

The Luna and her Quadruplet Pups by Jane Above Story

Chapter 132

3rd Person

Riley, Ryder, Parker and Paisley gazed around the dimly lit underground chambers where they now stood.

Sophie had led them deep into the bowels of the old sewer system, finally stopping when they reached what could only be described as the headquarters of Alta Montaña's unofficial orphanage.

The entire space was littered with old mattresses and discarded furnishings, with more than one half-starved pup looking on at the new arrivals with open curiosity. Sophie guided them forward through the melee, seeming completely unbothered by the unpleasant sights and smells.

For the quadruplets, who had only ever known comfort and safety, the sights were truly horrifying, but they knew better than to judge. Young as they were, they realized none of the children around them had chosen this life, but had been forced into it by circumstance.

All four offered shy smiles to the other pups in the dank sewers, even as they descended deeper into the eerie space. The other pups however, did not return their friendly expressions. "I don't like this." Paisley murmured in her sister's ears. The other kids look really grumpy."

"She's right." Ryder agreed. "I don't feel good 'bout this."

"We're ready in it." Riley replied, taking Paisley's hand and giving it a squeeze. "We can't really back out now."

"I mean, we could." Parker countered, "and if they try to stop us, then we know is not okay."

"You have a point." Riley conceded, leaning forward to tap Sophie on the shoulder. However before she could make contact, Sophie rounded the corner, leading them into a new corner of the sewers. There was a high vaulted ceiling, and an iron bridge over a steady stream of black water. On the other side of the bridge, a teenage boy sat in an ornate chair, watching their approach with bright eyed interest.

"What's this, Sophie?" He asked. His voice was clearly in the middle of transitioning from child to adult, cracking a squeaking awkwardly.

"I found them in the alley." Sophie announced, offering the boy a wide smile. They were hiding from the police."

"And so young" The boy remarked, seeming pleased by this fact. "Quadruplets too – that'll be good for business."

"I thought you might appreciate them" Sophie blushed prettily, seeming suddenly much less jaded than before.

"What are your names?" The boy asked, looking between the pups.

"You first." Parker countered, leaning into his siblings for support.

"I'm Fabian The boy stated simply, surprising no one. "I've been living here for more than five years now, i can help you with whatever you need- assuming you pay me my due respect."

"And what 'spect is that?" Riley asked, "We don't know you, so is not like we owe you anything."

The other pups in the room exchanged worried glances, which did not go unnoticed by Ryder, Riley, Parker and Paisley. The more they saw of this place, the less they liked it. Sophie had made it sound like a safe haven, but the other children here didn't seem all that happy. In fact, they seemed rather intimidated by Fabian and his schemes.

"You will." Fabian proclaimed, his smile never slipping. "If you stick with me, I'll show you how to survive here, I'll help you in any way I can."

"We don't wanna survive heres." Paisley repeated the same sentiment they'd expressed to Sophie. "We want to goes home"

"And where is home?" Fabian asked.

"The NightFang pack" Ryder answered promptly, not pausing to wonder when he'd stopped thinking of the Dark Moon territory as his home. The moment they found Paisley and Ethan, home became wherever their family was, and he wasn't about to question that.

"That's a very long way away." Fabian assessed, his brow wrinkling with confusion. "How did you get here."

"We were pup-napped" Riley shared. "And we appreciate you letting us hide here, but we don't wanna stay."

"Are you sure?" Fabian pressed. "You could have a good life here"

None of the pups were old enough to know how to handle such an awkward situation. The truth was that their life in the NightFang pack was a thousand times better, but they didn't want to insult their potential allies by pointing this out. "Thanks," Parker murmured, "but we just wanna get back to our Mommy and Daddy.

A few of the pups scattered throughout the space inhaled sharply. "You're not orphans?" Fabian questioned.

"No" Paisley answered softly. "We're just lost."

"Well that's alright." Fabian decided, gesturing for the other children in the room to settle down. "Either way you're going to need some money in order to make it back home. And there's only one way for pups to make money in this town."

"We don't wanna steal." Ryder said, trying not to offend their hosts, but not knowing how else to express this sentiment.

"No one wants to steal." Fabian scoffed. "It's not a choice, it's just a way of getting by."

