Luna: Oh, hi Toby. I was hoping you'd come by.

[long silence]

Toby: Your dad came and talked with me about this whole...you know.

Luna: So it doesn't bother you having a friend who's related to Steele?

Toby: Well, it is kind of strange. [quickly] But it's your business anyway, not mine. Besides, you're related to Balto too, which is pretty cool.

Luna: Oh, I'm embarrassed now. I didn't want you to find out that part, either.

Toby: Uh... [nervous] You mean you knew that part all this time and you didn't tell me? Why?

Luna: Like you said, it's my business. Besides, you're a Balto nut, and I didn't want to be friends with you just because of my grandpa. I want a friend who is my friend for me. We have a saying in our family that your parents define what you are, not who you are.

Toby: Well, I guess that makes sense, but still...

Luna: But still, what?

Toby: [smiling] Ah, forget it. Do you want to play? How about I'll be Balto and you be...Luna?

Luna: Hmm?

Toby: What is it?

Luna: How about you be you, and I'll be me?

Toby: Well, okay. And I won't tell anyone your secret. Just you, me, your folks, and my dad.

Luna: Thank you. And Toby?

Toby: Yes?

Luna: Thank you for being my best friend.

Toby: [as close to an audible smile as possible] And thanks for being my best friend.

[as they have talked, they have gotten fainter]

Luna: My ancestry will be our own secret, right?

Toby: Just between you and me.

Steele: [close, under his breath, chuckling] If only they knew. [evil laugh]

[closing music]