

The Luna and her Quadruplet Pups by Jane Above Story

Chapter 207

Jane

Of all the things I expected to find when I came home today, Paisley, Ethan and his fated mate were just about the last things on my list. I'm so stunned when I see my ex-husband that it takes me a moment to realize that Paisley is buried beneath her siblings on the floor. It's not until I hear her muffled voice crying, "Mommy!" that I'm able to pull my attention away from her father.

"Paisley?" I respond hopefully, feeling my heart immediately leap into my throat. After a moment her little head appears, and her eyes widen when she sees my round belly.

"Mommy you're tummy's ginormous!" She exclaims. She's not the only one who seems preoccupied with it. Ethan is staring at my belly too – as if he's never seen a pregnant she-wolf before. I try my best to ignore him, instead lowering myself to the ground to take Paisley into my arms.

"I know, angel." I laugh, pulling my daughter close as soon as she's within reach. "You should have seen me when I had all four of you inside me. I was like a giant, inflatable beach ball!"

Paisley giggles, and I can't help but notice that Parker, Ryder and Riley are climbing all over Ethan. I'm amazed, because the last time we were all together they didn't want anything to do with him. I'm not sure how I feel about this I want my children to be happy, I want them to have a loving father figure. The problem is that I don't trust Ethan not to turn on them when the chips are down..

The baby kicks as if it can sense its long lost sister is in my arms, and Paisley gasps in shock.

Mommy, your tummy kicked me!"

"That's the baby saying hello." I share, so happy to have her with me again that I could cry.

Ethan still hasn't stopped watching us, and now his eyes are so wide I wonder if he's in shock too.

Though I don't know why he'd be in shock, I'm the one who's been blindsided here. "I'm so happy to see you." I tell Paisley, kissing her beloved little face, "but what are you doing here?"

"We just thought we were overdue for a visit"

Ethan answers, rising to his feet and reaching for the woman I've been trying very hard to avoid noticing so far, "Jane this is Nina. Nina, meet Jane."

"Hi." I greet her stiffly, not moving from my spot on the floor. What are you supposed to say to the woman for whom your mate leaves you? I mean, I know it didn't happen until months afterward, but it hurts all the same. Just seeing Ethan with another Woman makes me feel sick.

"Hello Jane, I've heard so much about you." She smiles. Oh I'm sure you have. I think bitterly. I can only imagine what Ethan has told her about me.

My thoughts immediately spiral into tails of betrayal and incompetent mothering, and I have to forcibly drag myself out of my mind. Just focus on the present Jane, focus on the fact that all your babies are here together – the way they should be.

Ethan continues introducing Nina around, to the other pups and Devon, even to the babysitter.

Meanwhile I continue cuddling Paisley, then dragging her brothers and sister into my lap even though there's simply no room for them. I know it's past their bedtime, and I really don't care. I just want to hold them like this forever.

Of course, eventually we have to get off the floor, if for no other reason that I have to pee for the thousandth time today. I put the pups to bed, reading them a silly story and smothering them with kisses before watching them form their usual puppy pile. When I emerge from their bedroom, Nina is dozing on the couch, and Ethan and Devon have gone into my home office and closed the door.

Curious, I approach the door, reflecting on how much easier it was to sneak around when I wasn't carrying ten extra pounds of puppy in my mid- section.

I hear Devon first, his usually gentle voice uncommonly serious. "I have to tell you the truth, Ethan."

At once I realize he must be preparing to confess his vampirism to Ethan, and at first I lose interest.

After all, I already know this information. However before I can walk away Ethan's deep voice reaches my ears, and I stop short.

"What do you mean?" Ethan responds, his tone so sharp it takes me aback. "Don't tell me you're going back on our deal."

"I should have told you when this whole thing began, but I wanted to help you and I wasn't sure you'd understand." Devon continues, only serving to confuse me more. What whole thing? Help him with what? What deal?!