"Can we has a minute?" Riley asked him, not sure why she was deferring to a teenager's authority, but realizing it was the right thing to do nonetheless.

"Of course." Fabian agreed, giving them his blessing to consult each other in private.

The pups huddled together, exchanging worried expressions as they contemplated their options. "Is not as simple as he's making it seem." Parker insisted.

Specially not for us. If we're caughts, we'll be taken to the king"

"I don't think many of these pups worry 'bout being caught." Riley reasoned. "It seems like they get away with their schemes, otherwise they'd be much more afraid."

"You have a point" Ryder contributed, "but I still don't like it. Fabian seems awfully slimy."

"He does." Paisley confirmed, "I don't like the way he looks at us. Like we're some kinda trophy or speriment"

"And he's only just met us." Riley added, "so it's kinda creepy."

"Is defintly creepy" Ryder confirmed.

"So what do we do?" Parker cut in, trying to reassert some order in their discussion.

"I dunno" Paisley grimaced. "I mean we do have to eat and sleep, an' he's offering us a place to stay."

"I think we should stay" Riley put forth, "but I don't thinks we should trust him."

"I agree." Ryder said, "I don't like the way he looks at us, but I dunno what else to do."

"Is agreed then." Parker decided, turning back to Fabian. He straightened himself up to his full height- technically the oldest of his siblings, he was also the most dominant, if not the most mischievous. So in times like these it was only right that he take control and speak for their small pack. Still, he'd never felt the kind of pressure he did now, for they'd never been in such a dire situation. "What do we have to do?" He asked Fabian, hoping against hope that the answer wouldn't be too terrible.

"That's excellent news." Fabian grinned, looking to Sophie. "Let's set them up with their own corner, and then we can see what they're made of."

Sophie nodded eagerly. "I like it, and as cute as they are, they're bound to bring in lots of cash."

Half an hour later, Riley, Ryder, Parker and Paisley were gathered at the end of a narrow street in the village, nervously looking around for signs of the shepherds or the police. "What do we do?"

"It's really simple." Sophie answered, pushing a collection bin into their hands. "Just look really pitiful and beg for money. Some pups sing or put on little shows to try and bring in more money, but it's only your first day. Tomorrow I'll teach you how to pick pockets so sneakily that no one will ever suspect they're missing their wallets, but today let's just focus on testing your cuteness."

"Our cuteness?" Riley repeated, crinkling her nose.

"Yeah, the cuter you are, the more money you make." Sophie reasoned. "It's not the best system, but it definitely works."

"How much of the moneys we make do we get to keep?" Parker asked, all too aware that part of their earnings was going to be handed over to Fabian.

"Well," Sophie hedged, looking as though she didn't really want to answer. "It's hard at first because it takes a little bit of cash to get set up- and there's four of you. That's a lot of supplies."

"Are you saying we don't get to keep any of it?"

Paisley guessed, eyeing the older girl with fresh suspicion.

"Just for now." Sophie nodded. "know it's not ideal, but in time you'll learn to love it here."

"We aren't going to stay long enough for that."

Riley reminded her.

"Oh, right." Sophie blushed, instantly sparking the suspicions of her young protegees. "I'm sorry, most of the pups who come through here stay for the long haul.

"If that's true, then how is Fabian the oldest?"

Paisley questioned. "I mean he's bigger, but it's not like he's that growned."

"Maybe not, but he is in charge." Sophie reminded them. "And you don't want to cross him."

"Why not?" Ryder inquired.

"You don't." Sophie remarked grimly, just trust me on that. Now are you okay, do you need me to stay with you a while longer?"

"No, we've gots it from here." Riley announced, wanting to be rid of the older girl quickly, so that she could talk with her siblings in peace.

As soon as Sophie departed, the pups turned towards each other. "Does anyone else have the feeling that these pups are bad news?" Ryder asked.

"Maybe not all of them." Paisley amended, "but Fabian and Sophie seem very 'spicious."

"I agree." Parker nodded. "We can't trust them, they're up to something."

"You're right" Riley affirmed. "But we still have to find a way to get out of here, and we can't do that without monies."

"Are you really suggesting that we steal?" Paisley gasped.

"It's like they said." Parker sighed, "we don't have a choice."

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