

The Luna and her Quadruplet Pups by Jane Above Story

Chapter 169

Jane

“Okay, you can do this. You can do this. You can do this.” I repeat to myself, staring at the phone in my hands with utter trepidation.

The pups are sleeping soundly in their bedroom, and I’m getting ready to sacrifice my dignity in their honor.

I’m not sure how Ethan will respond to my phone call, if he’ll even answer when he sees my number on the screen. I’m half tempted to go find a pay phone and call from a number he won’t recognize, but I decide to try this first. Taking one last deep breath, I dial and hit the send button, raising the device to my ear.

It seems to ring for an utter eternity, but eventually the line clicks, and Ethan’s deep voice sounds in my ear.

“Jane?”

The familiar sound sends a shiver down my spine. “

Hello Ethan.”

“I thought I told you not to contact me.” Ouch, I know I expected failure, but that seems harsh, even for Ethan.

“Actually you just told me to leave, you didn’t say I couldn’t ever reach out.” I correct him hoarsely. It’s only been four weeks, but it feels like an eternity since we last spoke. Those early days after I left with the pups had passed in a haze that still haunted me, and it feels so surreal just to hear his familiar voice.

“Well I should have.” He growls. “I didn’t realize I had to spell everything out letter by letter. I thought you were smarter than that.”

“Wil you just listen for a moment.” I beg, hating how cruel he’s being.

He pauses for a moment. “Is something wrong?”

“Well that depends on how you define wrong.” I snap. “Your pups are absolutely heartbroken without you. They don’t understand why they can’t see you, they’re completely traumatized from the Southern Isles – every other night they’re having nightmares and begging for you instead of me, and yesterday they attempted to run away to the North Pole so they could ask Santa to bring you back to them for Christmas.”

Silence meets me on the other end of the line. I wait impatiently for a response, wondering if he’s even still there. “Ethan?” I prompt after a moment.

“Is that all? He questions coldly.

“Is that all?” I repeat, not believing my ears. “Is that all?! Ethan they could have been killed, they stole a horse-drawn sleigh and were taking off into the mountains. They’re desperate to be with you and they don’t understand why you’re suddenly not in their life anymore! And now they hate me, so you’re the only one they want!”

“Why should they hate you?” He snaps, sounding even harsher than he had a moment ago.

“You don’t think I told them that you’d abandoned them, do you?” I hiss. “I took the blame for you so they wouldn’t develop a complex, and now they think that it’s my fault they can’t see you.”

“Well they’re not wrong.” Ethan rumbles. “It is your fault. If you’d done what you were supposed to in the Southern Isles, we wouldn’t be in this situation.”

My mouth falls open as his words steal my breath right out of my lungs. I can’t believe him. I can’t believe how badly it hurts to hear him speak to me this way. He wasn’t even this cruel when Eve staged her attack all those years ago. I can’t believe how badly I misjudged him, and I’m furious with myself for falling for his act.

Still, I have to stand up for my children. “So you don’t even care that you’re punishing the pups for my wrongs?”

“I demand fiercely. “You don’t care that they’re completely innocent and they worship the ground you walk on – especially Paisley!”

I don’t understand why you’re complaining?” Ethan counters. “Isn’t this exactly what you wanted? You were planning to take her from me and cut off contact from the very beginning.”

“That was before!” I burst out, losing hold of my temper.

“Before what?” He remarks boredly.

“Before you made me love you again!” I exclaim. “

Why did you do that? If you cared this little about the children, why did you fight for me the way you did, why did you make me love you if you didn’t actually want us to be a family.”

“We’ve been over this.” He rumbles. “You owed me for faking your death and hiding the other pups from me.

You deserved to pay.”

“You’re nothing but a sociopath.” I accuse, feeling maternal rage bubble up inside of me. “It’s one thing to punish me, to break my heart, but it’s another to punish innocent pups. They didn’t do anything wrong – they don’t deserve this, Ethan.” I protest, tears burning in my eyes.

