

Chapter 56 - Out of Control

Jane

Staring down at the altar where Ethan and I were married fills me with both joy and pain. It looks exactly the same as it had that night, and if I close my eyes I can almost imagine that I'm eighteen again: full of love and hope, my biggest worry in the entire world being that I wouldn't be accepted at Ethan's chosen mate.

I was so foolish – so naive. Our honeymoon didn't even last a day. When we returned to the city the next morning, we were expecting a blowout fight with Ethan's parents, but it turned out that the best night of our lives was followed by one of the hardest days we'd ever experience. Ethan's father had died of a sudden heart attack in the night, and suddenly my eighteen-year-old husband was forced to defend his right to become Alpha. He fought and defeated more than a dozen wolves before he could bury his father or announce our marriage.

However when the dust finally did settle, there was no one left to object to his choice of mate. Ethan Blackwell was Alpha once and for all, and we had been married before the Goddess. We made history in more ways than one. Ethan become the youngest Alpha the NightFang

However when the dust finally did settle, there was no one left to object to his choice of mate. Ethan Blackwell was Alpha once and for all, and we had been married before the Goddess. We made history in more ways than one. Ethan become the youngest Alpha the NightFang pack had ever known, and I became the first omega Luna. A few months later we had a second, more formal wedding with half the pack in attendance, but from that day on I had a target on my back, even though I didn't know it yet.

"You promised I wouldn't regret marrying you." I state softly. "You lied."

"I know." Ethan admits, his voice full of regret. "I broke a lot of promises we made that day."

"Why did you bring me here?" I ask, feeling my eyes burn with the threat of tears.

"I thought you'd like it." He answers simply. "No matter what happened afterwards, I'd like to think that night is still a good memory for you."

"It's a painful memory." I lie. I've returned to that night far too many times to count in my dreams, and though I wouldn't change having my pups for anything, part of me still wishes we could go back to such a simple time.

"I think you wanted to confuse me with the past or guilt me for leaving you."

Fat grey clouds are swirling in the distance, reflecting my sullen mood. If confusing me was his intention it absolutely worked, especially since the bastard is still touching me and making my body feel too many things it shouldn't. I try to shake him off, but there's nowhere to run in this damned balloon.

"Actually I planned this before you came clean." Ethan says, surprising me, "I was going to use it to try to make you admit your true identity, but I went ahead with it after you confessed because it's a special place for us both."

Not for the first time, I wonder at how calmly he's behaved about everything I did to get away from him – as if he thinks this is all some big game. "Why don't you care?" I ask suddenly, unable to contain my curiosity.

"Care about what?" He replies,

Throwing up my hands, some of the Champagne sloshes out of my glass, and I turn on Ethan. "That I had an affair, that I left you and faked my death?"

"I do care." He answers evenly, lifting my hand to his lips, and licking the spilled drink from my skin. The feeling of his tongue lapped at the sparkling droplet erases all thought from my brain for a moment, particularly as I remember how talented his tongue is elsewhere.

Regaining my senses, I focus on his words with

considerable effort. "It doesn't seem like it." I grumble, shortly followed by, "would you stop that!"

Sucking my finger into his mouth and giving it one last, luxurious lick, he grins at my flushed expression. "Trust me Janey, I care." He assures me, releasing me only long enough to pour a bit more wine. "I'm just more relieved that you're alive, than I am angry about your trick. And don't get me started about your supposed affair." He adds wryly.

"So what, you're just going to let your anger go?" I scoff, not understanding how this could be the same man who reacted so brutally to my attack on Eve. I used to think that being Alpha must have corrupted him – how else could the loving man I married be so cruel? Now I'm beginning to wonder if he's not simply an incredible actor. Maybe this is what he does when he isn't in control: he pretends to be affectionate and caring in order to get what he wants, then shows his true colors when the time is right.

Ethan arches a brow. "Would you rather I punish you?"

My hackles instantly raise, "Of course not – I've had enough of your punishment for a lifetime." I snap.

"And that's why." He announces cryptically, a flash of some undecipherable emotion darting across his too-handsome features.

"Why you're letting it go?" I clarify, not quite believing my ears.

"Consider it time served." He remarks absently, staring past me with a furrowed brow. "That's strange." He says, more to himself than to me.

"You're what's strange." I mutter under my breath, "One minute you're coming on to me so strongly I have to practically jump out of the balloon to escape, the next you're actually being reasonable and then you go all moody, not even paying attention to our –"

"Jane!" Ethan interrupts my grumbling, and for the first time I catch a note of worry in his voice. He's no longer holding his Champagne glass, instead he's fiddling with the balloon's rigging, his movements swift and purposeful. Cocking my head as I watch him work, I belatedly realize that it's gotten oddly dark out. A few moments ago the sunset was still blazing around us, but this seems much too quick for it to already be over.

Turning around with a sense of rising dread, I can only blink in shock and horror at the huge black clouds barreling towards us, blocking out the stunning sunset and moving so fast that the wind must be gusting. "I thought you said you checked the weather."

"I did." Ethan answers through gritted teeth, "there weren't any storms in the forecast. It was completely

clear.”

“Right.” I utter simply, licking my lips. “What do we do?”

My voice sounds strange to my own ears, and I flinch as lightning flashes violently in the approaching maelstrom.

“We try to land before it hits us.” He explains, lowering the flame suspended beneath the red envelope.

“Is that going to be possible?” I squeak, already feeling the icy gusts of wind pelting my skin.

“We’re sure as hell going to try.” Ethan pronounces, raising his voice so he can be heard over the approaching thunder.

“What should I do? Can I help?” I question, my pulse beginning to race.

“The best thing you can do is just hunker down and wait it out, baby.” He instructs, guiding me to one corner of the basket and helping me lower myself into a crouch.

“I’ll get us out of this.”

In nine out of ten dangerous situations I would insist on helping, on not standing by and letting a big strong man save me. However right now I’m completely out of my league, and I don’t have the first clue what to do. Even Ethan, who knows how to fly this damned contraption, is powerless to a certain degree. All he can do is get us to the ground as fast as possible, but the little I know about balloons tells me that the colder the air is around us, the

harder it will be for us to land.


When the storm finally collides with us, the balloon is instantly sent spinning, and I cry out with fear, clutching the sides of the basket. To see Ethan standing up, still battling with the controls in the middle of such a gale makes me feel sick. A clap of thunder louder than any gunshot releases a torrent of rain. It pelts us at such a slant it seems almost horizontal, instantly soaking us both. I want to shout for Ethan to sit down, but I don't think he can. I keep imagining one good burst of wind knocking him over the side of the basket, but all I can do is wrap my arms around my knees and pray to the Goddess that we'll be alright.

I have to make it home, I think desperately, I can't leave my pups on their own. They're too little, they need me. The only other time I've known fear this strong was the night of Paisley's surgery, but this is fear of a different kind. This is the fear of knowing my own life could end at any moment, and Ethan's as well. It's bad enough to imagine leaving the kids without one parent, but to lose both is too terrible to contemplate. That's the only reason I'm so afraid for him, I tell myself. I wouldn't care if it wasn't for the kids.

The basket is spinning and shaking, the flame completely gone out as we hurtle through the air. Then, just as

another thunder clap draws a scream from my lips, I hear a vicious tearing sound as the nylon balloon rips wide open.



 I want no ads >