

Chapter 91 Backtracking

Jane

Paisley is curled up against her father's side, her small head resting on his chest, rising and falling with his low, steady breaths. I must not have been very attentive when I poked my head into the nursery, but then again it can be hard to make out one pup from another when they sleep in a cuddle pile. Not to mention my entire being is currently consumed by flames.

Backing away, I pull the door shut with a gentle click. There is only one power on earth that could overpower the base animal instincts of my heat, and that is the maternal drive to put my pup's needs above my own. Slinking away down the hall, I try to figure out what to do with myself. I've never gone through a heat alone. It's only ever come on around Ethan, and even after I became his slave, only he could give me comfort.

My wolf needed to be bred – by him and no one else. If there was another Alpha alive whom my wolf would accept, I've never met him. Maybe I can make it through to the morning if I take a sleeping pill. I think weakly, and maybe if I just stay away from Ethan, it will go away on its own.

I know better than to think this. Among our kind a heat lasts until one's wolf is satisfied, and while I might try to reason with my wolf, I know she'll never be satisfied without being rutted. Besides, the longer it goes on the worse the pain will become, until I'm absolutely begging Ethan to claim me.

The inner well of courage I tapped into at Linda's is fading the more time that passes. So I hobble away down the hall, bent double as I backtrack to my own room, and trying to think of any way to keep my former mate at bay. I hate thinking of myself as a coward, but I also can't help thinking that if anyone has the right – it's me. I have so much to lose, and I know what it means to lose everything in a way most people never will.

"Janey?" The sound of his rich voice sends me leaping into the air.

Turning hesitantly, my knees go weak when I lay eyes on him. He's wearing pajama bottoms and nothing else, the carved contours of his muscular chest illuminated in the dim hall lights. His strong jaw is covered in a thin layer of scruff, and his wolf is already glowing in his eyes, no doubt brought to the surface by my scent.

"I I just came to say thank you," I stammer vaguely, "for helping me earlier."

If I want to get away before we both lose control, I need

to do so now. We have mere minutes left before I lose the will to keep fighting, and once I do he won't hold back. He'll let himself go into rut, and then we'll both be powerless to stop our wolves.

I start to turn away again, but I freeze when he purrs. "Not so fast, little wolf."

Whimpering, I brace my weight against the wall, listening to his footsteps approach behind me as my heart pounds in my chest. Before I know it he's standing so close behind me that I can feel the heat radiating from his body. "Why did you come back, Jane?" He asks, brushing my hair away from my neck, so that his warm breath flutters over his mark.

"Because I felt guilty for imposing on Linda's hospitality." I lie anemically.

"Is that so?" He replies, nibbling the shell of my ear and sliding one powerful arm around my middle, supporting my weight even though I did not ask him to help me stay upright. "And how are you feeling?"

"Fine." I squeak, even as I lean back against him. The cramping in my belly is getting more and more powerful now that he's near, and it's only with the greatest effort that I can stay standing.

"So stubborn." He croons, his hand dipping dangerously close to the center of my need. "Are you sure you didn't

come to my room for a bit of company? It's awfully late for thank yous."

I can only whimper, rocking my hips back against him. My head lolls back against his broad chest, exposing the column of my throat to his lips and fangs, and preying he'll claim me that way he used to. In the back of my mind I realize I've tipped over the edge, too needy to be afraid now – or perhaps too needy to retain my sense of self preservation.

"If you want me to touch you, you need only ask." Ethan adds, stroking my hip. "I'd be more than happy to help you, baby. You have no idea how hard it was for me to let you go earlier."

His huge, hard cock is pressing into my backside, and suddenly my mind is overwhelmed with the memories and sensations of having him inside of me. A pool of wetness is soaking my panties, and if I were still in public I'd be paranoid about it seeping through my dress as well.

"Or," Ethan suggests, removing his hands from me completely and sending a flood of cold air over my body. "I can just put you to bed and leave you alone."

"No!" I exclaim, before I can stop myself. I'm already reaching for his hands, eager to return them to my overheated form.

"Are you sure?" He teases me, grazing featherlight fingers down my arms before I can catch them.

"Please, Ethan." I beg, turning to face him. "I'm burning up."

He catches my face in his hands, studying my flushed cheeks and shining eyes. "Poor little wolf." He croons, letting me lean my full weight against him, "Just tell me one thing first."

"Anything." I agree, rubbing myself against him in the hopes of marking him with my scent.

"Earlier – you suggested you'd been with Eric through a heat." He reminds me, keeping my face captive even though I just want to climb into his arms and go to bed.

"Were you telling the truth?"

I'm gnawing on my lip, fighting the urge to protect myself from this man who hurt me so badly, while struggling to contain my wolf who, like his own, doesn't seem to give a damn that we aren't fated. All she knows if that's her mate is in front of her, whether the Goddess intended it or not. "No." I admit in a low whisper, a stray tear slipping out of the corner of my eye.

Ethan tsks, catching the tear on his thumb, "Is it the pain?" He questions gently, easing me back towards my bedroom door.

Shaking my head, I can feel a rush of fresh tears surging

forth, and I'm too out of control now to stop them, "Please don't hurt me again, Ethan." I plead.

This stops him dead in his tracks, and the next thing I know he's kissing me, stealing the breath from my lungs as I gasp and moan, holding onto him for dear life. "I'll never hurt you again, Janey." He murmurs against my lips. "I'm so sorry I betrayed your trust."

"I can't promise you anything more than this heat." I admit weakly, "I I want to, but I'm not sure I can. I'm afraid that when everything is back to normal the fear will take over again, and I won't be strong enough to overcome it."

He backs me into the room, closing the door behind us with a determined slant to his full lips. "Then I won't give up." He vows, "You can run and push me away all you want, but I won't give up, Jane."

"You promise?" I prompt him, whimpering as a fresh spasm clutches my insides.

"I promise." Ethan proclaims, helping me onto the bed and pulling me back to the edge. "Now, are you going to let me take the pain away, or are you going to keep being stubborn?"

Despite the fact that I feeling like I'm being wrenched apart from the inside, it's in my nature to challenge him at every turn. How else will I know just how dominant

he is, if I don't test him? How else will I feel the incredible power he possesses, if he doesn't unleash it onto me and make me surrender to his strength.

When I don't immediately answer, Ethan throws his head back and laughs. "Some things never change."

He prowls over me, stripping the clothes from my body and spreading my legs so he can kneel between them.

"No," I complain, even as I lift my hips in offering. "I don't want your tongue."

"What do you want?" He inquires, rubbing his thumb over my swollen clit, and driving my need even higher.

"You know," I grumble, crying out when his lips replace his fingers, sucking my swollen bud into his mouth. "I want you inside me."

"Good things come to those who wait." He reminds me with a dark chuckle, slipping two thick fingers into my soaked channel.

"But I want it now." I whine.

Pushing myself up onto my elbows, I look down at Ethan, who flashes his fangs in a wolfish grin and offers me one last comment before returning his mouth to my most intimate flesh and wiping every last thought from my mind. "Too bad."

