

Chapter 80 - Bun in the Oven

Jane

Eve's words slam into me like a falling anvil. All my fury from a moment ago is instantly smushed beneath the weight of her announcement, and my threats become lodged in my throat. My mind whirls as I try to make sense of this new development, but try as I might, I can't find any logic in it whatsoever.

"That's impossible." Ethan growls, his body absolutely rigid. "We've never even been together."

Eve reels back as if she's been slapped, "I know it didn't mean anything to you, Ethan. But you can't erase the past simply because it's inconvenient."

"She's probably lying." I suggest, a new realization clicking in my overwrought brain. "pregnant women can't be imprisoned in this territory, and she knows it."

"Test me." Eve counters, notching her chin up in challenge. "I assure you I'm speaking the truth."

"Get a doctor," Ethan orders one of the officers, before looking back to Eve. "You're not leaving here until we figure this out. For your sake you better be telling the truth, otherwise you're wasting all our time and we'll be

able to add a new charge to your warrant - for obstruction of justice."

Eve is grinning so widely that my stomach flip flops anxiously. She doesn't look the least bit nervous, which makes me think that she's telling the truth about the baby, if not its paternity. My gaze zeros in on her belly. If she is breeding then she's not very far along at all - the woman is so thin she looks like I could snap her like a twig, and that's saying something because I'm nearly a foot shorter than she is and not nearly as strong.

Given the timeline, if she really is carrying a pup and it really is Ethan's, that would mean they conceived after I arrived here. Wrapping my arms protectively around my body, I try not to spiral. I don't know anything for sure yet, and the woman is a known pathological liar. Believing her is playing right into her hands. Still, I can't seem to silence the little voice in the back of my head, the one that keeps saying, "what if?" over and over again.

I can feel Ethan's gaze on me, dark and brooding. When I look up at him, he's frowning deeply. "It isn't true." He insists, clearly reading my mind. "If she's pregnant, it isn't mine. I've never so much as kissed her."

"I know." I assure him weakly, wishing I felt as confident as I sound.

A little while later the doctor arrives, and within fifteen

minutes he's making an announcement that resurrects my hangover in full force. "She's pregnant." He states firmly, "about six weeks along."

"We can't arrest her, Alpha." The lead policeman says apologetically, "it's your law after all."

"I know that." Ethan responds, forcing his infuriated words out through clenched fangs. "But she still has to stand trial." Eve has been grinning like the cat who ate the canary, but her smug expression dims when the Alpha closes in on her, "You won't be pregnant forever Eve. I know you're guilty, and as soon as you give birth, I will have you behind bars."

"What about my pup?" She frets, "Will you take care of it? Surely you're not going to abandon it."

"It's not mine, so I hold no obligation to it." Ethan tells her, "I'll find it a good home – no more, no less."

"What would you like us to do in the meantime, sir?" One of the investigators asks.

"Take her." Ethan orders, interrupting the burgeoning objections before they leave the officers' tongues, "She can't be imprisoned, but she can be committed and she's clearly unstable."

All the blood drains from Eve's face, "Committed? To the loony bin?" She shrieks.

"It's a psychiatric hospital, Eve." Ethan corrects her,

"You'll fit in wonderfully there. I've never met anyone in more need of counseling than you."

"You can't do this!" Eve shouts in outrage, "You can't bury this child by locking me away! I'll have a paternity test done, Ethan! As soon as I'm far enough along you'll see – the whole pack will see! Only a wolf without any honor would lock away the mother of his child."

"Get her out of here." Ethan growls, ignoring Eve completely.

She doesn't go quietly. She cries and screams the whole way down the hall, and only once the elevator doors have closed and she's being whisked down to the ground floor, do they fade.

Ethan turns to me, his dark brow furrowed with concern. "Are you okay?" He asks.

I want to tell him I'm fine, but I can't make the words come out. Shaking my head, I admit. "No." I try to estimate how much time has passed, wondering if Eve is already out the front door, fearing what she might say to the waiting reporters, and praying the police don't allow her to stop. "I think I need to go for a walk – clear my head." I say, "can you watch the pups.

