

The Luna and her Quadruplet Pups by Jane Above Story

Chapter 118

3rd Person

The pups screamed in terror as the giant snake pursued them through the jungle, moving far faster than they thought should be possible. Their shifter bodies were fast, but they were still only children and struggling to get through the unfamiliar terrain. The anaconda on the other hand, was a native and had no problem navigating the complex terrain and thick vegetation of the forest floor. It surged through exotic botanicals, leaf litter and fallen trees, while the pups stumbled and scrambled to escape.

Riley, Parker and Ryder caught up to Paisley after a few moments, and grabbed her hands, tugging her forward to prevent her from falling behind. The snake was only a few feet behind them when a strange rumbling noise filled the air, punctuated by violent cracks and the soaked earth shaking all around them.

what is that?" Riley shouted.

"Another storm?" Ryder guessed.

"No, this sounds different!" Parker yelled over the rising cacophony.

"I think-" Paisley gasped, struggling to fill her lungs with air as she pushed her heart farther than it had ever been pushed before, "I think is a earthquake!"

As the words left her mouth, the ground beneath their feet gave out, sweeping all four pups away down the side of a steep ridge, and leaving the snake far behind. The children cried out as they were carried away, not realizing that this was not an earthquake, but a landslide brought on by all the heavy rain. They also had no way of knowing how lucky they were to be at the top of the muddy cascade, far lighter than all the rocks and muck flowing downhill and clearing the path in front of them.

By the time they finally slowed, rolling to a stop on a mound of destruction, they were covered in bumps and bruises, but ultimately unharmed. They shakily looked up the hill they'd just been forced to descend, their mouths dropping open when they saw the vertical clearing the mudslide had wrought in the middle of the forest. A huge swath of barren clay was framed between towering trees on either side and even as they watched, a huge tree toppled over into the glade, no longer supported by its roots – which were somewhere beneath the pups. When it hit the earth, a bevy of ripered fruits were dislodged from its branches, and rolled down the hill.

The pups blinked as a pile of mangoes collected around them, and after exchanging a few glances, immediately snatched them up and began scarfing down the fruit. After a few moments of chewing the delicious yellow flesh, Paisley lifted her head and gasped for air."That was Cwazy."

"You can say that again." Ryder agreed, ripping off another chunk of juicy fruit with his sharp canines.

"Where are we?" Riley asked, gazing around in confusion as her claws peeled the skin away from her second mango.

"I dunno Parker sighed, swallowing a particularly large bite. "but I think we're even more lost than before.

Meanwhile back on the ship, Ethan stopped by the galley to pick up the items the medic had suggested for Jane's stomach, before heading to Eric's rooms. Of course, he had no way of knowing he was about to interrupt an intimate moment.

After Ethan left with Jane, Linda had found herself alone with Eric for the first time since the pups disappeared. They'd never been close the way Eric and Jane were, but every time they met over the years Linda liked him more and more. It had finally reached a point where Linda had to acknowledge she was in love with him – to herself if not anyone else. She knew he only had eyes for Jane, but no matter what she tried, she couldn't seem to shake her feelings for him.

"I had a feeling Jane wasn't going to give up that easily" Eric had said, after watching Ethan carry her away up the stairs.

"I'm surprised Ethan didn't see it coming too."

Linda agreed."I mean we weren't exactly subtle. You know Jane made me climb the rigging to get on board?"

"You're joking!" Eric exclaimed, his eyes lighting up with amusement.

"Oh yes, I imagine it was quite the sight." She recalled, shaking her head, "But she's a determined little thing, our Jane."

"I don't think she's "my" Jane anymore." Eric grimaced. "I'm pretty sure I burned that bridge for good.

Linda nodded in understanding, "It's true, you might not ever go back to the way things were, but the way things were wasn't working for any of you, was it?"

"No, I guess not" Eric agreed, rubbing the back of his neck. "I don't really want to spend the rest of my life chasing someone who doesn't want me."

"It never gets any easier." Linda shared, frowning."

But it's also a hard pattern to break. If we could choose who to love it... well it wouldn't be love"

"That's sure as hell true, but life would be a lot easier if we could Eric groused.