"Why wouldn't I understand?" Ethan answers, sounding confused. "I've always been on your side, Devon. I didn't hold it against you when you fell in love with my mate or left the pack. I didn't question it when you came back, and besides, I owe you. I had no business asking you to take on such a huge burden after all this time, but you did it without hesitation. We're family, Devon, you have to know that you can tell me anything."

Who is this Ethan and what happened to the horrible tyrant who's been making me miserable these last few months ?I think bitterly, wishing my ex would show me even a fraction of the kindness he's showing Devon. And wait a minute – he didn't hold it against him? I thought Ethan made Devon leave when he found out about his feelings for me.

And what burden? None of this makes any sense.

"I know." Devon sighs, "But I'm supposed to be protecting your actual family, and I'm not the wolf you think I am."

"Devon, we've all done things we regret – me more than anyone. I don't believe that makes you a bad person, or an unfit guardian. I know who you are deep down, that's all that matters." I can practically feel Devon's frustration floating through the door.

Ethan is being a typical Alpha, stubbornly defending his friend even though he doesn't know the full story and trying to comfort Devon instead of just listening to what he has to say. It hasn't escaped my notice that Devon said he's supposed to be protecting us, but I don't have time to process that now, because he's clearly reaching a breaking point.

"It's not what I've done – it's what I am!" Devon exclaims, his voice somewhere between a whisper and a shout. "Look, some shit went down in the years I was away. I worked really hard to put my life back together afterwards and I'm proud of how well I've done, but most people wouldn't want me anywhere near them if they knew the truth."

Ethan pauses, apparently having finally decided to listen to our friend. "And what is the truth?"

"I'm not just a shifter anymore," Devon begins, taking a deep breath. "I'm also a vampire. A Hybrid."

Ethan laughs, then stops when Devon doesn't join in. "You aren't serious. You can't be."

"I assure you, I am." Devon confirms. There's a beat of silence, during which I can only imagine Devon is baring his fangs or making his eyes glow red, and then Ethan is cursing violently. "What the fuck, Devon! You're telling me this now! How could you keep this from me?! How many conversations did we have putting all our plans in place? How many opportunities did you have to come clean? I trusted you with my mate, with my pups!"

"I didn't ask for this, Ethan! Not being a vampire, and not stepping into your shoes – even though we both know that I'll never be enough to fill them!" Devon counters hotly. "We wouldn't even be in this position if you hadn't abandoned them!"

"That isn't fair, you know I didn't have a choice!"

Ethan fights back, sending me reeling. "I did what I had to in order to keep them safe. You – more than anyone – knew how much it hurt me to let them go, how desperate I was to protect them!"

"And I agreed because I knew that no matter what I am, I would die before I hurt them. I just didn't trust that you'd see it the same way if you knew."

Devon shares.

"Or maybe you thought you'd finally have a chance to be with Jane now that I'm out of the way." Ethan accuses.

Devon scoffs, "Of course I did, that was part of the hope for both of us, wasn't it?" I can imagine him shaking his head in disbelief. "It's too late to let your jealousy win now, brother."

Ethan's deep voice sounds softer then, weaker – almost as if he's deflated. "I know." He agrees. "I know, I just. it's harder than I expected, actually seeing you two together."

I back away from the door then, suddenly not wanting to hear any more of this. I'm not sure what's going on, but a few things are painfully clear. First, that Devon has been working with Ethan all along. He lied to me about more than just being a vampire, but from the sounds of it he did so to try and help my ex. Second, that for whatever reason Ethan felt like he had to send the pups and I away. And third, that he's struggling to let someone else protect us.

His words ring in my mind. I trusted you with my mate. My mate. My wolf repeats wistfully, He still thinks of us as his mate.

There are tears in my eyes, and though I've learned never to trust the impulse to hope, I can't stop a kernel of hope from blooming in my chest now.

Whatever is happening, our story isn't over yet, and I'm going to get to the bottom of this if it's the last thing I do.

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