"Of course." Ethan agrees, reaching towards me and frowning when I jolt out of his reach. "It isn't true, Jane."

"So you've said." I answer in a clipped tone. "I'll be back

soon."

Half an hour later I'm seated in a cozy coffee shop, no calmer than I was when I left the house. Eric sits across from me, his worried eyes scanning my face. "You're making me nervous, Jane." He tells me. He hadn't asked a single question when I asked him to drop everything to come meet me, but now that he's here he seems to have run out of patience. "What's going on?"

"Eve is pregnant." I tell him forlornly. "She says it's Ethans."

Eric pulls me into his arms without another word, offering me the comfort I so dearly need without even being asked. I sink into his hold, feeling completely at ease in his warm embrace. "Do you want to talk about it?" He asks.

"I don't know." I admit, "part of me wants to hash it all out, but the other part wants to bury it deep and pretend none of this is happening."

"Don't be offended," Eric begins, almost guaranteeing that whatever is about to come out of his mouth next will upset me, "but, why do you care? You've been saying all along that you don't want anything with Ethan. So what does it matter if she's carrying his child?"

I can't tell Eric that I slept with Ethan. That I'm in serious

danger of falling back in love with him, or – as my worst fears sometimes imply – that I never fell out of love with him in the first place, which is why he’s still so capable of hurting me. I know admitting any of these things will both hurt my friend and open me up to more questions I’m not ready to face: like how I could still have feelings for someone who treated me so terribly, or how I could be so stupid to consider getting close to him again.

Instead, I reply. “He promised me they never had an affair, that it was just one of her lies. He made me believe it... I’ll feel like an idiot if it turns out he was lying.”

“I hate to say it, but I think you have to assume he was lying.” Eric remarks simply. “Sure, Eve is a liar too, but if you think about the harm they’ve done to you – Ethan and Eve are about even.”

“I don’t know that I agree with that.” I object, “I mean Ethan was thoughtless and cruel, but none of that would ever have happened if it wasn’t for Eve.”

“Except that Eve has done a handful of things that hurt you, but Ethan hurt you every single day for over a year. Yes, it was because of her, but if you look at the scoreboard, he’s been far more consistent betraying you – and his betrayal was worse because he was your chosen mate.” Eric argues.

"I know." I sigh, "and I agree, but he's not the same man he used to be." I share, wondering if I'm speaking the truth or just repeating another deception, "being a father changed him for the better."

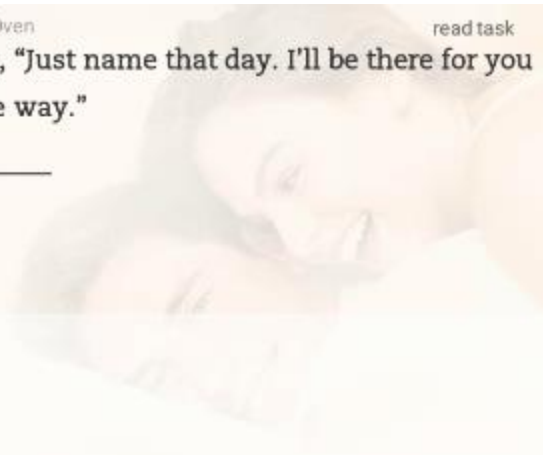
"And the fact that you believe that gives him all the more motive to tell you she's making it all up. He thinks he's starting to win you back, in his eyes admitting that he really did have an affair with Eve would ruin all that progress." Eric presses, squeezing me tightly.

Pulling out of his arms, I return to my place at the coffee bar. "Honestly Eric, I don't know what to think anymore. I wish I could hook everybody up to a lie detector test and figure out once and for all who's lying and who's telling the truth."

"You don't belong with these people, Jane." Eric tells me gently, "you are sweet and honest and pure, and they're like hungry jackals constantly bandying for power, playing head games and using people like pawns. You should be in the Dark Moon pack living your best life, not here being tormented by people you should have left in the past."

"Maybe you're right." I groan, dragging my hand through my hair. "The longer we stay here the worse things get. Maybe it's time we go home and put a stop to all this before it's too late."

Eric nods grimly, "Just name that day. I'll be there for you every step of the way."



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