

The Luna and her Quadruplet Pups by Jane Above Story

Chapter 157

Jane

As I walk through the sterile halls of the hospital, my mind whirls with thought. Grief and despair are closing in fast, but I'm trying to hold onto my anger instead. Fury will keep me going enough to get through the difficult days ahead. If I let myself feel this – if I succumb to this agony, I might never recover.

How am I going to tell the pups? I know they don't have any idea how much things have changed between Ethan and I, but this still isn't going to be a fun conversation. After all, I did tell them that Daddy and I would be taking them home, it's not going to be easy to walk that back. They were upset about the idea of being separated from Ethan even before the kidnapping, and now they need as much love and stability as possible.

I don't want to break their hearts, and telling them the truth about why we're going home alone would do exactly that. I can't beat for them to know that Ethan doesn't want them, especially not after everything they've been through. That leaves me only two options.

Either I can say that Ethan and I discussed it and agreed this would be best, or I can take the blame, and tell them that I decided to take them away despite their father's protests.

However the more I think about it, the more I realize the first option isn't truly viable. If this was some amicable custody agreement, the pups would expect to be able to say goodbye to their father, to still visit him on occasion. It would imply shared custody... and that's impossible. In truth, the only path forward to protect them from Ethan's rejection, is to make myself the bad guy. They know our history now, they understand I might have reason to take them away and cut off contact – or at least as much as any child can comprehend such things.

The metaphorical knife that Ethan drove into my heart when he rejected me slides even deeper as I realize what I must do. I want to feel sorry for myself – as if it wasn't bad enough that my mate tossed me out like yesterday's trash, now I'm going to have to lie to my babies, to tell them a story that will probably make them hate me.

My stomach roils, and I detour into the nearest restroom to vomit, wondering how I'll ever survive this.

How can it be that living without Ethan feels so impossible now, after I got along without him for so long? Don't cry, don't cry, don't cry. I think stubbornly.

If I start crying now I won't stop, and then the pups will know something is wrong. My wolf is howling non-stop in my head, and despite that fact that I've been wishing for nothing but the ability to be a parent to my babies again for nearly a month, right now I wish I had the freedom to curl up into a little ball and weep.

Instead I flush the toilet, rinse my mouth and wash my hands, then stalk from the restroom with my head held high. I find the pups in the hospital's waiting area, gathered around Linda as she reads one of the picture books scattered over the coffee tables. They look up when I enter, and before I can say a word they've leapt from their chairs and are charging my legs. “

Mommy!!”

I kneel down to meet them, pulling their beloved little bodies into my arms and squeezing them so tightly that they're soon complaining. “Mommy I can' breathe!” Riley exclaims in exasperation.

Having them in my arms – willingly or not- fills me with pure warmth, and I feel my broken heart flicker with life. “I'm sorry angels.” I apologize after a moment, releasing them, “I'm just happy to see you.

“Don' listen to hers.” Paisley instructs me, cuddling closer. “I likes tight hugs.”

“Me too.” I share in a whisper, giving her a kiss on the cheek. “Can you squeeze me back just as tight, until I can't even feel my limbs anymore?”

Paisley giggles and tightens her hold, soon followed by the others, who are only too eager to get in on the game. “Is that tight enough, Mommy?” Parker asks with a giggle off his own.

I shake my head. Tighter, I can still feel my feet.”

All four begin applying so much pressure that I actually do begin to struggle for breath- but that might have just been Ryder's arms around my neck. “Perfect.”

I announce hoarsely, kissing them again. “Are you ready to go home?”

“Yeah!” They exclaim in unison.

“Then let's go.” I smile, rubbing their backs as I pull this place.”

“We're going to get on the very next plane out of away.

“Yay!!!” They cheer, dancing around and pumping their tiny fists in the air.

“So soon? Linda asks, standing from her chair.

“Yes.” I confirm, trying to keep the emotion from my voice. “Ethan arranged it.”

