

The Luna and her Quadruplet Pups by Jane Above Story

Chapter 128

Jane

When the Southern Isles finally come into view, they take my breath away. Not because they're beautiful or how eager I am to be back on solid land, but because I know my pups are waiting somewhere on their shores.

"Finally!" I breathe, standing at the ship's railing as the distant lands draw closer and closer on the horizon.

I'm already in my disguise, feeling absurd and sick to my stomach beneath the prosthetics, yet knowing it's for the best. Ethan is by my side, looking equally comical in his old man get up, but entirely believable to those not in the know. I keep seeing him reach towards me out of the corner of my eye, only to stop himself at the last moment when he remembers we're supposed to be travel companions and not lovers.

I might think these efforts are completely overboard, if I didn't know just how far King Aimon goes when it comes to spying. Honestly, part of me wonders if we took these precautions too late. After all, there might have been spies back in the NightFang territory who watched us board the ship. Granted, they would have seen Ethan and Eric alighting the gangway while two strange women inch-wormed up the rigging, but the outcome remains the same.

Ethan insists that making the voyage by sea was the best bet for staying under the radar, but we haven't exactly been low profile on board. My illness has meant that everyone from the captain to the chef knows what's going on in the owner's suite, and even now I'm struggling to keep my breakfast down.

"How are you doing, little wolf?" Ethan asks, taking in my pallid complexion.

"I can't stand the waiting" I admit. "I want to be there already. I want to feel better so I can find my babies. I want this all to be over." My voice cracks on the last word, and despite our cover, Ethan shifts closer.

"I know, baby:" He assures me, his deep voice low and soothing. "It's just a little while longer." He promises, "by this time tomorrow you'll be good as new, and then we can do whatever it takes to get them back."

"I hope you're right." I moan, resisting the urge to lean into him for support."I don't think I can take another day of feeling this way."

Ethan chuckles, leaning his head against mine.

I'm always right." He teases, his sultry tones filling me with warmth. "And you're much stronger than you give yourself credit for. It 'll all work out – you'll see!"

48 Hours Later

"You lied!" I whine pitifully, retching into a bin at my bedside. "You said I'd feel better by now."

We made landfall yesterday, and though I've been trying to regain my land legs ever since departing the ship, I'm not feeling any better. Ethan checked us into a seaside bed and breakfast, but I haven't been able to leave the room even once. I know it's not something Ethan could have predicted, but I've never been much of a trooper when it comes to being sick.

"I know, I'm sorry sweetheart." He croons, stroking my spine and holding my hair back. "Do you want me to fetch the doctor?"

"No. I gr0an, telling myself this is just delayed seasickness – like before. "I'll be okay." It will take me a while to get my land legs, that's all. I keep repeating the same thought over and over again, praying I'm right.

"Are you sure? You're awfully green, Janey" Ethan frowns.

"No doctors!" I insist, somewhat manically. As much comfort as I take in Ethan caring for me, the idea of a doctor terrifies me right now. I'm all too aware that they might tell me this isn't seasickness after all.

"Okay, no doctors." Ethan agrees, taking my chin between his thumb and forefingers."For now. If you don't get better soon I won't make any promises."

"Fine." I grumble sulkily, collapsing back on the bed. Of course, in my head I'm not nearly so calm. This complicates things. If I want to keep the physicians away I'm going to have to rally whether I feel up to it or not.

"Poor baby" He commiserates, leaning down to kiss my sweaty brow, "I hate to leave you like this, but I want to get out and look for the pups before dark, will you be okay on your own?"

That gets my attention. I'm sitting up instantly, trying to find my clothes. "I'll come with you."

"No, no. You're in no condition for that." Ethan cautions, encouraging me to lie back down.

"I'm well enough to look for the pups." I insist, fighting his strong hands.

"Jane, look at me" Ethan encourages, kneeling down beside the bed, "I'll gladly welcome your help looking, but only once you're recovered. You need to rest so that you can be there for the pups when we find them."

"I can't just stay here and do nothing" I murmur,suddenly feeling as though I might cry. "I have to help."

I open my mouth to argue more, but Ethan presses a dinger to my lips. "This is what I meant about letting go, Jane. You can't do everything all on your own. Trust me to handle the search so you can focus on getting better. You'll be able to help a lot more once you're well.

He stands before I can think of a response, "I be back before you know it. Just call me if you need anything."

I'm still sulking and staring after him when the door to the adjoining bedroom opens a moment later, and Linda slips inside. "You okay?" She asks me, clearly having overheard my conversation with Ethan.

"No." I admit, "I know he's just trying to take care of me, but I can't stand the idea of staying behind."

"Would you feel better if I went out and looked too?"

"Linda offers. "It'll take me a minute to get my disguise on, but if you can manage on your own, I'm happy to go.

"Yes, please." I request, a devious thought sparking in my mind. I know Ethan was counting on Linda backing him up and keeping me in bed, but if they're both out searching, there won't be any bossy babysitters left to stop me from breaking out. "That would be wonderful."

I listen carefully as Linda gets ready, and wave her off when she stops by one last time to make sure I don't need anything before she leaves. The moment she's gone however, I'm out of my bed and stumbling towards the wardrobe, praying the room will stop spinning long enough for me to don my own disguise.

If I play this right, I can get out and back before either Ethan or Linda realizes I left. The port city isn't huge, but the more noses out tracking the pups the better. Besides, I know how my kids think better than the others. Ethan might love them to pieces, but he's only been around them as a pack for a short while, and they work differently together than when they're on their own. I'll have to be careful not to cross paths with my mate, but it's worth the risk.

Checking to make sure the coast is clear, I sneak out of the bed and breakfast and scent the air, heading in the opposite direction Ethan and Linda traveled.

We're staying very close to the marina, and I try to think like the kidnappers and my pups at once. If the traffickers truly intended on taking the pups to Eric's father, they would have needed to transport them somehow and if I know my babies, they'll have attempted to escape at the first opportunity. But would that opportunity arise here, or after they were already on the road?

As I consider the options, I realize that none of the ships in the marina ferry cars or other vehicles, so unless the kidnappers were originally from the Southern Isles, they would have needed to rent one after they arrived. I pause to ask a local for directions, lowering my voice as deep as possible and earning myself an odd look which tells me I need to practice sounding like a boy. However, despite the stranger's clear confusion, they direct me towards a car rental company down the block.

It's only a few hundred meters away, yet by the time i arrive at the rental business, I feel as if I've run a mile. Swaying on my feet, I head inside and show the woman at the counter Anita's photo, asking if she's seen her recently.

Yes,

she

answers

promptly,

making

my

heart

race. "I

remember

because

she's

the

only

person

I've

ever

seen

wear

leather

in

the

tropics."

"You did?" I exclaim, "how long ago? Was she alone?"

"About this time last week." The woman replies, " she was alone, but she rented a cargo van that seated five, so I doubt she was traveling solo."

"Can you give me the vehicle information?" I request eagerly.

The woman narrows her eyes, and for the first time I realize that dressing as a male – even an adolescent- to ask for these kinds of details was a mistake. This woman probably thinks I'm some sort of stalker. "I'm afraid that's against company policy." She answers stiffly.

"Please."I beg, throwing caution to the wind. "It's incredibly important."

"Sir, I can't give out that information." She repeats coolly, "now if you don't have any rental car needs, I'm going to have to ask you to leave."

"I can't do that." I press, brandishing the photo. "

Please make an exception, just this once. I'll pay you any price, I promise I have no bad intentions, but I desperately need to find this woman."

The clerk gestures to someone behind my back, and when I turn I see a security guard approaching

Don't

move.

I'm

calling

the

police."

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