

# The Luna and her Quadruplet Pups by Jane Above Story

Chapter 178

Ethan

That night I lay awake in bed, replaying my conversation with Jane over and over in my head.

For the first time since I got my diagnosis, I feel like I have a purpose again. It's taken me a while to reach this place, but Jane's return made it only too clear that giving up and pushing my family away wasn't working for anyone. What's more, being paralyzed has finally given me the perspective to understand that there's more than one kind of strength, and just because I can't protect them with my wolf, it doesn't mean I can't care for them in other ways. Above all else, I'm realizing that my possessiveness and determination to make Jane mine again was never about her welfare, but satisfying my own ego and selfishness.

The wheels in my mind are turning swiftly now, overflowing with ideas for how to put my plan in motion. When I started making my list of goals, I intended to help Jane and impart lessons on my children in the brief time we have left together, but now I see that it doesn't have to stop there. Already my wolf feels calmer, less on edge and erratic. I've been flailing and drowning for more than a month now, holding onto everything I felt I was losing and letting the pain rip me apart. But it's amazing how soothing it can be to simply let go.

I'm still lying there, staring at the ceiling fan when my door cracks open, and tiny footsteps cross my floor. Paisley's sweet scent wafts over me, and the next thing I know her precious voice is whispering beside me. "Daddy, are you awake?"

I might be." I tease, cracking one eye open. "But you shouldn't be, it's way past your bedtime."

"Can I sleep with you?" She asks anxiously, almost as though she's worried I'll refuse her.

of course, angel." I agree, lifting the covers for her to crawl onto the mattress next to me.

I've missed you so much, Daddy." She murmurs, snuggling her head against my chest. I don't like the Dark Moon pack."

"But aren't you happy being with Mommy and your brothers and sister?" I press, guilt assailing me once more.

Paisley is quiet for a long moment. I loves them."

She finally answers. "But I loves you too, and you're all alones now. I don't like it. Mommy has Ryder, and Parker and Riley... but without me you don't have anyone."

That was the point. I think wryly. If I'm alone I can't hurt anyone.

It's very sweet of you to worry about me, Princess."

I tell her gently, running my hand through her soft hair. "But it's a Daddy's job to worry about his pups, not the other way around. As long as you're happy, I'll be fine."

"Daddy of course it's my job to worry 'bout you."

Paisley objects, lifting her head and shooting me a stern look. "We've always been together and you needs me. You always says you don't know what you'd do without me.

Whoops. Trust a pup to remember your words at the most inconvenient times. Paisley, I love you, and that means I want what's best for you, even if it's hard for me." Her green eyes are glowing up at me in the darkness, and I can't help but wonder if our new baby will be as perfect as our first four. Will they still take after me, will they luck out and get even more of their mother's genes? 'Now I won't lie and tell you that it hasn't been hard for me to be away from you, but it's a sacrifice I'm willing to make."

But I'm not asking you to make a sacrifice." Paisley argues. "No one asked me where I wanted to live.

No one asked me if I wanted to go with Mommy.

"But sweetheart you've been dreaming of having a Mommy your whole life." I remind her. It's all you ever wanted, and I've always felt guilty that you had to grow up without one."

I know." Paisley frowns. But I always thought that if I got a Mommy we'd all be together. No one ever told me that I'd have to leave you.

I'm sorry," I sigh, hating to see my little girl so sad.

"But you're going to need your Mommy more than me the older you get. I could teach you how to be a pup, but she can teach you about being a woman. It's right for you to be with her.

"Daddy I'm not going to be a woman for ages and ages!" Paisley objects, sounding thoroughly affronted by this idea.

It's going to happen faster than you think,'munchkin." I chuckle, tapping the end of her nose with my finger.

Why do you keep saying these things?" Paisley questions, sitting up and brushing my hand away from her face. "You promised you'd never leave me, but after you rescued us you didn't even try to stay with us! And now it's like... I dunno, like you aren't you anymore!"

But I didn't leave you, Paisley." I inform her gently.

You went with your Mommy, and I let you go because I want what's best for you."

"But you're what's best for me!" Paisley cries.

Daddy why are you doing this?

Even as she says it, she pushes at my side, and her small hands collide with the braces wrapped around my body. I've been sleeping in them out of fear that I'll have to get up from bed in front of Jane or the kids, Paisley's young face scrunches up in confusion, and she pokes at the hard metal. "Daddy what's that?"

It's nothing, little one. I'm sorry this is all so hard, but everything always seems better after a good night's sleep. Just try to rest." I instruct, my heart racing as I try not to panic. She can't find out. If Paisley finds out it will only be a matter of time before the others do too, and then they'll never leave me. Jane will be stuck with me out of hopeless love or misplaced duty, and they'll all be the worse for it.

I don't even know if I can be cured yet. I'm determined to fight, but I won't be safe to be around until that happens.

Unfortunately Paisley isn't buying it. She's poking around the braces, feeling down my hip and over my legs. "Daddy, what are these things on you?"

"They're nothing important." I insist. Just something the doctor prescribed after my surgery."

"But the surgery was on your back. She protests, sounding increasingly suspicious. "These things are on your legs." The more she pokes and prods, the more I can see her sharp mind putting the pieces together. You've been walking funny.." She muses, gnawing on her lower lip in precisely the same way Jane does when she's thinking. " And you wouldn't skate with me..."

"Paisley, don't worry about it." I try to command, but I can see it's too late.

"Daddy... are your legs broken?" Paisley asks, looking up at me with wide eyes.

Damnit. You really are too smart for your own good, you know that?" I gripe.

"That's not an answer." Paisley pouts.

My legs aren't working right now." I confess.

Which means my wolf can't get out either. Do you understand what that means?

She shakes her head, her lower lips trembling. "Does it hurt?"

"I can't feel anything." I assure her, speaking only half the truth. I might not be able to feel my legs, but I can certainly feel my wolf's agony.

How long 'till you're better?" She asks, her eyes shining.

Sweetheart, I'm going to tell you a secret." I decide, sensing this is a disaster in the making but not seeing another solution. "But you have to promise not to tell anyone. Not your brothers and sister, and especially not Mommy."

She nods hesitantly, and I smooth the hair back from her brow. I sent you and the others away with Mommy because I'm hurt, and I might not get better. I can't protect you anymore, and if I can't find a cure... well, it won't be good. My wolf will take over more and more, and since I can't let him out, I'll get angrier and angrier and start lashing out at the people around me." I sigh. "That's why you had to leave, but your Mommy doesn't know, she thinks I'm just being mean."

Why don't you tell her?" Paisley asks, tears hovering on her lashes.

Because if she finds out she won't leave. I reply, feeling both dread and relief to finally be sharing the secret. "It would put you all in danger... and I don't want her to waste her life on me."

"Shouldn't Mommy get to choose that?" Paisley asks meekly. "Shouldn't we?"

The Alpha protects the pack." I remind her. "That means making the choices that are too hard for anyone else to make."

Daddy," Paisley whimpers, clutching at my arm now. "Are you dying?

I shake my head, hugging her close. "I'm going to do everything in my power to survive, Paisley. I'm not going to go without a fight – you have my word on that.

And finally, at long last– I truly mean it.

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