

Chapter 58 - Going Home

Jane

As my lashes flutter open, I struggle to place my surroundings. I'm lying on the cold, hard ground but my body is cushioned on all sides by warm, soft fur. Ethan's scent envelopes me like a security blanket; familiar, irresistible and only too cozy.

He purrs as I stir, his powerful muscles constricting around me as if trying to hold me closer. My mind grapples for memories of last night, trying to figure out how we ended up here. After a moment everything comes rushing back to me, and I'm instantly glad I'm in wolf form or I would be blushing scarlet.

I can't believe I let Ethan get the better of me that way. I can't believe how shamelessly I flirted with him – my Goddess, I practically did a strip tease. What on earth was I thinking? My wolf is practically glowing with happiness to be wrapped up in his proverbial arms, but all this incident has shown me is how weak my will is, even after all this time. There is no way I can possibly move in with him – if I lose this much control over a little balloon accident, what's going to happen when I have one too many glasses of wine, or when I feel a little

move in with him – if I lose this much control over a little balloon accident, what's going to happen when I have one too many glasses of wine, or when I feel a little bit too lonely late at night?

Hesitantly rousing myself, I manage to shake off Ethan's big limbs and shift back into my human form. The next thing I know the warm fur at my back disappears, and a pair of muscular arms circle my body. "Good morning, beautiful." Ethan murmurs in my ear, kissing my shoulder.

"Oh no you don't." I snap over my shoulder, pushing him off, and searching for my discarded clothes. "There's not going to be any of that."

"You can't blame me for trying." He chuckles.

"Oh yes I absolutely can." I grumble, glancing at my ex-husband and instantly regretting it. He's standing behind me completely naked, every inch of his bronze skin on display, muscles rippling as he stretches and yawns. Unable to stop myself, I let my eyes wander down below his waist, and now I really am bright red.

Though I will never admit it, I've fantasized about having Ethan back in my bed many times over the years. Whatever happened between us, there's no denying how talented he is in the bedroom. Still, I thought my memory was tricking me into imagining his... lets say skills...

were more prodigious than they truly were in reality. However the evidence is currently staring me in the face, and if anything I think my memory undersold him.

"You like what you see?" Ethan's deep voice reaches my ears, and if it's possible I feel my flush spread.

"No," I lie stubbornly, turning away and pulling on my panties. "You've really let yourself go, Ethan."

"Mhmm." He chuckles, prowling forward until he's standing so close behind me that I can feel the heat pouring off his body in waves. "Is that why I can smell your ar-"

"Hey!" I object, clutching my shirt over my bare breasts and pivoting to poke him in the chest. "Gentlemen do not point out that kind of thing."

"Then it's a good thing I'm not a gentleman." He grins.

"You've got that right." I mutter, pulling on my top without pausing to don my bra. Every moment I spend naked with this man is like a ticking time bomb.

"How are we going to get home?" I ask, looking around. The last time we came here we drove.

"We'll have to hike down to the road and hope someone will give us a ride." He reasons.

"Great." I remark dryly, "first you take a balloon into a hurricane, now you want to hitchhike. You know, near

death experiences aren't usually considered ideal date activities."

"Oh, so this is still part of the date?" Ethan quips, arching one of his dark brows. "Does that mean you'll let me hold your hand?"

"Not in this lifetime romeo." I answer, swatting the hand he has extended towards me as we set out of the cave.

"Do you think the pups are okay?" I fret, "they must be really freaked out that we never came home."

Ethan sighs, "I know, but there's not anything we can do about it. We just have to get home as fast as we can." He squeezes my arm, "They're tough pups, they'll pull through."

"I hope you're right."

At that moment, Ryder, Parker, Paisley and Riley were eagerly putting their heads together, trying to speak softly enough that their babysitter wouldn't overhear. "So you put rats in the 'partment?" Paisley asked, barely containing a giggle.

"We 'leased them two days 'go." Riley confirmed.

Paisley couldn't help herself. She laughed out loud, and her siblings couldn't resist joining in. "How many?"

"Twelve." Ryder chortled, his young face lit up with glee.

"Mommy hasn't noticed yet, but she will!"

"Then she'll be sure to move us." Parker concluded, "Mommy hates messes, and rats are super messy."

"I can't wait!" Paisley exclaims, "I've always wanted a big family."

"We can all live together, forever!" Parker agreed.

"And our plan might 'ready be working!" Riley added happily, "if they didn't come home last night, they must be having a really good time."

"I bet they're kissing." Ryder suggested, clasping his hands over his mouth, tickled by his own joke. The others chuckled along happily, completely unaware there was any act more intimate than this.

