

## Chapter 88 Jane confronts Ethan

Ethan

It takes all my strength not to wrench the door open and charge after him as he retreats down the hall, pouring lies into Jane's receptive ears. I can hear her shocked voice on the other end of the line, but I can also see the pups confused faces in front of me now. They need me more than Jane does in this moment, and I certainly don't plan on giving Eric that satisfaction.

"Ethan, have you lost your mind?" Jane exclaims, throwing her hands up in exasperation.

"No." I answer evenly, leaning against the kitchen counter with my arms crossed over my chest. The pups are finally in bed, and Jane didn't waste a single moment before turning on me. "Of course, I doubt I'd realize it if I had."

"You know Eric didn't kidnap the pups!" She continues, as if I didn't even speak. She's got herself worked up into such a lather that I find it's better to just let her get it out of her system, rather than interrupt. "Were you threatening to have him arrested because you meant it, or just to scare him?"

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"Eric knew exactly what he was doing when he took the pups without telling me." I allege, towering over my furious little mate. "And I never threatened him with anything. I told him I'd almost called the police when I thought the kids were missing. He made up the rest to create precisely this situation," I explain, gesturing between us.

"Why would he do that?" Jane scoffs, "Eric is a good man, Ethan. All he's ever tried to do is help me and he'd never intentionally hurt me. If you ask me, you're just jealous of him."

"Oh give me a little credit, Jane." I grouse. "I'm not a horny teenager who can't control their hormones just because another man is sniffing around you." I don't bother mentioning that a few hours earlier I very nearly lost my control in the face of Eric's provocation, or the fact that I'm having my rival investigated by the best private investigator in the territory. "And I hate to break it to you, but he's not the saint you think he is."

"Of course you would say that!" Jane complains, "you think everyone is untrustworthy because you assume that they all run on ulterior motives like you do."

"No, I think Eric is untrustworthy because he is!" I counter, "he's cunning and deceitful and he's completely playing you."

"How?" Jane demands, "other than watching our pups free of charge and trying to protect me from someone who almost destroyed me, that is?" She adds, glaring pointedly at me.

"He's the one who told them about our past." I announce gruffly, "and if you don't believe me, you can ask them."

Jane blinks, glancing in the direction of the pups' bedroom before stubbornly tilting her chin up. "He wouldn't do that."

"Ask them." I repeat, "he clearly wasn't smart enough to warn them not to spill the beans, because they told me without any trouble at all. Don't forget, he's the one who was with them all day when they found out."

Jane is frowning deeply now, looking as if I'm telling her something as outlandish and impossible as the fact that pigs are flying just out the window. I can see her determined streak battling with her instincts, the ones telling her I speak the truth. "Even if he did tell them, it's not as if he would have been lying. He wouldn't have been able to tell them anything if you hadn't done those things." She reasons.

"Maybe so, but that wouldn't excuse him telling something so inappropriate to such young pups." I insist, "and if there was nothing wrong with it, why didn't he tell you?"

"He didn't tell me because he didn't do it!" She combats, digging in her heels.

"Why are you so sure he's innocent?" I ask, "You're smarter than this, Jane."

"I'm sure he's innocent because bringing myself to trust a man after what you did to me took all my courage and all my strength. I'm not just going to throw that away because you feel the need to get all possessive." She grits out.

"Or maybe it's because being proved wrong would hurt you even worse the second time." I theorize, "and you're running scared – again!"

"You don't get to talk to me about my baggage, not when you're the one who inflicted all the damage in the first place!" She cries.

"And I will be paying for that for the rest of my life." I confess, "I will regret hurting you for as long as I live, but I won't let you get manipulated by a scheming jerk just to coddle your feelings."

"As if you haven't been trying to manipulate me yourself?" She prods, "you expect me to believe that all these dates, all these romantic outings you've taken me on haven't been trying to win me back even though you know I want nothing to do with you?!"

I can't help but laugh, "Do you truly believe a single word



you're saying?" I challenge, "Have you gotten so good at lying to yourself that you really think you don't want me?"

"Do you even hear yourself?" She hisses. "If another man spoke to me this way you'd beat him to a pulp."

Rolling my eyes, I drag her small body close, wrapping her up in my arms. "You forget, little omega, that this is our way. I'm not just any alpha to you, and you're not just any omega to me. We were mates, we're still bonded. I can sense your response to me, I can feel how hard you're fighting just to keep me at arms length."

"And all that should matter is that I am fighting." She murmurs. "If you respected me you'd take that as a sign to back off."

"And it's because I love you that I can't." I insist, "I know you're scared, but if you were happy you would be sleeping with me when you're supposed to be walking down the aisle with another man in a few months."

"I already told you, that was a mistake." Jane declares hotly.

"That's not the only reason." I share, "you've been making it too easy, Janey. Agreeing to go on dates with me, moving in when you had plenty of other choices."

Shaking her head, Jane clenches her little hands into fists. "You know I wasn't sure until this moment." She announces cryptically, "I felt so guilty about Paisley,

about taking the other pups from you, but I thought the sooner we ripped the bandaid off the better. But now I know for sure – I'm leaving with the pups, two weeks from yesterday. I'm taking them back to the Dark Moon pack, and there's not a thing you can do to stop me."

Suddenly I realize that part of Eric's story was true, but instead of feeling angry, I feel only the pain of knowing how soon my entire world is going to crumble around me. The blood is whirring in my ears now, and a red haze blocks out my vision. In an instant, the world around us disappears, and all that remains is Jane.

Before I can think better of it, I pull Jane flush against me, claiming her lips and silencing her objections before she can voice them. As usual she resists me for all of half a second, letting her wolf take over the moment she feels my lips searing her own. She melts into my arms and twines her slender arms around my neck, pulling me closer.

She surrenders so easily I wonder if I'm dreaming, but she feels far too real in my arms. I must be wearing her down, that or her hormones are as on edge as my own are. It seems like every day we spend together the stronger they grow, taking over bigger and bigger pieces of my brain. My tongue teases her lips, and she opens for me gladly. I slant my mouth over hers, coaxing her own

tongue out of hiding to tangle with my own. She purrs happily, stretching like a petted cat as I run my hands over her curves.

For a few blissful moments I'm able to forget all my worries. As long as Jane is in my arms, everything is alright – not that I can think about anything else. She's the sudden center of my universe, and my need for her grows more urgent by the minute. It's as if holding her in my arms reduces all the distractions in our lives to nothingness, as if Eric and Eve and even that incompetent investigator are all just white noise keeping us from focusing on the things that really matter: each other and our pups.

Suddenly Jane wrenches away from me with an agonized cry that stops me dead in my tracks. "Jane?"

"Oh Goddess," She moans, shaking her head and clutching her middle, "No, no, no! This can't be happening."

"What's wrong?" I question, concern for Jane flooding my veins. However she doesn't have to answer me, because a few moments later her scent hits me full force. Where there was only sunshine and moonflowers a second ago, there is now the spicy, unmistakable aroma of a fertile omega – one that is absolutely irresistible to my wolf.

The room seems suddenly blurry around the edges as I

zero in on Jane, understanding clicking even as my instincts take over. "You're going into heat."



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