"A lot easier, and a lot emptier." Linda amended, summoning a small smile and wrapping her arms around herself. She didn't think Eric knew how strongly she felt about him, but she believed he at least suspected her feelings weren't entirely platonic. It was an astonishingly nerve-wracking experience to have this conversation with him.

When Eric leaned towards her, she was so surprised she backed away. It wasn't until she saw him peering into the cramped staff cabin, frowning in disapproval, that she realized this had been his attention all along. "You can't stay here."

Linda shrugged."Sure I can, we paid for it."

"No; He huffed a laugh, "I mean it's tiny and smells of sick, you should come stay in my cabin, it's nice and big, and there's a pull out couch -I'll even let you take the bed."

Linda almost suggested that they share the bed, but stopped herself before the words could leave her mouth. Thanks but that really isn't necessary."

"Yes, it is." Eric corrected her, moving inside the cabin and collecting her luggage – not so much as asking before he carted it out of the room and up the stairs.

"Hey, you can't just make that decision for me!"

Linda objected, hurrying after him.

Eric didn't stop, continuing up three more flights of stairs until they reached the upper deck. "Give me one good reason why you should stay in that dingy little room when there's a comfortable suite upstairs with plenty of room for us to share." He ordered, steering the reluctant she-wolf towards the first class cabins.

Because staying in the same room with you and not being able to touch you or tell you how I feel will be utter torture. Linda thought to herself. Of course, saying this out loud was not an option and what's more, she couldn't think of a decent excuse. "1... It's... fine. She finally agreed, sounding thoroughly defeated.

"Oh" Now Eric did stop, hovering outside the door to his suite with a guilt-stricken expression. When he looked at Linda, she almost thought there was fear in his eyes, "unless you hate me too now?"

Linda j8rked her head up, amazed he could ever think such a thing. "Eric -I don't hate you." She told him firmly. "I could never"

"You don't have to say that." Eric sighed, dragging one hand through his hair.

"I'm not just saying it." Linda assured him. "I don't think you're evil or that you're a traitor. I actually... I actually think what you did is really brave."

Eric laughed humorlessly, "Now lying."

"I'm not lying!" Linda insisted, "And I don't appreciate being accused of it either:" She added, crossing

her arms over her chest. "Is this your room?"

"Yes." Eric pronounced, "But you really don't have know you're to –

Linda had already pushed through the door and strode inside, gazing around a suite about half the size of Ethan's, though it was every bit as nice. "Wow." She remarked simply. "Jane really owes me for those first two nights."

"Linda, I'm sorry." Eric professed, "I didn't mean to accuse you of lying, but there was nothing brave about what I did."

Linda eyed him closely, sympathy overwhelming her when she took in his downtrodden expression. "I don't excuse the way you deceived Jane." She began, surprised to see her words had the power to make the Prince wince. "But you were doing what you believed was your duty. You were proving yourself to your father -a desire all children have at some point or another.

And when you realized it was wrong, when you realized he wasn't being honorable, you stood up to him and took the consequences in stride."

Eric's eyes widened slightly, he'd never heard anyone describe his situation this way before. His father called him a traitor and a failure – a weakling.

Jane and Ethan called him a liar and an untrustworthy weasel, and he'd called himself all those things and more over the years. "I know what it's like to have a father who doesn't deserve your admiration." Linda continued, "and I know how hard it is to face that, come to terms with it, and put an unworthy parent behind you. You might be many things, but you aren't a coward, and you aren't a traitor."

"Then what am I?" Eric questioned, approaching Linda.

"You're a man who had a hard path, and is trying to make things right." Linda answered huskily, all too aware of how close he was standing. "You're strong and kind... and you deserve happiness."

Eric grazed his knuckles across her cheek, feeling the surreal sensation of being truly seen for the first time in his life. His wolf, who had never been entirely sold on Jane, urged him to kiss her. Linda was so lovely, and the way she was looking at him right now, he knew she wanted it too. Taking a deep breath, he lowered his mouth to hers.

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