

The Luna and her Quadruplet Pups by Jane Above Story

Chapter 161

Ethan

This is crazy, you know that?" Linda asks, watching as the doctors fit the braces onto my lower body.

"Linda, if you're not going to be supportive, you might as well as go back to your palace." I tell her coolly. Eric was released a few days ago and the couple is slowly settling into their life as the new King and Queen. They're planning a mating ceremony and a coronation, as well as trying to launch an emergency PR campaign to get the Kingdom up to speed on the changes in governance and conduct outreach to those citizens in need. Still, Linda visits me every day and though she's not always the most supportive of guests, it does feel nice to have at least one person who knows what I'm going through.

I'm sorry, I'm not trying to be unsupportive."

She replies contritely. "I just think this plan of yours is a recipe for disaster, I mean what's going to happen when people find out."

"If you have a better solution I'd love to hear it."

I gripe, "And they're not going to find out."

They will eventually." She reasons, "when it's all over the truth is going to come out."

"I'm going to do my best to ensure that doesn't happen." I sigh. "We'll come up with another story, a sudden illness or something. No one ever has to know about the deceit."

"Ethan, I wish you would reconsider telling Jane and the pups." Linda says, for the thousandth time.

Linda, we've been over this, and I know it's difficult for you to keep this from her, but you know it's for the best." I argue. I just hope you'll encourage her to find a new mate after I'm gone." My wolf howls at the very idea, and I admit that the idea of another man going near my beloved mate makes me apoplectic, but I want her life to be happy. I want her to be loved, and I want my pups to have a father figure if I can't be there for them.

I know this isn't what you want to hear," Linda begins carefully, "but I think you pretty much ruined the chances of that happening. You know how hard it was for her to trust you, to let herself be vulnerable with you again, and then you rejected her. She was traumatized enough after your marriage ended, I don't think there's any coming back from this."

All of a sudden I'm reminded of Jane asking me when the hardship would end, if we'd be struggling forever- and what we had done to deserve so many trials and tribulations. At the time I promised her for a bright future once the pups were safe, but now I wonder if she was right. Am I being punished for wrongs I committed in the past? Is this my repayment for stealing her agency when we were married? It doesn't seem fair. After all, I'm not the only one 'suffering here – Jane and the pups are paying the price too. I can't stand the thought of it – they're innocents. Even if I don't have a future ahead of me, I have to think that they will – I have to find a way to make that happen for them.

That's why she needs you." I explain. "Tell her I was evil, tell her other men aren't like me. She has a fated mate out there somewhere – encourage her to find him."

She doesn't want anyone else, Ethan. She's only ever wanted you, and you destroyed her." Linda proclaims sadly. "And I understand you're trying to protect her. I even respect what you're doing..."

I just wish it didn't have to be this way."

"And you think I don't?" I snap, so harshly that the scientists around me flinch. Linda looks mildly shell-shocked, and I try to calm down, I'm sorry, that was too harsh."

No, I'm sorry. I know this isn't what you want either." Linda apologizes, shaking her head and looking as though she might cry.

"Okay Alpha," one of the researchers interjects, you're all strapped in. The system works through these transmitters we're putting on your wrists.

You're going to have to practice, but any time you want the braces to move your legs, you have to move your hands and then the system will mimic the motion. To stand, close your hands into fists and straighten your arms to your sides, almost like you're pointing your hands at the floor."

I do as she instructs, and suddenly my body is surging upwards. It's the strangest sensation, I feel completely disconnected from my lower half. I sway in place for a moment, and the people around me reach out to brace my impending fall. "Slowly now, you have to go very slowly."

"The scientist informs me. "Obviously you can't feel the floor, so it's going to take some practice learning to balance."

"And how do I walk?" I ask, wanting to reach my arms out to my sides to try and regain my equilibrium, but recalling the moving my hands controls the braces.

"Just swing one hand forward – slowly – like you might if you were walking naturally." She explains.

I do as she says, amazed when the brace silently bends and straightens my leg, extending it out in front of me to take a step forward. It's really quite amazing. I move my other hand now, and before long I'm walking around the room in my hospital gown. Granted I'm walking with the ungainly grace of a newborn foal about to topple over at any moment, but I can already tell that once I have some time to get used to the system, it will be the perfect fake.

This is incredible." I express, looking to the scientists in awe. "I can't believe you did this so fast."

I mean in terms of robotics it's actually incredibly simple." The researcher from the think tank smiles. You should see the things AI is capable of these days – this is just a couple of basic functions."

"Well it's life changing." I state honestly. This is exactly what I needed."

You definitely have to fit in some practice before heading home." Linda observes, 'but once you've got normal clothes on and everything, no one would know the difference.

It's even silent.

Thank you so much." I profess, smiling for the first time since this all began. I haven't had any good news in a while now, and I wasn't sure that there would be any way to actually pull this off.

With the way things have been going it actually seemed more likely that it would fail spectacularly. I can't express how relieved I am that we truly have a solution.

"Now, you can sleep in this if you want to be able to jump up in the middle of the night, but you have to remove them to bathe. Do you have someone at home who can help you do that?" My surgeon asks, smiling despite her earlier warnings.

Well that's not ideal. I suppose I could ask Matthew, but I don't particularly want to put my Beta in that position. "Can't I put the braces on and take them off myself?" I inquire.

Yes." The researchers answer, it's more about mobility once they're off."

I'll figure it out." I decide, knowing that I have a nice big bathtub at home that I can probably climb in and out of using my upper body. I suppose this will be an opportunity for my arms to get even more muscular. "I'm going to have to figure out how to do a lot of things differently from now on. What happens if they brake? Can the wrist transmitters get wet?"

Yes, they'll still function – the bathing issue is more about rust." The researchers explain.

Neither they nor the braces should brake, but if they do we have an office in the NightFang capital that can troubleshoot, do repairs, or give substitutes. Everything we do is covered by strict confidentiality, so if you need them they'll be very discreet."

"Good." I nod, feeling as though the pieces to my plan are finally coming together. When will I be safe to fly?"

You can fly today if you like, but you can't do any heavy lifting or any rigorous physical activity, you're still healing from surgery after all.

Thank you so much."

"Good -I've been away for far too long, it's past time I went home." I announce. Lord knows what state the pack is in.

"Ethan, I wish you would stay a few more days, if you're going to be discharged you can come stay at the palace for a bit. I hate to think of you just rushing off with everything that's happening."

Linda frowns.

I appreciate that Linda, but putting off my return is only going to make things worse." I reason. I don't have any time to waste.

"At least stay one more night. Come have dinner with us so we can thank you for everything you've done." She requests.

"Alright." I agree, it's late in the day to book a flight anyway. "But first thing in the morning –

I'm going home."

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