

## Chapter 59 - Moving Day

Jane

Jane couldn't believe this was happening.

If it were anything else, she would simply grit her teeth and bear the inconvenience, but rats are magnets for disease and there were so many visible that she couldn't even imagine how many were hiding out of sight. So much for the fancy new apartment. She thought, already planning some very choice words for her leasing agent.

Ethan's voice hardened on the other end of the line, "Is everything okay? Are you in trouble?"

"Down boy." Jane answered simply, "there's no danger, unless you count the danger of me puking in disgust. We appear to have a rat infestation – and a big one at that." Peeking into the apartment, she shuddered when she saw a handful of long, hairless tails slipping away beneath her expensive furnishings.

Jane could almost feel Ethan relax through the phone, and she was certain she heard the start of a smile in his voice. "The babysitter is still here, I'll be over in a sec to help you."

"Ethan," She stopped him, feeling suddenly very

overwhelmed. "This is the only reason I'm agreeing. If I had another choice I'd take it."

If Ethan's thoughts followed the same train as Jane's – which told her she had a thousand other choices ranging from going back to Linda's, to getting a hotel or simply leaving the city early – he had the sense not to voice them. "Of course, Janey."

After she hung up, she looked down at the curious faces of her babies. "Well munchkins you got your wish, we're going to go stay with Ethan and Paisley." Jane dragged an exhausted hand through her long hair, "And I'm starting to think I have a seriously self-destructive streak."

"Wha's a self-structive streak?" Riley asked promptly, even while she and the boys dance around in celebration.

"Something grown ups have that makes them do things they know they shouldn't." Jane explained with a frown.

"You mean like when I wanna cookie, but you tell me to wait 'til after dinner, so I sneak it out a the jar behind you?" The little girl asked without even a hint of shame.

"Something like that." Jane agreed with a wry smile.

"Is okay, Mommy." Parker straightened up to join the conversation. "Everyone makes 'stakes sometimes."

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The next day, Eric arrived bright and early to help Jane

move all of their things out of the condo and into Ethan's penthouse, to the Alpha's extreme displeasure. Luckily they'd only just moved into the apartment, so lots of their boxes hadn't yet been unpacked. It was merely a matter of moving things from one place to another.

Jane had asked for Eric's assistance, worried that Ethan was already getting the wrong idea about her presence in his home. However if she was being honest with herself, her real fear was that she liked being back there far too much. Their first night in the apartment had been one of the most surreal and wonderful nights of her life. After everything that had happened with Eve, Petra had checked herself into a spa for a full week to try and recover, unable to wrap her mind around the terrible turn of events, so the young family had the penthouse all to themselves.

Ethan cooked dinner with his own two hands, and Jane got to have a meal with her entire family together for the very first time. Afterwards they gave the pups baths and put them to bed, all piling onto Paisley's bed for a fairy story before being tucked in with hugs and kisses from both their parents – for the first time in their lives. Once they were settled Ethan poured Jane a glass of wine and cleaned up while she took a bubble bath, before they settled on the couch to watch a movie. Jane fell asleep

cuddled up against Ethan, and didn't even wake when he carried her to her bed a little while later.

When she woke up in the morning Jane called Linda before the sun was even up, letting her old friend talk her down from a panic attack before reaching out to Eric. He promised to come to her aid without hesitation, and when he arrived after breakfast Jane didn't have to fake her joy at seeing him. She threw her arms around his neck and let him lift her feet straight off the ground, before kissing her soundly. Ethan and the pups looked on with disappointment, but they were too far away to hear Jane's whispers of thanks to her fake fiance.

"I'm in so far over my head." She admitted as they packed clothes into suitcases a little while later.

"Honestly Eric, what am I going to do?"

"Listen, it's a step in the right direction," Eric assured her, taking her by shoulders and speaking in a low, comforting tone. "You can do this, Jane. It's a few months and then you get to bring Paisley home once and for all."

"I know," Jane moaned, feeling completely beside herself. The previous night hadn't been as close a call as their time together after the balloon crash, but it had tempted her horribly. "But Ethan – he knows all my weaknesses, he knows how to get to me like no one else."

"Do you want me to talk to him?" Eric offered, a harsh note in his voice that wasn't there a moment ago.

"And say what?" Jane questioned. "Stay away from my woman?" She joked.

"Why not? If you want him to believe this thing between us is real, I can't just paw you all over in front of him – not that I mind." He added, flashing a wolfish grin. "I have to act the way he'd expect a true contender to act, and that means confronting him when he pushes you too hard."

"But what good will that do?" Jane countered, "other than riling him up?"

"It will make him take our engagement seriously." Eric reasoned.

"Fine." Jane sighed, "just promise me you'll keep it civil."

"That won't be a problem." He assured her. He had every intention of doing whatever was necessary to protect his future with Jane, and nothing was a bigger threat to that than Ethan.

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After a very long morning of moving boxes, suitcases and bags between the two apartments, Jane took the pups out to lunch, promising to bring take out back to Ethan and Eric and hoping their conversation went smoothly. Inside, she knew the chances of this were very small indeed.

She'd heard Ethan growling every time Eric touched her, and she genuinely thought he might attack the other man when he saw him playing with Paisley.

As soon as Jane and the pups were out the door, Eric turned on the powerful NightFang Alpha. "Let me guess." Ethan smirked, eyeing his opponent up and down, "You're going to set me straight about pursuing Jane when you've already staked your claim."

"This isn't about my claim, it's about her wishes. She left you for a reason, Blackwell." Eric replied stiffly. "She doesn't want you."

"If that was true, she wouldn't need you here to do her bidding." Ethan combatted, "If she didn't want me, she wouldn't be so worried about giving in to me."

"I've got news for you, if you have to make a woman "give in" to you, you're a predator." Eric stated fiercely.

"Of course I'm a predator." Ethan growled, "all true Alpha's are, and like it or not Jane is an omega, it's in her nature to run, even when she wants to be caught."

"You make me sick." Eric announced, "Goddess knows how an amazing she-wolf like Jane ever fell for you in the first place, but it's a blessing she finally came to her senses."

"You don't have the first clue about what happened between us, do you?" Ethan asked, offering him a lethal



grin. "It doesn't sound like there's much trust in your relationship if she hasn't even shared her past with you."

"I know you must have mistreated that incredible woman horribly for her to be as skittish as she is." Eric growled, "if there's not trust between us, it's because you traumatized her."

"You don't give Jane enough credit." Ethan informed him coldly. "She's one of the strongest women I've ever met."

"Maybe she's only as strong as she is because she had to survive you." Eric argued back.

"I made plenty of mistakes in our marriage, but Jane was a force of nature long before I fucked things up." Ethan declared.

"Well at least you have that much sense." Eric hissed, "But the bottom line remains, you don't deserve Jane, and I certainly don't want you anywhere near our pups."

That was the last straw, Eric's wolf was ready and waiting to burst free the moment Ethan attacked, and he knew only too well this taunt would provoke him into doing just that. With a thundering snarl, Ethan launched himself at the other man. He shifted in mid-air, transforming into a huge black wolf moments before he collided with the other man.

