

The Luna and her Quadruplet Pups by Jane Above Story

Chapter 216

Ethan

Jane notches her chin up defiantly, crossing her arms over her chest. "It's nothing, we had a little scare but I'm fine."

"Now why don't I believe you?" I rumble ominously. I rake my eyes over her body, searching for signs of illness. Her skin is glowing and dewy, and after so many months of horrible morning sickness, her figure has rounded out to be full and lush. The only hint of distress I can decipher are the dark circles under her eyes, but those could easily be the result of traveling with a litter of five year olds and waiting for news of my surgery.

"Devon?" I turn to my old friend, praying that he can be trusted to tell me the truth when my wayward mate will not.

"It was just a bit of pre-term labor Devon explains, shooting a reluctant look at Jane. "The doctor was able to stop it before she got too far along."

"Traitor!" Jane accuses, narrowing her eyes at Devon.

"Don't get mad at him, you should have told me.

"Don't get mad at him, you should have told me yourself." I scold, untangling my arm from Paisley and Riley in order to reach out and feel Jane's round tummy. My hand splays over her belly button, "Why did it happen, how are they going to stop it from happening again?"

"My c3rvix was struggling to handle the weight of the pup, that's all." Jane sighs, guiding my hand around the way she had in the car, moving it so I can feel the movement of the babe in her womb.

It's not kicking like before, but simply fluttering like a butterfly's wings against my palm. I imagine the pup doing somersaults in its protective bubble, and love surges in my veins, making me feel as if I'm back in my dream and flying through the mountains as my wolf. It's the most incredible indescribable feeling. "It really does like you, you know." Jane observes with a tender smile. "It doesn't move this way for anyone else."

Jane's eyes are bright and shining, but I know her Wiley ways too well. The clever creature is trying to distract me, to make me rethink my plans for the future, "Stop trying to butter me up and tell me what the doctor's advised. Why aren't you resting?"

"I don't have to rest, I just have to do some daily injections and use this progesterone gel. It's really fine, Ethan." Jane answers, rolling her eyes.

I arch my brow in challenge, pinning my mate with a disapproving scowl. She softens slightly, lowering her eyes to the ground and making my wolf purr with pleasure. Instead I look to Devon,"

Why didn't you tell me?

Before he can answer I catch Matthew and Nina exchanging a worried glance, with the latter shifting nervously on her feet. Before anyone says a word, I realize that something isn't adding up."

Wait a minute," I say, turning back to Jane. "When did you find out?" Ryder had said they would have been here sooner if it wasn't for Jane's hospitalization, which means they must have had at least 24 hours notice before my surgery. So why hadn't I heard from them? If Jane was determined enough to drive through the night to reach me, surely she would have tried contacting me in other ways.

"Paisley told me on your last night in the Dark Moon pack, Jane remarks smoothly.

Unfortunately, I went into labor before I could confront you. As for why no one told you about my condition?" She turns her fiery eyes on Nina. "I think that's a question for your fiancée. Didn't you wonder why she rushed you out of the city so quickly?"

My wolf surges to the surface, but I instinctively sense that it's too soon for him to emerge. I'm not strong enough yet, even if this conversation is pushing my temper right to the edge. "Jane, please take the pups back to the waiting room. I need a word with Nina, Matthew and Devon"

I want to stay." Jane counters immediately. The pups can go to the supervised children's play area of course, this prompts the pups to immediately object as well, insisting they should stay too.

I wasn't asking I reply stonily, letting some of Alpha influence enter my tone. The pups obediently climb down off the bed, but my stubborn mate is another matter entirely. Jane squirms in response to the power washing over her, but she doesn't budge, instead digging in her little heels and shooting me mutinous glances from beneath her lashes. Oh Goddess, don't look at me like that, baby. I think, wishing I could kiss her pouting lips without ruining everything. I lower my lips to her ear, unable to keep the gravel out of my voice. "Be a good girl and go have a snack or put your feet up for a bit." I command. "

Trust me, I'm nowhere near being finished with you, but right now I need to sort a few things out with this lot."