“Then maybe you’ll think twice before you decide to play with their fates again.” Ethan snarls. “All I did was give you what you wanted Jane. And yeah, maybe I snuck a lesson in there for you along the way, but this was your dream ending. You made your bed, now go sleep in it- and never contact me again.”

He hangs up before I can say another word, and before I can stop myself I hurl my phone against the wall, flinching when it strikes and bounces off again, clattering to the ground. I follow suit, sinking onto the floor and wrapping my arms around my knees, finally letting my tears fall freely. How could I ever have been fooled by that man, not once, but twice?

Suddenly I’m remembering the teenage alpha who turned up at my door on my sixteenth Christmas, bearing food and gifts for me and mom. I know how I fell in love with him, he’d been sweet, protective and affectionate nothing like the monster he was now. Where did that Ethan go? What happened to that loving, generous boy?

“Ethan, I can’t accept this!” I’d exclaimed, staring at the emerald necklace he’d bought to match my eyes. It was the first gift I’d opened, and already it was more valuable than anything I’d ever owned before.

“Sure you can.” He grinned. “I picked it out just for you.”

“But it’s too much!” I insisted. “Girls like me aren’t meant for jewels and finery, and I’ll never be able to get you anything near as nice.”

“You are meant for every bit of decadence and luxury there is, little wolf.” Ethan corrected sternly, “just because you haven’t had it yet doesn’t mean you don’t deserve it. This is just a small token, and you have already given me so much more in return. You give me more every day.”

I open my mouth to object again, but he places his finger over my lips. “Besides, if you refuse it “I’ll be offended.” He teases.

“Now open your other gifts.”

I tried to argue with every subsequent present, but Ethan always silenced my every protest, eventually ceasing verbal arguments and just kissing me senseless every time I tried to open my mouth. By the time I was ready to give him my own gift in return, I was half delirious with his affection. My skin was flushed and my eyes probably had stars in them, but I gradually found the courage to hand over the framed painting. “It’s not much, and it’s nothing compared to everything you’ve given me, but -”

Ethan claimed my lips again, “hush.”

I watched nervously as he unwrapped the golden paper, then watched his handsome face transform as he took in the painting. He blinked in amazement a couple of times, before looking up at me, “You painted this?”

“Yes, but if you don’t like it -” Again I found my words stolen by Ethan’s lips, only this time he didn’t stop at my mouth, he took my face between his hands and kissed every inch of my skin. “It’s incredible, and I love it.

” He praised when he finally pulled back. “You’re incredible.”

“You really like it?” I squeaked.

“It’s the best gift I’ve ever gotten, because you made it, and your heart is in every brushstroke.” He proclaimed, “now I feel like I didn’t get you enough, I just spent money, I didn’t do anything like this.”

“Ethan if you try to give me anything else I will throw an actual tantrum.” I warned him, only half joking.

Ethan chuckled. “You see the problem with you is that I like everything you do – I’d probably even like your tantrums.”

“Trust me, you wouldn’t.” I laughed.

I suppose only time will tell.” Ethan joked.

As I come out of the memory, I find myself crying harder than ever. Only this time I’m not weeping for my own broken heart, or even for my pups. I’m weeping for that poor naive girl I once was, the one who blindly walked into the arms of a predator and let him destroy her. Suddenly I’m mourning for the life I might have had if I hadn’t fallen for Ethan’s tricks. Don’t mistake me, I wouldn’t trade my pups for anything in the world, and I would gladly suffer Ethan’s abuse to have them again, but my soul is just so worn down and tired from the pain Ethan inflicted, and I hate what he did to that bright-eyed young woman. It’s clear to me now that I did the right thing shielding my pups from the truth. I don’t want Ethan to do to them, what he did to me.

I decide then and there that I’m doing crying over Ethan. This will be the last time – and then I’m never looking back.

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