

The Luna and her Quadruplet Pups by Jane Above Story

Chapter 143

3rd Person

“Are we really gonna see Mommy and Daddy?”

Paisley whispered excitedly. The pups were hesitant to believe any good news after everything they'd been through, but their walls were down after so much trauma, and the costume mistress had taken their worries very seriously. She promised to take them back and not to trust anyone but their parents.

“They says they're taking us back!” Riley exclaimed, bouncing up and down where she sat. “I can' waits, I'm gonna hug Mommy and Daddy so tightly. I'll never ever, ever lets go.

“What if Fabian finds us first?” Parker worried aloud. “What if it's too cloudy to see them again?”

“Don' be so grumpy” Ryder scolded. “If you thinks like that, you'll jinx us.”

“How long 'afore we get there?” Paisley asked the costume mistress when she returned from the caravan's kitchen unit with a jug of hot water and a few wash cloths.

“It will be a few hours.” She tells them kindly, “And I'm sure your Mommy and Daddy would prefer to have nice clean pups returned to them” She continues, waving the cloths in their direction.

“Mommy and Daddy loves us dirty or clean.” Riley informed the woman haughtily.

“Well of course they do, but you don't want to worry them do you?” She reasons. “They're probably already so concerned, and they'll feel bad if they see how hard you've been living. I don't have any fresh clothes for you, but we can at least get some of the dirt off you.

This reminder made the pups submit to her ministrations. They found it annoying that grown ups were always so obsessed with being clean, but they couldn't help but see the logic in her statement. They didn't want their Mommy and Daddy to feel bad, and if they were completely honest, they didn't like smelling like the sewers or feeling the grime on their soft skin.

“When was the last time you ate?” The costume mistress questioned once they were recognizable as pups -rather than street urchins- once more.

“A nice llama farmer gave us food the day 'afore yesterday.” Parker explained, “we didn' really have anything with the orphans.”

“Ahh, so you were with the street children for a time” The woman surmised. “That must not have been easy, they have a bad reputation in Alta Montaña.”

She was gently probing for more information, trying to figure out the story behind the little one's adventure without asking directly. She could only guess why they were so skittish, but she knew it would keep their l!ps sealed no matter the cause.

“No one really helps – is all just tricks and playing pretend.” Paisley murmured, her young eyes look far more haunted than should be possible. “Only Mommy and Daddy are safe.”

“They were so close.” Ryder nods in agreement. “

We heard Mommy calling for us in the clouds.”

“I'm sure they can't wait to see you.” The costume mistress assured them. “There's nothing scarier than losing one's pups.”

“Did we do someting wrong... To be taken from them?” Parker wondered aloud, speaking thoughts he hadn't aloud himself to voice with his siblings. As the oldest, he often considered it his job to protect the others, but now that there was an adult to ask- now that they'd given up trying to stay silent to protect themselves – hé couldn't stop himself from asking.

“No my sweet.” The costume mistress promised. “

It's very hard to explain or understand, and it really isn't fair. But sometimes bad things happen to the best people. Even innocent little ones like you.”

Paisley was nodding in agreement. Of all her siblings, only she had experienced such misfortunes before, and she had asked herself these very same questions. If Parker had shared his worries she might have told him she feared the same thing. But after everything happened with Jane and Eve, her parents had told her over and over that it wasn't her fault, and it was always hard to believe – until she was safe in their arms and heard it repeated a few dozen times.

That was the only thing that ever helped.

“I misses them.” She whispers, linking hands with her siblings.

“I'm sure they miss you too.” The costume mistress empathized. “You'll be together again soon enough. I promise, I will not leave your side until you're back safe with them.”

The pups exchanged hopeful glances. They'd heard promises like this before, but so far no one they'd met on their journey had been truly trustworthy. Anita's goons had promised they were safe, only to take them so far away. Thomas and Mary had been kind, but they'd only gone to the police. Sophie had promised to be their friend, only to hand them over to Fabian as his first command. Could this grown up be trusted to keep her word? Would it be smarter to run again?

When the pups finally climbed out of the caravan back in Alta Montaña, they immediately began scanning the small town's streets for signs of their parents – or even Sophie. They saw nothing at first, and the costume mistress took Ryder and Paisley's small paws in her own. “Why don't we try going back to the spot where you first found the trunks?”

They nodded in agreement, that made sense. They padded through the dark cobblestones, wanting to call out for their Mommy and Daddy, but afraid to call attention to themselves. They came to a stop behind a clothing shop, and the costume mistress pursed her l!ps. “All these shops are closed now. Perhaps we should try checking with the hotels. Are you sure you can't tell me your parent's names, or maybe what they look like?”

The pups looked back and forth between one another, silently conferring. Eventually, Riley nodded and shared, “Mommy's really pretty, with gold hair and eyes like mine.”

The costume mistress smiled, she believed it-if their mother was even half as lovely as her pups, she must be a great beauty indeed. “And your Daddy?”

“He's as tall as a giant and really strong!” Paisley announced, smiling as she thought about her beloved father.

“And we looks just like him” The boys declared in unison.”

“All right then.” The costume mistress assessed.

I'll ask if anyone who looks like that has been seen around.”

As they walked from hotel to hotel, questioning receptionists and maitre d's however, it gradually became clear that no one matching these descriptions had been about. The only travelers in the area had been a trio of three men, and a young woman in leather – all on her own.

“I suppose they might not have stayed the night.”

The costume mistress mused. The possibility that they might have figured out what happened and tried to follow them suddenly occurred to her, though she prayed she was wrong. She changed tactics then, beginning to ask around at the restaurants – which were much more likely to note day trippers.

After the fourth restaurant, she led the pups back towards the caravan, deciding to check their cell service in case anyone had been calling during their journey.

Unfortunately, as the pups waited outside the caravan's doors the clouds rolled in, covering the mountains in dense white mist which was only too familiar.

The young children's bad memories began to play tricks on their minds, as they recalled all the terrors that might be waiting just out of sight. “I thinks I hear Fabian!” Riley whispered, spinning around anxiously.

“Quick, get into the care van!” Parker advised, holding onto his sisters' hands while they held Ryder's.

They knew never to let go of each other in the pale fog.

They ran back in the direction of the caravan, at least they thought they did. Instead they ran blindly in the wrong direction, all navigational sense gone out the window with the whiteout.

“Wait where is it? It was just here!” Ryder whimpered.

“Maybe we wents the wrong way?” Paisley fretted, looking around nervously.

Back at the caravan, the costume mistress was stepping out the door with a wide smile on her face. It had been just as she feared, the pups parents had tried to follow them, but thankfully they had also been able to find out who the theater troupe was, and had been calling non-stop. Her voicemail was full of messages.

Good news, I have phone numbers for- kids?” Panic assailed her when she saw the blanket of clouds, which obscured absolutely everything from sight. “Ryder, Riley, Parker, Paisley? Where'd you go?”

Less than a hundred meters away, the pups had come face to face with the last person they expected to find in this place. They'd been so worried about Fabian, they forgot all about their other pursuers. But now they were facing someone they wished never to see again – a tall woman, dressed all in leather.

Anita's face split into a cruel grimace, one she surely meant to be a smile. “At last. 've been looking for you everywhere.” She prowled towards the pups, even as they huddled together in shared fear.”Come on now, don't be difficult.” She growled. “You've got a date with the King, and it's rude to keep royalty waiting.

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