

Chapter 11 Ethan finds the wrong pup

Ethan

Following the direction of Paisley's pointing finger, I scan the crowded courtyard for my daughter's look alike. Despite my best efforts, I don't see anyone fitting her description. I believe Paisley saw a child who resembled her, but it seems like she's gone now. "I'm sorry sweetheart, I don't see her."

Paisley drags her expectant gaze from my face, looking back across the mall. Her little face scrunches up in disappointment when she too fails to find the child in question. "Daddy, I swear. She looked exactly like me! Maybe she's my sister!"

Chuckling warmly, I tug my pup towards the theater entrance. "I know you want a sister, my love, but your mommy only gave birth to you."

"No, daddy, that was my sister." She insists stubbornly. "I decided!"

This is not the first time my daughter has invented an imaginary sibling or invisible friend to play with, after all, don't all children at this age? I know it's no use arguing, and I don't want to stifle her creativity. Instead I shake my head in amusement and agree, "All right little

one. Sister or not, it's time for the movie."

From her expression, Paisley suspects I'm merely humoring her, but she doesn't argue. She's too excited to see this film. For the next two hours, my sweet pup delights at the antics of the characters on the sprawling silver screen, and I sit back and enjoy the sound of her laughter. With her medical troubles I have to relish every moment of joy we can find, especially the simple joys like this one.

Afterwards we take the elevator up to the top floor of the shopping center, entering our favorite restaurant, which offers a 360 degree view of my beautiful city. Stuffing our faces full of rich Italian food, we gaze out the floor to ceiling windows as night falls over Nightfang Valley. Just as thousands of electric lights spark to life below us, illuminating the darkened city, Paisley begins to dance in her seat. "Daddy I have to go potty."

"Alright angel." I stand and guide her to the restroom. I always hate navigating public facilities like this. If Jane was here she could take our pup inside the ladies' room and help her through the process. Unfortunately, I can do no such thing. I know it's not a big deal, but I don't like taking my eyes off Paisley in public places, especially not when she's so prone to exploring.

A number of attractive young women in line offer to help Paisley, but my little girl has a prideful streak. "Daddy I'm not a baby 'nymore, I can use the potty myself."

"Okay munchkin, I'll wait right here." I vow, raising my palms in defeat.

While Paisley disappears inside, I try to avoid the interested gazes of the she-wolves still waiting in line, but I can feel their eyes on me nonetheless. This is the downside of being Alpha; I can't go anywhere without being recognized, and the tabloids keep my private life plastered across the front page. These women not only know who I am, but my average net worth, my complete romantic history and every sordid detail in between.

I'm nothing short of relieved when Paisley finally emerges, though she starts to walk off in the opposite direction. "Paisley, Daddy's over here." I call to her.

She doesn't respond. Stepping forward, I catch her easily, scooping her up and belatedly wondering if she somehow managed to change clothes in the restroom. I'm almost certain she wasn't wearing a pink dress earlier.

To my surprise Paisley begins to writhe and fight my hold. "Stranger danger!" She calls, "Let me go!"

"Paisley, what's gotten into you?" I ask in exasperation, tightening my grip on the squirming bundle so that she does not topple out of my arms. I don't know what game she's playing, but I don't care for it: she's struggling so fiercely I'm genuinely worried I'll drop her.

"I'm not Paisley!" She narrows her green eyes to slits, "I'm Riley and I don't like you. Let me go!" She repeats, pummeling my muscular chest with her little fists.

"Daddy, what are you doing?" A small voice sounds in the vicinity of my hip, and I look down to find Paisley staring up at me in confusion.

"I..." My gaze ping pongs between the identical children, the only dissimilarity between them being their clothes, "What? How is this possible?" Scenting the pup in my arms, I realize she truly isn't Paisley. She smells similar, but Paisley's fragrance is slightly sweeter and more delicate. More importantly, this pup smells like Paisley did when Linda brought her home the other day; like the Blonde woman I've been tracking.

The girl who called herself Riley is staring down at Paisley in shock, and my daughter begins bouncing up and down in excitement, "Daddy, you found her! You found my sister!"

Before any one of us can say another word, a beautiful she-wolf in oversized sunglasses sweeps through the crowd and plucks Riley out of my hands, stunning me so completely I freeze in place. She's already moving away when Paisley calls after her, "Mommy?" She swings her attention to me, "Daddy, that's her! That's Mommy!"

Her words jolt me into action, and I push through the gathered shifters to follow the retreating mother and pup. The blonde slipped away so quickly that I waste valuable time trying to find her, relying on my vision rather than my other senses. By the time I knock enough sense into my head to track her scent, it's too late. I catch one last

glimpse of the woman as she stands calmly in the elevator waiting for the doors to close. I've barely stepped forward when the silver panels slide shut, obscuring her from view.

What the hell just happened?

Third person pov

Jane could barely breathe and couldn't believe what had just happened.

Seeing Ethan in the flesh was a shock for which she was not prepared.

He looks exactly like he did the last time she saw him: powerful, dangerous, and so handsome she could swoon.

Over the years she'd convinced herself that Ethan no longer held any power over her. She was sure she'd become immune to him. She was so much stronger now, surely he didn't still have any influence over her, did he? She had been working hard to make sure that she would never be at risk of falling victim to the Alpha again.

But if this moment was any indication, she was in as much danger as she ever was.

She had to leave right away with the pups.

"Mommy, are you okay?" Riley asked, "Why do we have to go? Who's that? Where are Ryder, Parker and Aunt Linda?"

"They'll be waiting for us at home." Jane kept her smile

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and quickly explained, "I thought you and I could spend some girl time together - just us!"

Riley frowned, "But Mommy, who was that?"