“But surely he's not ready to be released?” She inquires, shocked.

Sighing and trying not to feel annoyed by a perfectly reasonable question, I answer. “He isn't. He isn't coming with us.”

The pups, who naturally have been listening to every word, freeze. “Daddy's not coming?” Parker asks, C*g his head to the side.

“No, he bought tickets for the five of us so we can get home as soon as possible. I'm not sure how much longer he'll be here” I confess.

Linda's brow is furrowed in confusion. “You're not going to stay to see him through the recovery?”

I hate feeling so frustrated with my friend when she's doing nothing wrong. Linda has no idea what's just happened, and unlike the pups, she knows exactly how attached Ethan and I became on this journey. It makes sense that she's confused. At the same time, I wish I could tell her to put a sock in it.

“No I replay simply, shooting her a pointed look to try and communicate that I'll explain later.

“Then, he's coming later?” Riley asks, c*****g her head to the side, trying to wrap her clever little mind around these developments.

For a moment I pause, grappling with the right thing to do here. If I tell them home means the Dark Moon pack and that Ethan isn't coming at all, I'll have a quadruple tantrum on my hands the likes of which I've never seen. It will be impossible to get the pups onto the plane. If, on the other hand, I wait until we reach our destination to break the news, I'll still have a tantrum, but the hard part will be over. Technically Ethan will be returning to the Nightfang territory at a later date, so it wouldn't even be a true lie.

Can I do such a thing? Can I blatantly trick my pups to avoid the hassle of traveling with a pack of severely distraught four-year-olds? Is that the most selfish plan in the world? Then a new possibility occurs to me. If I tell them that we're going to the Dark Moon pack and that Ethan won't ever be joining us, they'll undoubtedly try to go see him, they'll want to convince him to come with us, to overrule me. And what then? Will he break their hearts as badly as he broke mine? Will he tell them he doesn't want them?

I can't take that risk.

“Yes” I confirm, before I can think better of it, “now hurry and get ready, the car will be here any minute.

“But we wanna say bye to Daddy.” Paisley objects.

“I'm sorry, there isn't time.” I answer, hating myself more and more with every word I say.

Linda's looking at me with blatant suspicion now, gather your things kids, I wanna say goodbye to your Mommy since I'm staying with Uncle Eric.” She pulls me off to the side, lowering her voice to a whisper.” Jane, what are you doing? You're not pulling a runner are you?”

“No I snap back, more fiercely than I intended. I can't bring myself to look her in the eye, and I can feel the tears threatening. “It's the opposite.”

She frowns, “what?”

“I'm not leaving him” I clarify, “he's kicking me to the curb.”

Linda's mouth falls open in shock, “No-not possible, you must have misunderstood:”

“I didn't misunderstand” I hiss, despising her in that moment. “Trust me, he was very clear:”

“But the pups-” Linda objects.

“Trust me, Linda, if you've thought it, I've said it.” I counter, swiping angrily at my eyes. “Now I love you, and I'll call you when we're home, but we have to go now.”

Linda gives me a hug, and I sweep the kids into a taxi and jet off to the airport. The trip is long and boring.

And I find myself counting down the moments when I can lock myself in my room tonight after the kids have gone to bed and cry. It's so grating to be surrounded by so many people, and I feel like I'll unravel at any moment. Of course this isn't the worst. The worst comes later, when we're finally back in the Dark Moon pack and I have to break the news to the pups.

They don't realize anything is off until the taxi pulls up outside my apartment building. I suppose all airports look alike to children, and they're really just along for the ride, following my directions and not overthinking the pilot's announcements or anything else which comes to pass.

Paisley doesn't recognize her surroundings, but Riley, Ryder, and Parker certainly do. “Mommy, what are we doing here?” Ryder asks, his sweet face crumpled in confusion.

Taking a deep breath, I reply. “I have to tell you something.”

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