Jane peeks up at me uncertainly, but my words seem to mollify her. She leads the pups out of the room, cradling her pregnant belly in one hand. As soon as their footsteps disappear into the distance,

I turn on the three remaining wolves. "What the fuck happened?"

Slowly the story comes out. First about Jane's collapse in the apartment, and Nina's insistence that Devon remove her before I could learn the truth. Then the hidden-phone calls and subterfuge to keep Jane from getting in contact before my surgery.

"We were just trying to follow your wishes." Nina concludes mildly, reaching for my hand.

I jerk it away. "Don't you dare." I growl. "You knew I would want to know about Jane. Otherwise, you wouldn't have conspired to get me out of the city before I could find out. You knew I would delay the surgery."

"And if you had then it might have been too late!

Nina exclaims defensively. "Jane and the pups are fine, we had to do what was necessary to ensure you would be too."

"But you didn't know she was fine!" I thunder, rattling the curtain rods surrounding the bed. "She might have needed me, but you intentionally kept me in the dark and we both know it wasn't for my sake! It was for yours!"

"Don't take this the wrong way Ethan, but you've been doing exactly the same thing to Jane for months" Devon interjects, frowning deeply. "What you're feeling now is a fraction of what you put her through."

I know that!" I hiss. "But Jane has never been a danger to me! I kept her in the dark to protect her, you kept me in the dark when she might have really needed me!"

"We were just trying to fulfill your wishes..."

Matthew insists, speaking up for the first time.

We thought that you wanted to keep her as far away as possible."

I turn to glare at Matthew, "I wanted to keep her away from me, not neglect her when she was in trouble"

"You can't have it both ways, Ethan" Devon counters gruffly, "You can't keep Jane out of your life and still ask for the right to interfere in hers

"Why not?" I demand. "What is so wrong with wanting to care for her from a distance? I disqualified myself as her mate a long time ago.

I'm just trying to make amends."

"It sounds more like you're trying to punish yourself" Devon grumbles, "you've decided you aren't good enough and you don't even care whether she and the pups agree" He scrubs his hand over his face, looking exhausted "Look brother, I know I'm not exactly your favorite person right now, and I probably don't have any business advising you about anything after my own deception but Jane is a big girl and she knows what she wants. At a certain point you have to stop patronizing her and respect her own right to decide what's best for her.

I destroyed her I remind him, my frustration growing more profound with every word of this conversation. "I did unforgivable things which can never take back Jane might be willing to forgive me, but that's not because I deserve forgiveness it's because she's too kind for her own good."

The others stare at the ground, unable to argue with my logic "I want better for Jane than she would want for herself, and if that's a crime then you can just add it to my list of offenses. It will certainly have plenty of company." I continue, replete with renewed certainty. "Punishing myself isn't a bad thing when it's warranted. I probably deserved to die, but the Goddess saw fit to give me a second chance and I'm not going to waste it."

Matthew shakes his head, "Ethan, has it occurred to you that giving Jane what she wants might be better for her, even if the thing she wants is you?

"Matthew, every time I try to do the right thing in this relationship, it ends up backfiring horribly. I grit out, lifting my fingers to list off the evidence I tried to protect her by putting her on house arrest, and she was demeaned and demoralized. I tried to convince her to stay with me, and our pups were kidnapped and they all almost died. I tried to break things off to keep her out of harm's way, and in doing so I crushed her spirit and pushed her into the arms of a vampire! I exclaim, glancing apologetically at Devon and adding, "no offense.

"None taken He remarks dryly.

The point is that I can't be trusted to be anywhere near Jane or my pups, because one way or another, I'll find a way to ruin it! I'm a broken person." I look to Nina then, "Besides, I'm a man of my word, and I made a promise."

Nina blinks, "You mean.. are you saying that we can still get married?"

I nod. "I'm not happy with you right now, but yes.

When I'm well enough and things with Jane and the pups are settled, we'll get married just like we planned.

"And how are you going to settle things with Jane?" Devon inquires.

"That's why I wanted to talk to you all." I answer.

I need your help – just one last time."

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