

The Luna and her Quadruplet Pups by Jane Above Story

Chapter 185

Jane

"I'm worried about Paisley." I murmur, glancing at Ethan before returning my eyes to where the pups are running along in front of us. It's boxing day and we've taken a family shopping outing. At the moment Paisley is hand in hand with her siblings, but her moods have been almost as variable as my own since yesterday morning.

After receiving Linda's gift, I'd dissolved into sobs and Ethan pulled the pups away to give me some Space, making more explanations about pregnancy hormones and wild emotions. However when he tried to remove Paisley from my arms, she clung to me like velcro, refusing to budge. "It's okay, Ethan." I insisted, wrapping both arms around Paisley and pulling her the rest of the way into my lap, "let her stay."

My mind resurrected the memory of the night Paisley came to me in the bath, asking if I left her behind because I didn't want her. I remembered the way she cried then, and yesterday felt as though we'd switched places. After she begged to stay with Ethan I needed to hold her and cry with her, to know she still wanted me, to know I hadn't ruined everything.

The difference is that I calmed down after a while, but Paisley continued swinging back and forth between tears, anger and confusion. She would lash out at Ethan and run to me and the other pups for comfort, only to change her mind and beg for Daddy to hold her.

"You've been worried about all of them for weeks."

Ethan dismisses me, but I can see a twitch in his jaw.

"Don't act like you don't care." I snap. "Hating me doesn't mean you have to be a complete as*s about the kids"

A low growl sounds in his throat, and though I tremble in response, I'm proud of myself. This time last week I wouldn't have been able to talk back to Ethan at all. I feel so much stronger than I did before, and I'm not sure if that comes down to the pressure being off with the pups, or simply having the time to process everything that's happened to us.

"She'll adjust." He says, sounding unsure, "it will be easier after you leave and we're not pulling her both ways anymore. She's just overwhelmed."

"I wouldn't write off her feelings that easily." I caution. "It's not like with Ryder, Riley and Parker, you're all she's ever known. She's never going to stop wanting you, Ethan"

"She's four -"

"She'll be five in two weeks." I remind him stiffly.

"My point is that she's very young. How much do you remember before the age of five?" Ethan inquires. "I don't recall anything from that age.

"And that's really what you want? You want her to target you or repress the memories of you so that she's not mourning the loss the rest of her life? Is that really better than having you as a long- distance coparent?" I challenge.

"Who are you really requesting this for?" Ethan replies coldly, "Paisley, or yourself?"

I stop dead in my tracks, turning on him. "Don't you dare accuse me of being selfish about our children when you're the one abandoning them!" I hiss, trying to keep my voice low.

Ethan looks as though he might explode, his wolf suddenly glowing in his eyes – however before he can say a word, a new voice interrupts us. "Ethan? Jane?"

We both break off our conversation, whirling to face the person addressing us. The man is almost as tall as Ethan, with dark cocoa skin and long, curly black hair. His eyes are a striking, metallic silver, and his face could easily grace the cover of a magazine. It's all angles and edges, almost too pretty – missing a rugged edge like Ethan's. Still I recognize him instantly, and so does my former mate, "Devon?" We say in unison.

"I can't believe it!" He exclaims, stretching his arms out to hug Ethan, then me. "How long has it been?"

"I don't know, 8 years, 10?" I guess. Devon grew up with Ethan and I. He's a beta who used to run with Ethan and Matthew, but when it became clear that Matthew would become Ethan's second in command, he left for greener pastures. The last I remember seeing him was at my father-in-law's funeral and I honestly haven't thought about him in years. Suddenly I feel guilty, we were all such close friends once. "Are you here visiting family for the holidays?"

"Yeah, and you?" He presses, looking between us then down at the children. "I saw all the news about the kidnapping, you must be so relieved to have the pups back. I can't imagine what you've been through."

"Mommy, who is this man?" Parkel asks curiously, looking up at Devon.....Devon laughs, bending down and introducing himself. "I'm Devon, I've known your Daddy since we were your age, and your Mommy almost as long." He shares,

"You knew Daddy when he was little?" Paisley asks, astonished.

"That's right, I could tell you some wild stories about him too." Devon whispers conspiratorially.

Now you must be Paisley," He guesses, taking in her smaller stature and the way she's hiding behind Ethan's legs. "Which makes you Riley," He guesses, shaking hands with my other daughter.

But I'm going to need some help telling the boys apart,"

"This is Parker and this is Ryder," I clarify, feeling even more guilty now. He's clearly been keeping up with us, but I don't have any idea what he's been up to over the last decade, or even where he lives. "How long are you in town? I'd love to catch up."

"Just through the new year." He answers, smiling ruefully. "But we should get coffee or dinner one night."

Ethan is smiling, but it doesn't seem to meet his eyes. He's looking at Devon with a strange light in his eyes, as if suddenly inspired, but also unhappy to have whatever idea is floating around in his head. "Why don't you and Jane go for coffee now?

I'll keep shopping with the pups, and you two can catch up."

"You don't want to join us?" Devon frowns. "I want to hear all your news."

"Jane can tell you." Ethan answers mysteriously.

She knows it all."

"Ethan "I start to say, baffled by his strange behavior.

"Go on now, you deserve a break." He continues, apparently pretending to be concerned for me now that we have an audience.

Hey, that's not fair. My wolf interrupts, he was concerned for you before too.

He was concerned for the baby. I correct her, feeling terribly bitter. And speaking of which –

"Ethan, I can't drink coffee." I remind him sulkily, wrapping my arms around myself.

"Then have a hot chocolate, the drink doesn't matter." Before I can figure out what's happening, he's sweeping the pups away and leaving me with Devon, who is doing his best not to show how awkward this is.

"I.."I stammer, looking at him with a helpless shrug. "I guess, do you want to get some coffee?"

"Sure," Devon agrees warmly, guiding me forward with a hand at the small of my back. "Do I want to know what that was all about?" He asks as we walk.

"Ethan and I are separated." I confess, gesturing between us. "But I'm afraid I don't have any explanation for this."

"I'm sorry," Devon professes, sounding genuinely remorseful. "I heard you'd been back in the Dark Moon Pack, but I didn't quite believe it. You and Ethan were always such a great couple."

"We weren't" I correct him, unable to keep the sharp edge from my voice. "And if it seemed that way in the beginning it was just because our relationship had never really been tested. We fell apart at the first stumbling block."

Devon's handsome face, so familiar, yet so different from the boy I knew, pulls into a grimace.

"Then that's a tragedy, you two always gave me hope, I always dreamed I could win the mate lottery like Ethan." There's something new in his eyes now, an admiration I haven't noticed before.

"I'd hardly call falling for a weak omega winning the lottery." I scoff, disbelieving.

"Well I beg to differ." Devon grins. "I think so now and I did then too. Why else do you think Ethan chose Matthew for his beta? He couldn't very well pick a wolf who was in love with the future Luna."

This stops me dead in my tracks. "What?"

"He never told you?" Devon asks, looking shocked.

"Are you saying... what I think you're saying?" I choke.

"Jane you had to know, I never tried to hide it."

Devon says, taken aback now.

"You were in love with me?" I gape.

"Yes." He confirms softly.

"And that's why you left, that's why you never became beta?" I can't wrap my head around this at all.

Yes." Devon answers, in the same, even tone.

Suddenly the street is spinning again. This is too much. This is all too much. "I think I'm going to faint."

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