

The Luna and her Quadruplet Pups by Jane Above Story

Chapter 186

Ethan

The moment I saw Devon, I was struck with a terrible idea. The most wonderful, terrible idea.

Jane might not be up to date in pack politics, but I know the Alpha of the Dark Moon pack just retired his Beta before the holidays, and if the word on the street is correct, Devon will be his replacement.

I've been counting on Matthew to keep an eye on me and help train my successor – once I find one- but I still haven't come across a solution for giving Jane and my pups a worthy father figure.

However if Devon is going to be in the Dark Moon pack, then he could be the answer to those my problems. I wouldn't have to worry about them so much if I knew Devon was there, and even if he isn't still in love with Jane, it will only be a matter of time before he falls again – only an idiot wouldn't love Jane.

My wolf is growling furiously at this idea, jealousy bubbling up inside us like a toxic tidal wave of green-eyed fury, but I force down the feelings. The idea of letting another man sniff around my family goes against everything I am, but I also know that I'm not in any state to defend my claim on them – which is exactly the problem. My wolf might want to fight anyone who goes near them, but my days of winning fights are over. They need a new protector, and Devon is precisely the kind of man I would want for Jane if I couldn't have her myself – I've known that from the day he stepped down as my Beta.

The memory rises through my thoughts as I watch him walk away with Jane, headed for the coffee house. I continue leading the pups down the street, but my mind is already a thousand miles away.

"What do you mean, you're leaving?" I demand, staring at Devon in shock and horror. We're seventeen, and up until now we'd always planned on leading the pack together when my father steps down. We've been friends since we were in diapers, and he's never shown even the tiniest glimmer of disloyalty. I can't believe he's just resigned and announced he's quitting the territory.

"I'm sorry, Ethan." He sighs, not looking me in the eye. "I wouldn't do this if I thought there was any other way."

"What are you talking about?" I growl. "This has always been the plan, you've always been a brother to me – you can't just walk away without any explanation, Devon."

"Trust me when I tell you that you don't want to know my reasons." Devon begs, looking torn. "I'm trying to do the right thing for everyone."

I cross the room, bracing my hands on his burly shoulders. "Please, talk to me." I plead, hating the way he continues to avert his gaze. "If something is wrong I want to help."

"You can't help!" Devon explodes, finally raising his blazing silver eyes to mine. I can feel his anger as if it were my own, but more shocking than anything is the resentment I see in his expression.

It's so fierce I have to take a step back.

"I don't understand, have I done something to upset you?" I inquire, both needing and fearing the answer.

"You can't help." Devon repeats heavily, shaking his head. "Because you are the problem.. not that you can help it. I don't even blame you, really.. I just can't stay."

"Stop speaking in riddles." I order, scrambling to figure out how I've offended him. "If I'm the problem then I sure as hell can help it. Just tell me what to do, tell me what to change – what to say, who to pay, who to kill."

Devon emits a frustrated groan, dragging one large hand through his curls and clenching his fists in exasperation, "For the love of the Goddess Ethan, can't you just let it go! Do you have to be such a pain in the as*s!"

"Yes!" I thunder in return. "When it comes to losing my best friend, I absolutely do!" I bite back, studying his familiar face as though I've never seen it before. "And what about Jane, this will break her heart."

The three of us have been tied at the hip for as long as I can remember. Jane might have met me first, but she befriended Devon just as quickly as she befriended me. We've always been the three musketeers, and though I worried falling in love with one of my best friends might alienate the other, Devon never seemed the least bit phased.

When we told him we were dating, he just laughed and said he'd wondered if we were ever going to figure it out.

However when I say her name now he flinches, and for the first time I notice a hint of color flushing his cheeks. He's gone back to staring at the floor, and suddenly I know what he's about to say before he even opens his mouth. "Jane's heart won't ever be broken, as long as she has you. And I want her to be happy more than I wish it for myself, so I'm not going to get in the way."

"You think she's your mate." I guess, feeling suddenly sick to my stomach.

"What I think doesn't matter. She doesn't see me that way, she only has eyes for you." Devon replies, his even tone only hinting at the underlying grief I know he must be feeling.

"Why didn't you tell me?" I ask, deflating slightly.

"You're my best friends and I've never seen you happier than when you're together. You intend on marrying her, don't you?" He guesses, though I've never spoken this secret aloud.

"Yes." I confirm, "if she'll have me."

"She will." Devon confirms gravely, "And together you two will make the best leaders this pack has seen in generations. I might be strong enough to give her up, but I'm not strong enough to stay here and watch you build your lives together."

"Does she know how you feel?" I ask, not sure I want to know the answer to this question. If the answer is yes I don't think I'd mind, but if it's no... then shouldn't he tell her? Shouldn't he get to profess his feelings? Shouldn't Jane know all the options available to her? What if... what if she realizes she's meant to be with Devon, instead of with me? Am I brave enough to risk that happening? No, I immediately answer myself. I'm not, I can't lose Jane.

"No, and she's not going to." Devon responds simply. "I won't have either of you heartbroken on my account."

"But... what if it's meant to be you two. What if you are fated, and she just needs to hear it to realize?" I feel as though the room is spinning all of a sudden, and for the first time in my memory, I feel uncertain of myself, uncertain of my relationship with Jane.

"I meant what I said." Devon insists, "I don't want to hurt you either, and even if we are mates... you're the stronger wolf. She's safer with you. Her children will be Alphas that's not something I can give her."

"But Devon -"

"I don't like it any more than you do." He insists.

But I have to do this. She picked you, I have to respect that."

"Where will you go?" I ask, hating myself for agreeing to this plan. I feel a sharp stab of shame for my cowardice. Maybe being an Alpha makes me selfish, or maybe Devon is simply a better man than I am. If the tables were turned I can't say that I would sacrifice myself this way – in fact I knew I wouldn't. I have the opportunity to give Jane the choice here and now, but I'm too afraid of losing her to do the right thing.

"I haven't figured that part out yet, but don't worry – I'll land on my feet. Just, do me a favor and wait until I'm gone before you tell her." Devon requests.

If she asks me to stay I'm not sure I'll be able to refuse her."

"I understand." I nod, crossing the room and throwing my arms around him. "I'm sorry to see you,go.. It was always supposed to be three of us running the pack, not just Jane and I."

"You two will do amazing without me – you'll see."

He smiles sadly, hugging me tightly.

I'll never forget the way Jane cried when I told her Devon was gone, or how horrible it had felt to tell her I didn't know the reason he left. And the more I look back on it, the more I realize I had been a coward by not encouraging him to tell Jane how he felt. Maybe he was the right man for her all along, and my selfishness stopped them from being together. He'd certainly been wrong when he told me Jane would never be heartbroken as long as we were together.

Either way, Devon let Jane go when he believed I was better for her, the least I can do now is return the favor, no matter how badly it hurts.

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