"Why'd they split up in da first place?" Paisley asked the others, voicing a question that had been bothering her for some time. "I asks Daddy and all he said was they're playing hide and seek."

"I dunno." Riley frowned, "Mommy's never 'ven talked 'bout Daddy before - but she always seems really sad when we asks."

"Daddy's seemed sad too." Paisley nodded. "He's been a gazillion times happier ever since she came back."

"Mommy's seemed happier too." Parker shared. "Auntie Linda says she's 'flicted... or something like that. I think it

means confused, but she keeps humming and smiling for no reason. She never used to do that.”

Riley shook her head in annoyance, “Grown ups can be so silly. It’s right in front of deir faces and dey don’t even see it.”

A few hours later when Jane and Ethan came through the door, apologies raining from their lips, the pups looked up at them in confusion. “Why’re you sorry?” Ryder asked, thinking his parents were very odd indeed. “We’ve been having so much fun!”

“We should stay here all da time, Mommy!” Parker beamed.

Jane sent a meaningful glance in Ethan’s direction, just barely missing him cover up his smile. “You weren’t worried when we didn’t come home last night?”

“Course not!” Riley laughed, “We knew you were safe with da Alpha.”

Now Jane did catch Ethan grinning, as he made no effort to hide it. Instead he put his arm around her shoulders and beamed at the children. “That’s right kids,” He proclaimed, “Your Mommy is safe as long as she’s with me.”

“And on that note, we really should be going.” Jane announced, to the sound of four dramatic groans. “Come on, now, you’ve had lots of time together, I don’t want to

hear any complaints.”

As the pups gathered their things, Ethan pulled Jane to the side. “Have you thought any more about my proposal?”

Jane glanced at the kids nervously, “Hey, careful. If the kids hear that word they might think you mean something very different.”

Ethan didn’t look the least bit dissuaded, “Is that a yes?”

“I don’t think it’s a good idea.” Jane confessed, “There’s too much history and it’s just too complicated. I don’t want things to be harder for Paisley, but I also don’t want to get the others’ hopes up about…”

“About me?” Ethan guessed when she trailed off. “Why would that be a concern when Eric is in the picture?”

“Well that’s the other thing.” Jane relayed honestly, “Eric isn’t wild about the idea of his fiancée moving in with her ex.”

“Fine.” Ethan grumbled, “We’ll leave the matter open for now.”

“No.” Jane argued, “this is my decision.”

“You only thought about it for a couple of days, and one of those was under some pretty stressful circumstances.”

Ethan reasoned, “do us both a favor, and give it some more time.”

“You’re right.” Jane conceded, “I might have agreed if it

hadn't been for the date."

Anger flashed in Ethan's eyes, but he didn't argue. He knew better than to push Jane when she was already digging in her heels. Jane left with Ryder, Parker and Riley, feeling a sense of calm to finally be returning home and to have things semi-settled with Ethan. She didn't know if he'd still let her take Paisley when her time in the city was up, but she knew she might never get out of the NightFang territory if she took that risk with Ethan.

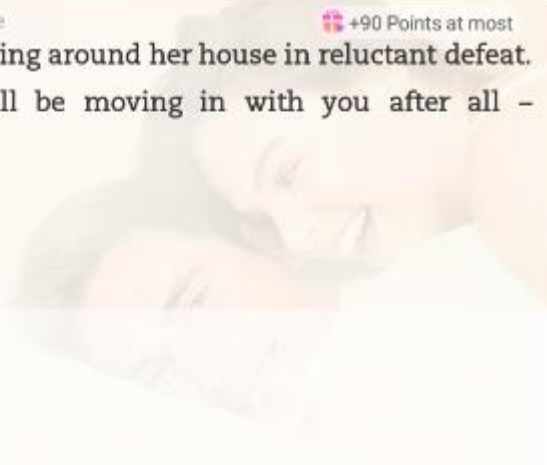
Of course her light mood only lasted as long as it took them to make the short walk home. As soon as she opened the door, she smelled the rats, and when she flicked the lightswitch, she saw they're scurrying bodies. "Oh my goddess." She exclaimed, putting a hand out to stop the children from going inside. There were droppings everywhere, and she could see from here that the electrical wires on more than one of her appliances had been chewed through. "How on earth!" She exclaimed, dropping her head back in exasperation, "I don't believe this."

Taking a deep breath, Jane pulled out her phone and dialed Ethan's number. He picked up almost instantly. "Hello gorgeous, you miss me already?"

"No." She growled, "But I have sort of a situation here."

Jane sighed, staring around her house in reluctant defeat.

"I think we will be moving in with you after all - immediately."



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