

The Luna and her Quadruplet Pups

Chapter 5. My little angel

Jane

“You’re lying!” The sales woman immediately argues. “Elise Carrington is one of the wealthiest women in the world. She would never set a foot outside in such drab clothes.”

Glancing down at my jeans and fitted black top, I press my hand to my cheek in faux shock, “How strange!” I exclaim, “I was sure I’d worn my ball gown today. I always try to be as uncomfortable as possible when I fly.”

The women’s faces scrunch up in confusion. Clearly they don’t understand sarcasm. “I was traveling today.” I drawl derisively, “I’m rich, not crazy.”

“What you are, is a liar!” The indignant she-wolf accuses, turning towards her colleague with the phone. “Call security right now.”

“As I said, I know what my perfumes smell like, and this is a fake – as is the one you’re wearing.” I add calmly

“That’s not possible!” She objects swiftly. “My boyfriend bought this for me last year, and he spent thousands of dollars.” She eagerly called the security guard over, “Get this liar out of here!”

“Suit yourself.” I scoff, “It’s your funeral.”

“What are you talking about?” She hisses. “What does a lowly b***h like you know about any of this?”

“I’m helping you.” I inform her simply. “Let me guess, your boyfriend bought that bottle here?” Sighing, I remove a travel-sized bottle of perfume from my purse. “This is the real product.” Snatching up a strip of test paper, I spray a bit on the end, then do the same on another paper with the fake.

Handing the first to the mortified she-wolf, I explain, “Top notes of moonflower, night-blooming jasmine, and rare orchids, with basenotes of wolfswood and patchouli.”

Exchanging the papers I elaborate, “But this one doesn’t have the orchids or wolfswood, which are extremely expensive and difficult to find. Instead it has aconite, which smells similar and is infinitely cheaper, but it can also be quite toxic if you have long-term exposure.”

The woman’s skin is turning a sickly shade of green as her sharp wolf nose notes the distinct difference. “A-aconite?” She repeats nervously.

Nodding I purse my lips, “More commonly known as wolfsbane. Whoever created this counterfeit obviously thought it could only harm you if ingested, but I assure you it can be absorbed through the skin. Have you had any symptoms of illness lately?”

“No.” She gulps, “I…”

“She fainted last week!” One of her colleagues steps forward, the woman clearly possessing more sense than my accuser.

The woman in question could no longer speak, clearly refusing to accept that she’d been fooled, but unable to come up with an alternate explanation.

“Oh my Goddess.” The second saleswoman gasps, “We’ve got to get these off the shelves immediately.”

“You do.” I agree, “and you should get a medical exam right away.” I inform the first woman, adding, “I would also advise washing off the fragrance.” As she runs to the restrooms, I turn to her colleague. “And now I’d like a word with your superior.”

Eve

When I finally stroll into the boutique an hour later, I stop dead in my tracks. Everyone is in an uproar, and all the La Louve fragrance counters are empty. “What is the meaning of this?!” I demand.

I’ve never seen a picture of Elise Carrington. She’s famously secretive and never lets herself be photographed or interviewed by the press. I always assumed she must be hideously deformed or something, but the woman in front of me now is anything but. I can only see her back, but a cascade of lustrous golden hair falls down her back and while she’s quite petite, her lithe figure is curved in all the right places.

She turns when she hears my voice, and my heart stops in my chest. It can’t be.

The woman offers me a lethal smile and strides forward, extending her hand. “Elise Carrington, La Louve Founder and CEO.”

Shaking myself out of my stupor, I take her hand. She looks exactly like Jane, but Ethan’s ex-wife died years ago. Besides she was nothing like the strong, confident woman standing in front of me now... still, their resemblance is absolutely uncanny.

“Eve LaRue.” I introduce myself, straightening my shoulders, taking control again.

“Would you like to tell me what’s going on?”

“Well it would seem you’ve been selling counterfeit perfumes, with toxic ingredients no less.” She replies smoothly. Her voice is the same too, those light, lyrical notes Ethan always adored.

s**t. I think anxiously, how the hell did she find out. Feigning ignorance, I clasp my hand over my mouth, “What?” I cry, “That can’t be!”

The ghost of Jane narrows her eyes, and I’m sure she sees through my act. “I’m sorry to tell you it’s the truth.” She gives me a cunning smile. “But once you’ve gotten rid of the fakes, I’d be happy to strike a deal with you to carry the line in your lovely shop.”

Fury pulses through me, I can’t afford to continue selling the fake fragrances now that La Louve knows about the fraud, and I can’t enter a deal with this woman. I’m more convinced she’s Ethan’s ex-wife with every moment that passes, and I can’t risk having her around. I’m this close to finally winning the Alpha’s affection, and that will never happen if Jane returns.

Politely apologizing and making a vague, entirely false, promise about connecting with her office to discuss the deal, I usher her out of the shop. The moment she’s gone I whip out my cell and dial my private investigator. “Drop everything, I need you to investigate someone for me, and it can’t wait.”

Jane

When I step out of Eve’s boutique, relieved to have the matter solved without any disasters, I’m scarcely paying attention to my surroundings. That was close. I couldn’t

let the toxic perfumes continue to be sold under my label, as such a scandal could destroy my entire business and livelihood. Still it was risky, I wasn't sure Eve would buy my act – fake name or not.

I'm so distracted going back over every word of our conversation that I almost run straight into a little girl in a pink dress. "Oh my goodness, I'm so sorry!" I exclaim, looking down at the pup in surprise. Doing a double take, I say, "Riley?"

I realize with a jolt that this girl looks exactly like my daughter, but she couldn't be. I stare at her so intently that I forgot to breathe. I know she isn't Riley... which can only mean one thing.

"You're pretty." The pup tilts her head up and smiles so widely I can't help but grin as well. "I can't find my daddy, can you help me find him?"