

# End of a Legend

By Greykitty

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*Balto at the end.*

## 1. The End

Balto craned his neck up towards the sky. Snow was falling quickly from the pale grey clouds. He blinked as the snowflakes hit his eyes and melted. Snow and tears mingled with blood, as he lay half buried in snow.

"It's only noon...why are things so dark?" he pondered to himself. Slowly, wearily he started to move his front legs. He pushed his chest out from the snow that encased it and painfully sat up. Cuts from his legs and chest oozed and he winced as the icy cold wind gusted against him. He then started to move his hind legs but stopped after a surge of pain shot up his back.

He tried again to move but pain was unbearable and he collapsed in the snow sniffing back tears. He laid still, snow collecting on his guard hairs, and began thinking of home. Oh, how he missed his beloved Jenna, and even Rosy, old Boris and those two crazy polar bears. He smiled slightly from reminiscing.

He turned his eyes toward the sky once again; it was getting darker and colder. He laid his head down on the snow again and closed his eyes. His laborious breathing began to slow and he started to drift into sleep.

He awoke to a familiar smell. As he opened his eyes a bright light greeted them and he squinted. Not three feet in front of his nose was a large white paw, lifting his head he slowly followed the leg up to the chest then to the face with his eyes. He let a soft whisper escape his muzzle, "Mother..." then exhausted he lay his head back down.

The wolf gently spoke, "Get up my son."

Balto turned his head away and replied, "I can't. I can't move."

Her reply was sharp but not unkind, "Get up."

Balto inhaled and bit his lip as he attempted to get up. To his surprise the pain was gone, and in fact the weight of the snow no longer weighted down his body. He stood up and looked at the wolf, tears streaming down his face. "I'm so very glad to see you again, mother."

The wolf slowly walked forward and touched her nose to Balto's and said, "and I you."

She smiled at him then said softly, "Come my son, it's time for you to come home." She turned towards the light and paced off.

Balto stood still pondering what her last statement meant, he trotted to catch up, and then spoke, "What, what do you mean? My home is that way." He pointed with his nose to the south.

Aniu looked over her shoulder and lifting a paw motioned towards something. Balto turned to look. His jaw dropped. "Can it be?" he thought to himself. He slowly padded over to the mound. He saw blood stained snow, tufts of fur, and finally a body. It's face was covered by a paw...his paw. It was him, Balto, covered in blood and snow. He was dead. He stepped back then turned towards Aniu, "What about Jenna? I didn't even get to say goodbye..."

Aniu looked at him sadly and said, "You still can."

"I would very much like to."

She looked at him then turned her head towards the sky and let out a long howl. Clouds surrounded Balto and everything vanished before him, and a few seconds later he was on the outskirts of Nome. The peaceful little town was lighting lamps. Then he saw Jenna. She was slowly making her way up to the hill where he was. She carried a lamp. He slowly walked over to her, she set down the lantern behind some old bottles and as it shone through them it created a borealis effect on the neighboring hill.

She smiled as she looked at it and remembered the night that Balto returned with the medicine. Since then she'd kept up the tradition and every time his team was to come in late she'd bring the lamp up to this hill.

"She can't see me..." Balto said softly.

"She will now my son." Aniu howled again.

Jenna, startled by the sudden howl turned around and saw Balto.

"Balto!" she exclaimed and ran towards him. They caressed and both had tears welling up in their eyes.

"I was worried I'd never see you again...I heard about the accident. That poor musher and the other dogs... Oh but you're back. You're here to stay now."

She cried on his shoulder. Balto looked out over the snow covered hills and then back at Jenna, his eyes were sad as he backed away from her and said, "Not to stay Jenna."

"What?"

"I can't stay."

"Why not? I don't understand..."

Balto motioned towards Aniu who stood behind Jenna. She looked over to see the great white wolf.

Jenna buried her face in Baltos fur and cried, "No! I can't lose you. I need you...I want to go with you."

Balto pulled away enough so that he could see her face and said gently, "They need you though, Rosy and Boris and Kodi too." He smiled sadly and said, "We'll see each other again. I promise."

He touched his nose to hers and reiterated, "I promise you Jenna. We will see each other again."

Then he started to walk towards Aniu and said, "Tell Kodi I love him and Boris too."

She nodded slowly as tears ran down her face and said, "I love you Balto!"

"I love you too Jenna."

Balto stood next to his mother and said softly, "I'm going to miss you Jenna."

Aniu raised her head and howled, and disappeared into the darkness. Balto looked at Jenna one last time then he too let out a long mournful howl. The wind picked up, the lantern went out and a legend slowly faded into the night.