

The Luna and her Quadruplet Pups by Jane Above Story

Chapter 202

Ethan

Unlike most kids, I never hated going to the doctor. I never feared shots or had anxiety visiting the dentist. It wasn't until Paisley was born that I began dreading the sympathetic smiles of nurses or grim faces of physicians with the unfortunate burden of bearing bad news. Over the years, watching my baby battle her heart condition taught me to absolutely despise hospitals and the sterile scents of testing facilities. I can't walk into a doctor's office without my heart sinking into my stomach, even if it's just for a routine wellness check.

Those feelings of dread only grew when it became my turn to battle for my life, though Paisley is still at the heart of it. I wouldn't care so much about my fate if it weren't for her. I know Jane and the other pups are safe with Devon, I know they're healing and well on their way to bright futures. What's more, over the last three months Matthew and Nina have helped me make plans to ensure the pack's survival and prosperity if the worst should happen, but I'm terrified of what my death will do to Paisley. The pack will recover. Jane, Parker, Ryder and Riley will recover.. Paisley might not.

So when I enter my doctor's office this afternoon, my insides automatically tie themselves into knots. I've come to expect bad news from appointments like these, and even though I've been improving in recent months, I can't unlearn all those years of fear and heartbreak. It's something of a surprise then, when my doctor enters with a wide smile on his face.

I narrow my eyes at him, not trusting that he's entered the right room. My suspicion only grows when he greets me with the same warm expression, "Hello Alpha."

I cock my head to the side, flaring my nostrils as if I imagine I might be able to sniff out whatever trick is about to be played on me. "Why are you smiling like that?" I demand, wondering if he's trying to soften some imminent blow with his friendly demeanor. "Oh Goddess, how bad is it?"

How long do I have?"

The physician rolls his eyes and gives me an exasperated look. "Honestly Ethan, it's not bad news. Have you no hope at all?"

"No, I don't." I quip, still overwhelmed with suspicion. "If it's not bad news, then what is it?" I press, "Are you trying to sell me something, or butter me up so I'll give you a recommendation to the board?"

"I don't know how your mate puts up with you." He jokes, but his eyes linger on me, as if he's trying to gauge my reaction. The pack had been taken by genuine surprise when I introduced Nina as my fated mate. After everything that happened with Jane, Eve and the kidnapping, no one ever expected our family to split up. In the end I gave the excuse that traumatic experiences like ours could bring couples closer together or tear them apart, and we unfortunately qualified as the latter.

That had provided the tabloids with plenty of material, but things really notched up when I announced my relationship with Nina. The gossip has been endless and unbearable.

Seeming to gather that I'm not going to give him any insights on my private life, my doctor eventually continues. "Your latest scans are excellent, Alpha." He announces. "The fluid around your spinal cord has finally reduced enough that our chances of a successful surgery are now around 50 percent – which is a vast improvement from a few months ago."

"50 percent chance of success?" I repeat. "And what is failure, exactly? It doesn't work and we try again later, or it doesn't work and I die?"

Now he does frown. "Ethan, you've been paralyzed for four months now. Your wolf is becoming more erratic by the day, even with your mate and your pup helping to calm him. By my estimate, you only have three or four months left before you cross a point of no return. Now, we can wait another month or two and hope that your chances will improve into the 60 percent range, but I can't predict what mental state you'll be in by then."

"So that's the best improvement I can hope for, ten percent?" I inquire, the gears turning in my mind.

"I'd say so, and while the physical damage might be reversible, the mental may not be. I'm advising you – as your physician and as a member of this pack who wants you to remain Alpha – do not wait on this surgery. Now is the best chance you have to come out of this in one piece, and if you wait we all might pay the price." He declares firmly. "Your family most of all."

I nod, clenching my eyes shut against the truth of his words. "I need to talk to them." I answer. "I can't make this decision without letting them know what's at stake."

The doctor offers me a sad smile, "Ethan, I understand what you're going through better than you think, and I know it's difficult with a little one at home. Just remember, it might feel important to stay with her as long as you possibly can, but if this works you can have a whole lifetime with her – in my books that's worth risking a few months that will probably be incredibly painful and traumatizing for her."

"I hear you." I confirm, "I still have to talk to them first"

When I reach the penthouse about an hour later, it's to the sound of Nina's exasperated cry."

Paisley, this isn't funny! Come out this instant!"

Despite the frustration in her voice, I feel my lip quirking up in amusement. Paisley has not exactly accepted Nina, and she gets up to no end of mischief when I'm away. If I had to guess, I'd say my clever pup has decided to play hide and seek with my fated mate – despite the fact that Nina never agreed to a game.

When I walk in, I find Nina standing in the middle of the hall way, holding one of Paisley's dresses in her hand. She turns toward me with blazing eyes,

She did it again!" She exclaims. "I told her it was bedtime and she pretended to come along- then the moment I turned my back she disappeared!"

Nina waves the dress at me, as if in accusation."

And of course this whole house smells like her so tracking her is like trying to find a needle in a haystack."

"Hmm," I muse, striding into the living room, "if I were a sneaky little sausage called Paisley, where would I be?" I ask loudly, ducking down to peek under the couch. I hear a small giggle from the kitchen, and though Nina whips around with her ears cocked to the noise, I hold up a hand to stop her. "She's not here" I project, pulling back one of the curtains. "Did she disappear?"

"Honestly Ethan, I know you think it's cute but she's too old for this!" Nina hisses. Poor she-wolf, it's not her fault that Paisley is so set against her. I don't think she's ever dreamed of having children of her own, but I don't think she dislikes them either – and Paisley has made her experience of step-motherhood very difficult indeed.

I pause to drop a kiss on her forehead, taking the dress from her hand. "She's just a pup, Nina." I remind her in a whisper. "And she's had a very hard life. She misses her Mommy, don't take it personally."

Nina softens slightly, glancing sympathetically towards the kitchen. She exhales heavily, and makes a gesture encouraging me to get on with the game, before stalking into the living room and slumping onto the couch.

I, on the other hand, continue the hunt, prowling into the kitchen and making ominous announcements every few feet, "Fee, Fie, Fo, Fum, I smell the blood of a Paisley pup!" Occasionally I open a cabinet or drawer, making disappointed noises when I fail.

"Hmm, she's not in the freezer..."

Not in the microwave – that's a relief."

Then, I whip open the cabinets nearest her, shouting "a-ha!" Of course they're empty, but my perceived failure only sends my little girl into a riot of laughter. Chuckling deeply I finally pry open the door concealing my daughter, who's curled up in a little ball, wearing only her underwear.

"Daddy, you found me!" Paisley chirps happily, leaping into my arms.

"I did!" I exclaim, kissing her cheeks, forehead and nose. "You haven't been making trouble for Nina, have you munchkin?"

"Maybe just a littles." She flushes, peeking up at me from beneath her lashes.

"Tsk, tsk." I scold, "Such a naughty pup. Don't you know Nina only wants to take care of you?"

"But Daddy, she's so funny when she gets all mad."

Paisley objects, as if this justifies everything.

I set her down and pull her dress over her head. "

March your cute butt over there and tell her you're sorry."

Paisley pauses, narrowing her eyes. "Do I have to take a bath after?"

"Eventually, but first we need to talk." I answer seriously.

"Bout what, Daddy?" She inquires.

I take a deep breath, wishing this was as easy as sniffing her out. "About our future – and how long I'm going to be in it."

[Previous Chapter](#)

[Next Chapter](#)