

## The Luna and her Quadruplet Pups by Jane Above Story

Chapter 188

Jane

As I consider Devon's question, I'm inundated with memories of Eric. Unlike Devon, I'd always known Eric wanted to be more than just friends, and I'd considered dating him more than once. I thought he would be a safe partner because he'd never be able to hurt me the way Ethan did, and though I later learned the basis of our friendship was I lie, ultimately I'd been right. I was angry about his betrayal and angry at myself for trusting him, but it didn't break my heart.

I don't want to give Ethan the power to influence my decisions for the rest of my life, but it's hard not feel of romance after everything I've been through with him. I hate to say it Devon, but I don't think I see romance in my future at all. With anyone." I finally reply, feeling ashamed of my own cowardice, yet also completely trapped by it.

"Oh Jane, don't say that." Devon replies, sounding truly pained by the idea. Though I don't think his pain is for his own dashed hopes, but to hear me speaking so cynically. "You're breaking my heart here. You're only twenty-five, you've still got your whole life ahead of you. Don't let Ethan take away your future happiness on top of everything else he's done.

"I don't want to." I hiccup, heaving in a shaky breath. But I can't help it. The idea of being close to anyone that way again terrifies me. And I have my pups to think about. I've seen what happens when they get attached to someone and then that person goes away."

Devon is shaking his head, his own eyes shining. "I could kill Ethan for what he's done to you. I feel like I'm looking at a shadow of the girl I knew."

"I am a shadow." I confess, wrapping my arms around myself. "I feel like my heart has been completely hollowed out, only I know that can't be, because if it were really empty then I wouldn't hurt so much.

Devon shakes his head and pulls me into a hug, and I'm amazed at how familiar his arms feel. I let myself lean into his warmth, taking the comfort he's selflessly offering. I'm surprised to discover that I do feel safe with him, not because I believe I couldn't feel strongly enough for him to be hurt like I did with Eric, but because I've known him almost my whole life. I knew who he was before he went away, and though he's undoubtedly changed on his journey, he still feels like my Devon.

I don't know if I can ever love anyone other than Ethan." I say, speaking into the curve of his neck.

But I'm willing to try. You'll have to be patient with me though. I'm not good at letting people get close to me.

Devon chuckles. "I'm proud that you're brave enough to try again, Janey. But I don't think you're going to be ready for anything like that for quite some time.

"I.. but you asked," I murmur, confused.

I know." He replies, because you wanted to know my intentions. Now I'll tell you right now that, when you are ready, I'll be here waiting. But I think you need a friend right now, not a lover."

Already the differences between Ethan and Devon are glaringly obvious, and I wonder if I didn't make the wrong choice all those years ago. I don't want to be one of those women who continuously falls for bad men, and when I was young I probably mistook strength for safety. Now I know better. So do I try to change, do I take a chance on someone who is good and honest and true? Or do I hang my hopes on men who excite me even if they might destroy me?

"Thank you." I breathe, squeezing Devon's middle as tightly as I can. He squeezes me back, and I make a terrifying decision.

"Will you do something for me, then. As a friend?"

"Anything." He agrees easily.

"Don't let me make you wait too long? I mean, I don't want you to pressure me, but don't let me forget it either. Don't just let me off the hook by saying I'm not ready. If you let me, I'll crawl back inside myself like I did before and close myself off from the world. And I don't want to do that anymore.

I want to be brave"

Now that's a promise I can easily make." Devon says, and I can hear the grin in his voice. We're going to get you through this, Jane."

When I get home after my coffee with Devon, I find Ethan waiting with an eager expression on his face.

Well, how did it go?"

I do a double take, astonished to hear him inquiring like an excited roommate after coming home from a first date. "It was rather illuminating." I admit, crossing my arms over my chest and shooting him a glare. "Apparently when you told me Devon left all those years ago, you lied to my face when I asked you why."

Something flashes in Ethan's eyes, and I think I might be hallucinating, because it almost looked like pleasure. However when he speaks, his voice is cold and biting, and I know I must have imagined it. "He was already gone. I didn't see what difference it would make."

You didn't think I had a right to know he left because of me?" I inquire.

I think you have a soft heart and you would have asked him to return, and I wasn't going to have that.

I made him leave for a reason." He scowls.

"I...you made him go?" I repeat, unsure if I misunderstood him, or if Devon was being kinder to my ex-husband than I realized when he explained his departure.

You didn't really believe I would let him stay knowing he would be drooling all over my mate, did you?" Ethan hisses.

I stagger backwards, unsure why I'm surprised.

Haven't I learned my lesson by now? Why does it shock me to learn Ethan did despicable things even before he showed his true nature to me. "He was your best friend! He was loyal to you and the pack above everything else. He never would have made a move on me!

If he was really loyal to me, he wouldn't have ever looked at you at all." He remarks angrily.

That isn't fair, you can't decide who to love. It doesn't work that way." I object. Even as chosen mates, I know that the heart does exactly what it wants and no power on earth can reason with it once it's made up its mind. Ethan's rejection of his fated mate proved that much.

Well that's obvious enough. I certainly wouldn't have picked you if I had the choice. A real choice, that is." He snipes, as if reading my mind. "So tell me, is he still hung up on you?"

I don't know exactly." I answer, trying not to show how badly his words hurt. "He offered his friendship, and suggested we might date down the line." I don't know why I'm telling him this – I suppose part of me wants to see how he'll react. To test whether or not he still feels any lingering possessiveness for me.

I think you should go out with him." Ethan suggests, shocking me further. After all, I'm done with you. If he wants my sloppy seconds, so be it.

I reel back, feeling as if I've been slapped. It only takes me a moment to rebound, rage swelling up inside me. Fine." I snap, wanting to shock him too, wanting to hurt him the way he hurt me. I'll ask him out right now!"

Fuming, I dial Devon's number, newly added to my contacts. Pacing as the line rings, I try to calm down.

My hands are shaking I'm so furious. Ethan hasn't been quite so horrible the last few days, but I suppose we've been spending most of our time with the pups rather than being alone together. Of course he wouldn't be so cruel in front of the children. I'm still glaring at Ethan when he picks up, half expecting to come over and rip the phone from my hands.

Well hello there." His warm voice greets me. "You miss me already?"

You caught me, How is it possible he can make me laugh when I was so angry a moment ago? "Do you have any plans for New Years?""

"Not yet." He replies, his deep voice open and curious. What do you have in mind?"

There's a big celebration downtown, I was going to take the pups. Maybe you'd like to join us?" I invite, figuring that this will be a good test. No one has better as-sh0le -radar than children. Besides, if the pups like him I'll feel better about letting him into my life, and if they don't, I'll know that we need to proceed very carefully.

I can hear the smile in Devon's voice. I'd love to.

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