

The Luna and her Quadruplet Pups by Jane Above Story

Chapter 121

3rd Person

The pups were so exhausted after facing the anaconda and the landslide that they stopped for the night shortly afterwards, taking care to carry a few mangoes with them as they clambered up into the branches of a rubber tree – safe from the dangers of the forest floor. The next day they woke and made a breakfast of the sweet yellow fruit, before continuing to trek downhill.

Around midday the endless sea of trees and vines finally broke, giving way to rolling green hills and fertile pastureland. As Riley, Parker, Paisley and Ryder plodded through the muddy fields, each feeling more exhausted and hungry than they’d ever been in their lives, they tried to figure out what to do next.

“I dunno how we can make a plan, when we don’ even know wheres we are” Parker sighed, feeling as though their conversation was going round in circles. Every time one of the siblings came up with an idea, the same wrench seemed to get thrown into the suggestion – that they were well and truly lost.

“Do you think Mommy and Daddy know we aren’ in the city ‘nymore?” Ryder questioned nervously.

“I bet they do.” Riley mused. “They’re really smart, and Daddy’s such a good tracker.”

“But we made it ‘mpossible for Anita to track us, and that goes for Daddy too.” Paisley reminded the others, “he’ll never know to look for us here... wherever here is.”

The others nodded forlornly, but then Parker – who was leading the way – pulled up short. “You guys, look!” He exclaimed, pointing to the terraced landscape ahead of them.

“What are they?” Riley gasped in awe, staring at the strange creatures dotting the fields they approached. None of the pups had ever seen animals like this. They were tall, easily as tall as their Mommy, with long necks, long legs and very furry bodies. They had two little ears pointing up on top of their heads, and the curly white fluff covering them from head to toe looked as soft as a cloud.

“They look like sheeps on stilts.” Ryder suggested, desperate to get a closer look.

All four pups inched closer to the nearest animal.

They’re so fuzzy.” Paisley observed with a lopsided grin, “do you thinks they’re friendly?”

“They haves to be.” Riley confirmed, “they’re so cute | could scream.”

“Don’t do that!” Parker objected, “It might scare them off”

“I didn’t say I would scream, just that I could.” Riley answered, sounding affronted her brother might think she’d do something so foolish.

“I wanna hug ‘em.” Ryder announced, “maybe if we’re really nice they’ll let us.”

The animals in question were watching the approaching pups with unbridled curiosity. They smelled like the people who cared for them, but they looked very strange indeed: covered in mud, insect bites and bruises, and moving like tiny predators trying to sneak up on some unsuspecting prey, with they’re small paws raised in front of their chests as they tip-toed forward.

When Parker came within reach of the nearest creature, it craned its long neck down to sniff his head. Apparently decided it liked the way the pup smelled, the fuzzy animal soon began nibbling his hair. Parker giggled delightedly, “Is eating my hair!”

Thankfully for the young boy, his siblings distracted the creature before it could make a true meal of his dark locks.

Paisley was gingerly petting one of it’s wooly flanks, while Ryder circled his plump arms around its long neck and Riley clambered all the way onto its back, sprawling her short arms and legs on either side of its body and burying her face in its soft fur with a happy sigh.

The animal jerked its head up in surprise to be suddenly covered with puppies, unintentionally carrying a laughing Ryder with it.

“I love it.” Paisley murmured with a beaming smile. “Is so soft!”

The animal huffed, and Riley followed the direction of its gaze, staring into the distance as her sibling continued to play. Her eyes widened when she saw movement in the distance, movement headed right towards them. There’s a man!” She announced in a frantic whisper. “He’s coming this way!” All at once the atmosphere shifted as the pups went into emergency mode.

“Hide!” Ryder urged his siblings.

Where?” Parker fretted, looking around for anything they could use to conceal themselves from view.

“Under the tall sheeps!” Paisley suggested.

One by one the young shifter gathered beneath the animal they’d so recently been cuddling, but it seemed they were too late. The man had stopped a few meters away, kneeling down onto his haunches and c*g his head as he studied the dirty children. “It’s alright.” He called softly, “You don’t have to be afraid.”

