

The Luna and her Quadruplet Pups by Jane Above Story

Chapter 175

Ethan

Jane and I are both on our feet the moment we see our pup injured. My instincts send me flying onto the ice, but my braces keep me from moving the way I normally would. I barely beat Jane to Parker's side, biting back a growl of pain when the braces wrench my legs into painful contortions. I can't feel anything below the waist, but the sharp metal still digs into my abdomen, and the powerful pinch as they try to adjust to the precarious surface beneath my feet is nearly excruciating.

I drop to my knees beside Parker, scanning his precious form for the source of the injury. Almost at once I see a bleeding gash on his forearm, and though I'm relieved to see the wound isn't grave, I still feel a pang of sympathy for the child. "Are you okay, buddy?"

Parker looks up at me, his dark eyes welling with tears as his face grimaces in pain. He's clutching his arm, clearly trying to put up a strong front but obviously struggling. Daddy, it hurts."

Jane is already on the ground beside him, stroking back his hair. "Let Mommy see, sweetheart." She encourages gently, reaching for his arm.

I watch her examine him, praising him for being so brave as she deftly studies the injury. The sight of his crimson blood staining the ice makes me feel sick to my stomach, despite the fact that I'm no stranger to blood and gore. It's always been the same with Paisley, seeing her injured can cut me to the core while I barely blink at dead enemies on a battlefield.

What happened?" I press, my wolf anxious to confirm it was simply a skating accident and that there's no greater threat.

He lost his balance." Riley answers for her brother, "but when he felled his arm hit Ryder's skate."

Tsk, poor darling." Jane croons, "Let's get you off the ice, I bet there's a first aid kit here somewhere."

I scoop up Parker before she can object, needing to feel him safe in my arms. The others follow us off the ice, and Jane disappears to find medical supplies.

My wolf wants to follow her, not wanting to let her out of his sight. Unfortunately there's no way around this, so instead I find a bench and settle with Parker in my lap while his brothers and sisters gather around us.

Where'd Mommy go?" He sniffles, looking around anxiously.

"She'll be right back." I assure him. She just went to find some bandaids."

He's sniffing louder now, and I realize we're about to have a full on breakdown. I want Mommy."

Parker m0ans, letting his tears fall freely now.

Apparently the pain hadn't been bad enough to send him over the edge on its own, but Jane's absence on top of the discomfort was too much for the poor pup.

"Is okay, Parker." Paisley consoles her brother.

Look, here Mommy comes now."

Jane seems surprised to find Parker crying and reaching for her when she returns, but she takes him into her arms as easily as breathing. "Poor darling."

She croons, stroking his hair as he presses his tear stained face into her neck. "It's okay, I'm here.

Mommy's got you."

There's something almost serene about watching Jane comfort our son, the way only a mother can. If only all problems could be fixed as easily as they can when we're little, and the only medicine that will do is a hug from Mom. It's an important reminder of why I have to help repair Jane's relationship with the pups. Not only because she'll never recover if they continue to shun her, but because she's the only parent they can rely on now. They have to trust her implicitly.

Jane is still cuddling and kissing Parker as she sits down, passing me the first aid kit. Luckily all of their attention is focused on Parker as I kneel down, unsteady and graceless in the braces. As I begin cleaning the wound, pleased to see it's shallow and straight, the other children press closer, looking over my shoulder as I work.

Eww," Riley exclaims, sounding more intrigued than grossed out. "It's all gushy."

That looks bad, Parker." Ryder adds solemnly.

"Does it hurt lots and lots?" Paisley asks in a hushed whisper.

Parker sniffles and shakes his head, downplaying the ache. "Not really.

That's my brave boy." Jane praises him as I unpack more supplies.

Parker shoots the ra disgruntled look, "Mommy you're 'barrassing me." Despite his words, he doesn't attempt to move a single inch from her arms, instead cuddling closer and leaning his head back against her shoulder.

I find myself chuckling. Next to Riley, Parker is the most independent and proud of our pups. His sister has a truly wild spirit, but he wears the weight of being the oldest and strongest. I know that he, and not Ryder, is my natural heir. And though he's still very young, he's clearly already feeling the pressure to hide his vulnerable side. That's another thing I'll have to do, I think, beginning a list in my head of all the tasks I need to accomplish before I say goodbye to my family for good. Help Jane find her strength again, heal her relationship with the pups, teach my boys that being strong doesn't mean destroying their soft sides.

There's nothing embarrassing about loving and being loved." I tell Parker, seeing Jane's eyes widen in surprise over his head. Your Mommy just wants you to know how proud she is. And she's right, you're being very brave."

"But Daddy -" Parker begins, only to be cut off when I continue.

No buts. How would you feel if you told one of your siblings you loved them and they told you to stop because they didn't want anyone to hear?" I ask, giving him a searching look.

Parker frowns, "I'd feel bad, like there's something wrong with me.

Exactly." I nod. "It's okay to feel embarrassed sometimes, but you should never feel ashamed of showing affection especially not from your family.

Your Mommy loves you more than anything."

Parker looks up at Jane, as if for confirmation, and I feel a bitter twinge. A few weeks ago they never would have doubted her, now they need to hear it from me to believe it – and it's all my fault in the first place. "It's true." She agrees solemnly. "I love you four more than I love myself."

All four pups lean closer now, and Parker's lower lip quivers. "Sorry Mommy."

"It's okay munchkin." She promises, smiling sadly.

I'm going to embarrass you more and more as you get older,!"

'Nu-uh." Paisley argues, "we'll never be embarrassed of you agains, Mommy."

Thank you, sweetheart.' Jane reaches out an arm to squeeze our youngest daughter. She looks as though she might want to thank me too, but she can't seem to look me in the eye, instead she peeks up from beneath her lashes, bringing her brilliant green irises up to my chin. At the last moment she chickens out, lowering her gaze back to Parker without a word. I hate seeing her so diminished: and I can't imagine a greater shame than seeing those you're meant to protect cower from you in fear.

Later, after the pups are asleep in bed, I find Jane standing at their door, watching Parker anxiously.

Her gaze is loving and hawkish at once, and she's wearing the same expression I've seen in the mirror a thousand times when I think about my family being hurt. She's barely let him out of her sight since the incident at the rink, though it was a minor injury.

"He's fine Jane, it was just a little cut." I tell her softly, realizing the children's kidnapping must still be plaguing her – bad memories and past trauma playing on her emotions.

"I know that." She murmurs, still not taking her eyes off him. "I just want to make sure they go down without any nightmares..."

She's mentioned this a few times before, the way the pups can't seem to sleep through the night anymore, the way they wake crying for me. "Why don't you let me do this." I suggest, wondering if Jane has been sleeping herself, or if she's been staying up all night to watch over the pups. "You go get some sleep."

Jane shakes her head. "No, I don'tmind." She insists, but I see a flicker of darker emotion in her eyes. It's as if she doesn't like the idea of sleeping one bit, but I can't tell if her fear is for leaving the pups unguarded, or for herself.

"Have you been having nightmares too?" I question, watching her closely.

A flash of anger crosses her beautiful creatures.

What do you care? she bites coldly.

"You're sleep deprived." I cut sharply. "It's no wonder you're such a mess when you're exhausting yourself this way. Now if it's because of worry for the pups then I'm telling you I will look after them while you rest, but if it's about your own dreams that's another matter entirely."

Jane looks at me for the first time all day. Why?

Even if I have them, it's not like you can fix them."

You never have nightmares when you sleep with me." I remind her sternly.

Jane reels back, looking shocked. "Are you saying... you want me to sleep with you?"

Previous Chapter

Next Chapter