

The Luna and her Quadruplet Pups by Jane Above Story

Chapter 122

Jane

The last few days have passed in a dizzying haze. I've slept through much of our journey, and though Ethan has remained by my side in my waking hours, I do have to wonder what he, Eric and Linda have been planning while I- rest. Today we've finally reached a midway port to resupply for the rest of the trip, and when Ethan wakes me with the news that I can finally get off this boat, I can't move fast enough.

When I emerge from his luxury cabin and feel the blaze of the unforgiving tropical sun for the first time, I can only think of my babies. Would the traffickers give them sunscreen? Would they have enough water? The worry consumes me so quickly and powerfully my knees go weak.

It's almost too tempting to return to the drug induced haze I've floated in the past few days, but I know that isn't right.

It's a selfish inclination, to save myself having to feel these things, when my pups don't have any such luxury.

I tell Ethan as much as he helps me off the boat. I don't want any more medications when we board again.

Ethan."

His strong arms are around me, guiding me forward down the gangway. "Sweetheart you'll be sick as a dog without them."

Then let me be sick" I state simply, "I shouldn't get to avoid suffering when everyone else around me is stuck with their pain... when the pups didn't have that privilege."

"Jane" Ethan sighs, dragging his hand through his hair.

You dying of dehydration isn't going to save anyone any suffering- especially not the pups."

"It doesn't feel right." I insist. "I want..."

"You want what? To hurt?" Ethan guesses, hitting the nail square on the head.

"Yes," I confess, my throat thick with emotion. "I want to hurt, because I know they're hurting too. I want to hurt... because I deserve it."

To Ethan's credit, he doesn't say a word about my drastic mood swings. I think he understands that my grief is sending me spiraling from one extreme to the next. The fact is I can't even come to terms with the abrupt shifts myself. One moment I'm begging him to take away my pain by making love to me, and the next I'm wishing for nothing more than the freedom to wallow in my misery – and each end of the spectrum feels so surreal and strange that any other headspace seems like an impossibility.

Ethan pauses us right in the middle of the ship's boarding ramp, gathering me to his chest. It's much too hot for our bodies to be pressed together this way, but his solid strength grounds me like nothing else. "You don't deserve it."

Ethan murmurs. "You don't deserve any of this."

I open my mouth to argue, but he stops me before I can reject his comfort. "You've trusted me this far, Jane. So please trust me now. I wouldn't lie to you – not about this."

Looking up at him with wide eyes, I realize he's right. I – have trusted him thus far, and he hasn't given me any reasons to doubt him. Though I was incredibly disgruntled at the time, I'm grateful that Ethan didn't give into me the other night. The memories are still fuzzy, but I know I admitted more than I'm comfortable with, and I hate to think what else I might have let slip in the throes of passion.

He wasn't wrong, I feel safer with him knowing he didn't take advantage of my altered state, and it makes it easier to believe him now. The more time that passes, the more I see how badly I misjudged Ethan. Still, I have a hard time accepting that he's telling me these things because they're true, rather than because he doesn't want me to be in pain.

Somehow I bite my tongue, leaning into him as we continue off the ship. "So what happens now?"

"Now, Eric goes ahead on his own." Ethan explains. This island is governed by NightFang allies, but Aimon is bound to have a few spies running around. So you, Linda and I need to find disguises, and Eric is going to sail on a different ship to avoid us being associated with one another."

As we step off the gangway, I expect to feel my stomach instantly settle. After all, we're no longer swaying two and fro on the water. However I'm disappointed by solid ground. I don't find any relief from the sour churning in my belly, and belatedly I recall that it can take some time to regain one's land legs". "How long will we stop?" I inquire, wondering whether it's better to give myself time to recover, when I have to get back on a damned ship and start the wretched illness over again, or if I should try to get the entire journey out of the way at once.

"Just long enough to get the disguises." Ethan announces, seeming to read my mind. "The sooner we reach the Southern Isles, the better."

"Linda's not going to be happy about Eric going ahead without her." I muse. From what I remember of my brief visits with my friend, she'd been working hard to convince the Prince to take her along on his advance trip. It might have been easier for her to accept his refusal if he hadn't claimed her during their long lovemaking sessions on the ship, but it seems that once he opened his blind eyes and finally saw the woman who'd been standing in front of him all along – he hadn't been able to resist. Now they were almost as good as mated, and he was still planning on leaving her behind.

"You can say that again." Ethan purrs in my ear, nodding to the dock on our left. As if they'd been reading my mind, Eric and Linda are standing there nose to nose, arguing about the plan.

"Tell me the truth!" Linda demands loudly, "Did you claim me just so you could make this decision for me?"

"Of course not!" Eric insisted. "I claimed you because I love you!"

"Oh, just apparently not enough to introduce me to your family!" Linda argues back.

"Because my family are lunatics!" Eric shouts, I'm not introducing you, because I don't want them to kill you in your sleep!"

"No you're just going to leave me behind so someone else can murder me!" Linda bites back.

"No one is going to murder you, as long as you stay with Ethan." Eric growls.

"Ethan is the one your family wants dead more than anyone – he's the reason this is all happening, how am I safer with him?" Linda reasons.

As curious as I am to continue eavesdropping on their argument, I'm more concerned with the impact my friend's words might have on Ethan. Looking up at him, I can see the tension gripping his features. His jaw twitches dangerously.

She's right, you know. He grumbles. "That's why I wanted you to stay home"

"And it's also why I had to come." I murmur, clenching my eyes shut as I feel my stomach rise in my throat. "Not only because of the pups, but because you need someone to watch your back."

"You were worried about me?" Ethan arches a brow, petting my sides when he sees my greenish expression.

"In part." I shrug noncommittally, for once grateful that my traitorous stomach is giving me an excuse to change the subject. "Goddess, I think I'm going to be sick again." I lunge for the nearest trash receptacle, and Ethan holds my hair back and croons sympathetically.

"Tsk, I really hoped being on land would help" He frowns.

"Just give it time." I gasp, coughing and retching, wishing I hadn't let Ethan convince me to eat so much breakfast this morning.

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A moment later Linda storms up to us, looking entirely annoyed, but sympathetic to my plight. "Still feeling dismal, huh?"

"Yeah." I groan, "And you?"

"Pissed" She admits, glancing at Ethan when his phone begins to ring. "I've got this." She promises when he hesitates, looking in my direction with concern.

Thanks" Ethan says, "I'll only be a few moments."

Linda rubs my back and gives me a sip of water when I finish being sick. "Does it ever get easier dealing with Alphas?"

I actually manage a laugh. "No. They always think they know best... and sometimes they do, but other times they're as blockheaded as any other man."

"You can say that again" She mutters, but I also see her smothering a smile.

"Are you happy though?" I ask, feeling thoroughly out of the loop. Her romance happened so fast, and I missed all the important stages. Before I fell ill Eric was still oblivious to Linda's interest, but a few days of seasickness and all of a sudden they were glued at the hip.

"Deliriously!" Linda beams. "I know it happened really fast and we aren't exactly agreeing about what happens next, "she hedges, earning a snort from me. "But I've wanted this for so long. As long as we're together, I have everything I need. "

Ethan returns to my side then, an indecipherable expression on his handsome face. "I just got a report from one of my agents in the Southern Isles. There hasn't been any word of the pups, or any signs that the King knows they're missing."

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"What does that mean?" I ask, feeling lightheaded.

Ethan looks like he doesn't want to answer, but eventually caves. "I don't know."

"And Eric?" Linda asks urgently, looking around for her newfound mate.

Ethan sighs. "He's already gone."

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