“Don’ listen to him.” Paisley instructed her siblings, “you know how strangers are – they can’t be trusted”

The others nodded in agreement, huddling closer together. Meanwhile the man was searching the field behind them, “Where did you little ones come from?” He asked, truly bewildered. “Where are your parents?

“Don’ tell him ‘nything!” Parker murmured. “I don’ like the looks of him.”

“Are you lost?” The man pressed. “There’s not much around these parts. I don’t have the faintest idea how you got all the way out here.”

When the pups didn’t respond, the man attempted to inch closer. However this sent the wary children running to take shelter under a different animal, one who seemed remarkably unbothered by their presence. “Maybe we can try to ride one away.” Riley offered, thoughtfully studying the creature’s long legs, “I bets they move real fast.”

“I dunno,” Paisley frowned, “ don’t thinks I’d like to be ridden. It might throw us off”

“What are your names?” The man called, not giving up, still moving closer.

“Go away!” Parker shouted, stomping his foot when the stranger continued to follow them.

“You like my llamas huh?” The man asked conversationally. “1 don’t blame you, they’re friendly critters.

“Wha’s a llama?” Ryder asked, earning a light smack from his sister. “Don’ talk to him!” Riley scolded, but the truth was that she was curious too.

Why its the animal you’re under right now.” The man shared, giving them a welcoming smile. “1 raise them for their wool, soft aren’t they?”

The pups exchanged glances, subconsciously clutching the creature’s fuzzy wool for comfort. Paisley, intrigued by the idea that the tall sheep might belong to someone, peeked out from behind the llama’s front leg. “Do they have names?”

“Some of them do” The man confirmed, sitting on the ground now that the children weren’t actively running away.

“That one doesn’t though – you could give it one.” He offered.

The pups exchanged another series of serious looks.

Really?” Riley questioned suspiciously.

“Any name you want.” The man nodded, “and I can introduce you to the others too.”

“What should we call it?” Parker whispered.

“We shouldn’ call it nothing.” Ryder frowned, “is probably a trick.”

“How could naming a llama be a trick?” Riley countered.

“Stop saying it like you knew what it was.” Ryder argued, “for all we know they could be evil.”

“That’s crazy.” Paisley scoffed. “Cloud’s not evil!” She shrugged when her siblings furrowed their brows in confusion. “I thinks we should name it Cloud.”

“Cloud is an excellent name.’ The man praised, startling them all when he appeared a few feet closer than before.

And your sister is right, they aren't evil. And neither am I.” He promised. “My name is Thomas, and I’d like to help you – if you’ll let me.”

“We don’ need help.” Riley declared stubbornly.

“No?” Thomas asked, rubbing his chin thoughtfully, “ when was the last time you ate or had water, when’s the last time you had a bath or slept inside?”

“We don’ like baths.” Parker announced, as if this decided everything. However almost as soon as the words were out of his mouth, his stomach growled loudly.

“Uh-huh.” Thomas nodded, “well I’ll tell you what. I’m going to go back over the hill to my house, where my wife Mary is making a nice big lunch. You’re welcome to come along- you can even bring Cloud if you like. I won’t make you come inside or take a bath, but you can have some food and water and I swear no harm will come to you.”

Ryder pursed his l!ps, “we need a minute to think ‘bout Thomas raised his-palms in acceptance, giving the children a bit of space to confer.

“1 think is a bad idea.” Ryder began, “ mean I’m as hungry and thirsty as you, but we can’t afford to trust another grown up.”

1 dunno if we have a choice.” Riley frowned. “I don’ think we can make it much longer on our own.”

“He seems nice.” Parker shrugged, “I don’ get a feeling from him like I have with other baddies.”

Ryder looked to Paisley. Of all the pups, she had the most experience with untrustworthy adults. “Paisley, what'd you think?”

I think Riley's right." She grimaced, reaching for her sister's hand. "We don' have a choice."

"Okay." Ryder nodded. "Let's go."

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