

Chapter 67 – Reliving the Past

“No.” I protest. “It isn’t possible, whatever happened between us in the past, however badly Ethan might want the kids, Ethan would never harm his mother. He’s been devastated by her loss.” I explain, feeling confused but increasingly confident Eric is on the wrong track.

“Devastated by loss, or guilt?” Eric suggests ominously.

“The investigators said a woman killed her.” I remind him, “If Ethan had done it her head wouldn’t have even been on her neck anymore.”

“Well of course they did, you’re being framed for the crime Jane, it would have to look like a woman did it whether it actually was or not.” Eric insists. “And that man almost killed me for merely suggesting the pups weren’t his. You think he wouldn’t take extreme action to keep them?”

“You don’t know Ethan like I do.” I insist, “He loved his mother.”

“You’re right, I don’t know him like you. But I know how he talks about you and your family when you’re not there and he’s not trying to charm you, I know the kinds of things Alphas do behind closed doors to stay in power.” He leans forward, “You have a big heart, and your

empathy for his loss is blinding you.”

“My big heart isn’t the only problem with your theory.” I sigh, “Ethan doesn’t only want the kids, he wants me too. He can’t have me if I’m behind bars.”

“He kept you out of prison once before didn’t he?” Eric asked, “didn’t you say there were assault charges which had been dropped? Wasn’t that the start of all your problems with him?”

Suddenly I realize he’s right. If I was blamed for Petra’s death, Ethan could keep the kids and take me prisoner again, as an excuse to punish me without putting me in jail – just like last time. A moment ago I was flushed with indignation, but now I feel all the blood draining from my face.

“What exactly happened with you two?” Eric asked. He clearly pieced together part of the story through my account of my interrogation and clues over the years, but I’ve only ever told Linda about just how bad things got.

Somewhere in the back of my mind, I can’t help but think Eric might not want me so badly if he knew how low Ethan had brought me. That self destructive spark inside me is flaring up again, because I can already feel myself thinking I won’t have to decide about dating Eric if he decides he doesn’t want me.

“It was a misunderstanding, one gone terribly wrong.” I

murmur. “Eve concocted the entire scheme, but I don’t know how she did it.”

“What happened?” Eric questioned again.

“I’ve never been able to talk about it.” I admit, but even as I say it, I don’t feel the usual pressure tying my tongue, the helpless silence locking the truth inside me. “It was my graduation trip after college. It was just supposed to be a simply girl’s trip, but we were attacked by rogues the moment we got across the border. They were waiting for us, and the moment we came in sight they attacked. The strange thing was that they only went for Petra.” I explain, amazed I’ve even been able to share this much.

“This is so strange,” I admit, “I wonder if Petra’s death somehow broke the spell. I’ve never been able to get one word out about that day.” I continue. “They attacked Petra, they were going to rape her and it was like I was completely frozen. I wanted to help her, I kept trying to intervene but I was paralyzed. I couldn’t speak or twitch a single muscle. Until Eve tried to step in, and then I could move, but not in any way I chose. I lunged for her, I took her down. I knew what I was doing, but I didn’t want to and couldn’t stop. It was like I was someone else’s puppet.”

Eric reaches out and takes my hand, offering me silent support. The words are pouring out of me now, and I

catch myself speeding up, as if I'm afraid I'll lose the ability to speak again before I can finish. "After Eve passed out, the rogues just disappeared. I knew then and there it was a setup. They could have attacked all of us - I mean I was Luna, I was most valuable, but they only chose Petra and then they left for no reason. I got my body back, but not my voice. I couldn't say a word to defend myself to anyone, even Ethan."

"It took me a while to figure out that Eve was behind it, but I saw what happened after. Petra had never liked me, but now she hated me and completely adored Eve. Eve lost her wolf in the attack and so Ethan moved her into the penthouse, and they started an affair, and Petra was advocating for them to be married."

"And Ethan?" Eric encourages, "What did he do?"

"He convinced Eve and Petra to drop the charges against me, but he didn't let me go unpunished. He demoted me from Luna, he made me nothing more than his concubine. I wasn't permitted to work, I stopped having anything to do with leading the pack and was taken completely out of the public eye. I wasn't allowed to leave the house without his permission." My voice shakes as I recount those horrible days. "My entire life became servicing Ethan. I basically lived in house arrest, waiting for him to decide when he wanted a fuck and

listening to Eve's stories about their love affair."

"I thought he'd thrown me over for her and was just keeping me as a toy." I close my eyes, unable to look him in the eye. "Later I learned that there was never anything between them at all. Ethan took my status but he couldn't stay away, he couldn't bring himself to throw me out. So in his mind, he thought he was depriving me of my privileges as punishment for my crimes, but in reality I was just imprisoned for something I didn't do – degraded and demeaned for over a year."

"What hurt the worst is that he believed them so easily, he believed I would just abandon Petra and attack Eve for trying to help her. I couldn't speak to defend myself, but he just accepted their word. We'd been together since we were fifteen – he knew me better than anyone. And then, like he'd just snapped our bond in two, he treated me like a cheap whore."

The hand Eric has over my mind is shaking now, and he pulls me towards him. I don't even realize I'm crying until he wipes the tears from my eyes. "It's not your fault, sweetheart." He murmurs, hugging me tightly.

I let myself take comfort from him for a few moments. I don't feel the way I do when Ethan touches me – full of excitement, butterflies and heat, but I do feel safe. When I pull away, swiping at my cheeks, I glance around the

shop to make sure our little scene didn't draw too much attention. Luckily there weren't many other customers.

"I know how hard that was for you," Eric acknowledges tenderly, "but there are a couple of things I'm not sure you realize you admitted, Jane."

"What do you mean?" I question.

"You just told me Eve's wolf was paralyzed in the attack." He reminds me. "If she doesn't have a wolf, how did she attack Petra?"

Blinking, I frown up at him, "Maybe she was lying." I guess, "she lied about everything else."

"How do you know she was lying about the affair?" Eric presses.

"Ethan told me." I confess, realizing how weak that would sound to him. "But I also never saw any signs of it other than what she said. I never smelled her on him or caught them at it." A disturbing thought enters my mind, "Of course, I never saw signs of her wolf either."

Eric purses his lips. "Okay." He sighs, dragging his hand through his hair, "And Petra, your paralysis – did it ever occur to you they were in on it together?"

"What do you mean?" I press.

"Well if the spell was broken by her death... maybe she's the one who cast the spell in the first place. You said she

never liked you, even before that.” He reasons.

“She thought I was a gold-digging omega, she always wanted Ethan with an Alpha female like Eve.” I tell him.

“So maybe she and Eve worked up this scheme together to get you out of the picture, and Ethan simply didn’t cooperate.” He suggests.

“That’s possible.” I agree.

“And the other thing,” He forges ahead, “you just described a man who was so obsessed with you that he was willing to enslave you rather than give you up. Who’s to say he wouldn’t do the same thing again? If he’s capable of doing that to the woman he supposedly loves – he’s capable of anything.” Eric proclaims gravely.

“Eve doesn’t have a wolf, and her motive from framing you is strong, but it’s not as strong as Ethan’s. He had access, motive, ability and now he has every excuse to keep you and the pups here for good.”

