

Chapter 103 Tracking The Pups

3rd Person

In the end it was a good thing that Jane collapsed into Ethan’s arms, because if he hadn’t been occupied with comforting her, he probably would have killed the investigator. “Where did they go? Where would she take them?” He demanded, his harsh voice as far a cry from his tender treatment of Jane as possible. He rubbed her back and kissed her hair, all the while snarling threats and demands at the pale faced man behind them.

“I don’t know!” The former detective exclaimed in a panic. “I swear they were here when I left. Eve must have known I was going to turn her in, she must have moved them.”

“Call it in.” Ethan ordered the police Commander, who hovered just behind his ex employee as if he expected him to make a run for it. “I want every tracker on the force out here, now.” Glaring at the investigator, he pressed. “You have no idea where she would go? Other hideouts? Escape plans? Even the smallest hint could help.”

“If I knew I would tell you.” The detective insisted. “I don’t know anything.”

Smothering his frustration, the Alpha looked down at Jane as she wept inconsolably into his collar. “Janey, look at me.” He instructed, unsurprised when she did no such thing. “I need to find their trail.” He explained regretfully, “I have to leave you for a little while.”

“No!” Jane argued, his words jolting her out of her despair. “I’ll go with you, we’ll have a better chance of finding them if we’re together.”

He nodded, not wanting to let her out of his sight anyway, and understanding her need to help. “Do you know which way Eve brought them in?” Ethan questioned the investigator.

“Probably the same way we did.” He shared, shrugging. “She was coming from the same place after all.”

Ethan nodded, scenting the air around them. The pups’ scent was trailing off down the street in the opposite direction, and his pulse spiked as the first stage of the chase commenced. In some ways it was no different from tracking a deer in the woods or some faceless foe – at the end of the day a hunt was a hunt. However this time was more important than any hunt he’d ever taken part in before. His entire world was on the line if he failed, and the adrenaline pumping through his veins was stronger than any he’d ever felt.

“This way.” He growled, taking Jane by the hand and leading her away from the hideout. “Keep him here.” He called over his shoulder to the commander, “But take him inside, just in case Eve comes back.”

The commander did as he was told, absconding with the detective before they’d even rounded the corner. He had no idea how far Eve might have taken them, but he knew every second counted. “Let’s shift.” Ethan decided, “Our wolves will be better at this than we are.”

Jane silently agreed, not bothering to strip off her clothes and simply shredding them as her wolf burst out. Ethan did the same, and together they broke into a trot, their noses pressed to the cold ground. After a few blocks they came to a series of toppled garbage bins, with refuse spilling over the street and Eve’s scent heavily mixed into the chaos of smells.

Ethan and Jane exchanged confused glances, and the Alpha began to wonder if the pups hadn’t escaped and forced Eve to chase them. Their distinct scents were not part of the acrid blend of waste, decay and Eve. Further, there was a smear of blood on the pavement Ethan was certain belonged to the horrible she wolf. Blinking at his mate, he didn’t know whether to be more agitated or hopeful by the idea the pups might have gotten away. He didn’t want them with Eve, but he didn’t want them roaming this area alone either.

Jane whined and leaned her weight into the Alpha, clearly thinking the same thing. What had happened here?

Ryder, Riley, Paisley and Parker squinted into the darkness, deep frowns consuming their young faces. They’d been so focused on getting away from Eve that they’d fled without any thought or plan. Even if they had been able to plan a route, they didn’t know where they started out, let alone where they were now.

“What do we do?” Paisley asked anxiously, her slight limbs beginning to tremble.

“We should ask someone for help.” Ryder suggested, sounding far more confident than he felt. Still, he remembered his Mommy’s rules for getting lost, which were easier said than done in their current predicament: stay put, stay together, and tell a grown up who looks trustworthy.

“There’s no one out here and ‘aside, I don’t trust strangers.” Riley argued, she could already tell they wouldn’t be able to find anyone who fit Jane’s criteria for trustworthiness. No parents were taking their pups out this late at night, and no businesses were open either. ”We should stay here and wait for Mommy and Daddy. They’ll find us.”

“No, we have to keep moving.” Parker insisted. “If we stay here Eve might find us, she’s prolly tracking our scents right now.”

“Then how do we get back?” Riley responded. “I don’t have any idea where we are. Paisley, do you recognize anything?”

“No, I’ve never been to this part of the city.” She answered sadly, “but I don’ wanna stay in this alley, it’s scary.”

Even as she spoke, rustling footsteps sounded from somewhere deeper in the narrow passage. “Wait, I think I hear something!” Ryder whispered nervously.

The eerie noises grew louder then, and the frightened pups huddled close together. “It’s behind us.” Parker murmured, taking his sister’s hands, “We have to get outta here.”

Before they could take a step, something large and furry burst out of the darkness and darted past them, making all four pups yelp in surprise. It was only a raccoon, a huge raccoon made fat by feasting nightly in restaurant dumpsters, but a raccoon nonetheless. The pups sighed with relief, huffing a few relieved laughs as they turned back towards the street.

However as soon as they shifted out of the alley and into the dimly lit thoroughfare, they were met by the towering figures of three grisly looking shifters. They were tall and their muscular arms inked heavily with swirling black tattoos, their faces and hands bore scars from fighting, and all three wore the haggard expressions of men who had led very rough lives indeed.

The frightening figures blocked the pups’ path completely, and the man in the middle offered them a smile – at least, that’s what they thought it was. In practice it looked far more like a grimace. “Hello there, what are you little ones doing out so late?” He asked.

“And in such a bad part of town?” One of his companions added, sounding more excited than concerned.

“We’re just waiting for our Daddy.” Riley lied swiftly, the idea spilling from her tongue in a flash of inspiration. “He’s just around the corner.”

“He left you here?” The third man asked curiously, “Well maybe we should go find him. This is a very dangerous neighborhood.”

“No.” Parker objected, “He told us not to move and that he’d be back in a second. He just forgot his cell phone in the car.”

The men exchanged skeptical glances. “Well in that case, we’ll wait for him.” The first man offered, “We wouldn’t want you to be all alone here. There are all sorts of ne er do wells about who would love to snatch you up.”

Riley, Ryder, Parker and Paisley instinctively closed ranks, squeezing close to each other and taking comfort from their siblings’ closeness. They might have only recently been reunited, but their innate bond worked in their favor, making their intuition one in the same. They could all sense that these men had no interest in helping them, and they understood that they needed to find some way to put distance between themselves and the strange shifters.

“That’s okay.” Ryder replied, “he’ll be back any minute now.”

“Will he?” The biggest wolf clarified. “Are you sure you aren’t out here on your own? Don’t lie to us now, we can’t help you if you lie to us.”

“You don’ wanna help us.” Riley accused hotly, linking her arm with Paisley’s. Her little sister seemed to be tongue tied, too afraid to voice her own protests. “You should leave before Daddy comes. He’s an alpha and he won’t like it if you’re here.”

She didn’t know why she didn’t mention that Ethan wasn’t just any alpha, but the Alpha. Perhaps she thought they wouldn’t believe her, or that it would make them think they were more valuable. Either way, her threat fell short. The men laughed. “Well you’re a ballsy little thing, I’ll give you that.” The man in the middle observed, bending down to look Riley in the eye. “But you see, I don’t think you’re being honest, Your Daddy isn’t here, you’re all alone.”

“Is your funeral.” Parker told him, crossing his arms over his chest.

The men laughed again, but when their humor faded, any sense of light heartedness slipped from their faces completely. When the tallest man spoke, his voice was cold and without mercy, “Take them.”