

## The Luna and her Quadruplet Pups by Jane Above Story

Chapter 174

Ethan

Christmas carols fill the air as I watch Riley, Ryder, Paisley and Parker zoom around the skating rink, giggling and laughing as they play tag and stage races. Fairy lights and boughs of holly have been strewn around the edges of the rink, and the scent of apples and cinnamon waft through the falling snow from a nearby hot cider booth.

My first afternoon back with the pups is the best day I've had since they were kidnapped – and certainly since I was paralyzed. It's true that I'm heartbroken over Jane, but being with my children again at long last is pure joy. Ice skating has always been Paisley's favorite Christmas pastime, but I've never seen her share the experience with anyone but me. It's magical to see her playing with the others, so carefree. In the old days I had to hold her hand the whole time, she was never healthy enough to get rambunctious on the ice. Now she has no problem keeping up, and I couldn't be prouder.

That said, every few minutes she comes racing over to the sidelines to beg me to come onto the ice with her. She doesn't understand why I'm not out there with her like I always have been in the past.

Unfortunately my mechanized braces are great for pretending to walk, but there's no way they can handle ice skating – the movement is too smooth, and the balance too precarious.

"Daddy please!" Paisley begs, giving me huge puppy dog eyes. "We came all this way to see you and you're not even skating!"

"Daddy's still recovering from his surgery." I lie.

You remember how careful you have to be when you're healing."

But how much longer is it gonna take? She inquires. "I wanna play with you."

I want to play with you too, angel. And I will- I'm just not up to skating." I sigh. Besides you don't need me anymore, you have your brothers and sister."

Is not the same." Paisley frowns. I never had to worry 'bout falling before. You were always there to catch me! What if I falls?"

"Sweetheart, you're healthy enough to fall now.

That's a good thing. I promise, making my tone as gentle as possible as I continue. You can't go through your whole life holding Daddy's hand. You have to branch out on your own take risks. It's what growing up is all about."

The truth is I'd be thrilled to let Paisley keep holding my hand as long as she wants to after all, those years when pups want to be that close with their parents are so fleeting. However if I'm going to let them stay here it can't just be for Jane, I have to take the opportunity to get my pups used to the idea of living without me. I have to teach her these lessons while I still have the chance. After talking with Matthew I'm actually grateful that Jane did return.

It's giving me the opportunity to do things right – to make sure she and the pups are really going to be okay after I'm gone. In hindsight, I should have done this from the beginning, but I didn't have the braces then, I didn't know I'd be able to pull it off.

Although Paisley doesn't really seem to be buying my story. "Daddy what are you talking about?" She demands. "I don't wanna grow ups if it means I have to stop holding your hand."

I know, little one." I confess. "None of us ever want to grow up. But it happens anyway."

She narrows her eyes. "Daddy, you're being weird."

I chuckle. "I know, I'm sorry, munchkin."

You and Mommy are both being weirds." Paisley continues. "Is something going on you're not telling us?"

of course, I think wryly. The pups have always been too smart for their own good. That's Jane's doing- her genes were clearly stronger than mine when it came to passing down her brilliant mind. Usually I think it's a blessing they're so bright. But times like this make it very inconvenient.

I'm searching for some way to answer her without giving up the game. Then, right on queue, Riley, Parker and Ryder skid to a stop beside her. "Come on Paisley!" Riley urges. "We wanna make a skating chain."

Paisley continues watching me for a long moment, but eventually she turns to her sister. "Wha's a skating chain?" She asks, crinkling her nose.

Is when you hold hands and can't let go even if other peoples are coming towards you!" Parker answers excitedly.

"You have to weave and dodge and try to stay together as long as possible!" Ryder adds.

Okay!" Paisley agrees excitedly, forgetting her earlier mistrust.

As they skate away I look back to the benches lining the rink, finding Jane watching me with a drawn expression. She hasn't spoken a word to me since we fought this morning, and her eyes are still red from crying. She's trailed behind the pups and I throughout this outing, her arms wrapped protectively around herself as if she's waiting to receive some sort of blow.

I go to sit next to her, pulling my mouth into a hard line. "They know something is up. You need to pull yourself together."

"Can you just give it a rest, Ethan." She answers, glaring at me. "I'm trying, alright? I'm trying to do what's right, I'm trying to shield them as best I can.

And I'd have an easier time keeping myself together if you stopped hovering over me this way."

Goddess, if only I could. I think bitterly. It's one thing to keep up my horrible act to ensure she'll hate me, but it's another entirely to walk away from her when she's so raw and fragile. Part of me wants to feel hopeful like my Beta suggested, to leave a window open for myself in case I get better and get a second chance with Jane. But I meant what I said –

I'm no good for her. She's in this state because of me. Even if I do get better, I need to let her go. She deserves to find a better mate than me, I just have to make sure she's not so broken that she runs from him when he finds her.

Look, it's going to make them more suspicious if there's too much distance between us." I argue.

They might not know how close we got when they were kidnapped, but they know how things were before.

"I'm surprised you care." She bites. "You didn't give a damn about their feelings when you rejected us.

Now all of a sudden you want to make sure they don't find out we hate each other? I swear, it's like you have multiple personalities."

"Jane I admit I let my temper get the better of me in the Southern Isles. I was so angry with you I didn't think about the pups' nearly enough – and I haven't since." I growl. "But they're here now, and I don't want them to end up like you. So if that means putting on an act while you're in town, I'm willing to try."

You're such a hypocrite." Jane snaps, clearly more angry or more confident than she was this morning.

Now that she see's I'm not going to send them packing, she no doubt feels brave enough to fight back a bit. "You see that I'm a mess and you don't want the pups to end up damaged, but you don't acknowledge that the reason I am in this state is entirely your fault!"

Don't blame me for your mistakes, Jane." I scold.

And whatever happened before, we have to find a way to move forward. We can't keep lingering on the past.

Well if you think I'm going to go back to letting you paw me and be all over me when you're calling me a pathetic whore behind closed doors, you are out of your mind." Jane hisses. "How can you even suggest such a thing?"

"I'm not talking about that kind of act." I insist, though if I thought there was a way to do it without further tormenting Jane – I would. I merely mean we have to try and be civil. Kids pick up on so much more than we think – especially ours. If we keep going the way we are, they're all going to end up with complexes."

Jane buries her face in her hands. "So let me get this straight," She begins, forcing the words out through gritted teeth. "I told you all this from the start, I begged you and tried to convince you not to leave them for exactly these reasons, and now you're going to come to me and pretend like it was your realization and your idea?"

If that's the way you want to view it, go right ahead." I mutter, knowing how bipolar I must seem to her. In truth I feel a bit bipolar too – then again, the kind of trauma we've been through can jumble even the stablest person's mind. Now do we have a deal, or not?"

Before she can reply, I hear a tumble and a sharp cry in the direction of my pups, I whip my head around, expecting to see Paisley sprawled on the ice.

However it isn't Paisley writhing on the ice in pain, it's Parker – and he's bleeding.

[Previous Chapter](#)

[Next Chapter](#)