

The Luna and her Quadruplet Pups by Jane Above Story

Chapter 210

Jane

I call Linda first thing the next day, determined to figure out the truth. I'm still reeling from my conversations with Paisley and Nina, still trying to wrap my mind around the idea that Ethan is paralyzed.

I hate to think that all this has been happening right under my nose, and I feel so stupid for not seeing it sooner. My wolf tried to tell me that something was wrong with Ethan, but I was so ready to believe he didn't want me. I expected him to hurt me, so I didn't question it when he did – even though we'd come so far together.

My hands are shaking as I dial my best friend, wondering what Ethan could have possibly said to convince her to lie to me this way. She answers promptly, "Hello, my love." Her voice is familiar and warm, and her betrayal cuts through me. Linda was my friend, not Ethans – she was supposed to be on my side no matter what.

"Linda," I breathe, barely able to contain my hurt.

I'd planned on having an open and logical conversation with her, but now that she's actually on the line, I don't think I can. "Were you ever going to tell me?"

There's a pregnant pause on the other end of the call, and when Linda finally answers her voice is stiff and stilted. "What do you mean?"

"I know about Ethan." I declare hoarsely. "I know about all of it, and I'm just trying to figure out why you – my supposed best friend- didn't think I deserved to know what was happening in my own life, to my own family?"

Linda curses under her breath. "Oh Jane," She murmurs, sounding miserable now. "I tried to convince him to tell you. I tried to convince him not to go through with this ridiculous plan – but he had leverage-

"What leverage could possibly be worth breaking my heart and depriving my children of their father?" I demand fiercely, interrupting her even though I know she's trying to explain.

"We owed him everything, Jane. If it weren't for him the Southern Isles would be in ruins, Eric would be dead and we never would have gotten to be together. Besides I hid you and the pups from him for years... I betrayed my Alpha, and he wasn't going to let me forget it. He used his power and authority to make me promise... but more than that, it was his dying wish." Linda shares, her voice growing thick with emotion. "I know how hard it's been for you and I'm so sorry Jane, but it wasn't easy for him either."

I scoff, "well he certainly made it look easy. You should have heard the things he said to me... he knew all my weak spots and he struck every last one of them – knowing exactly what it would do to me, and then blaming me when I fell apart."

"He was trying to protect you, Jane." Linda growls.

I know he was cruel, but you didn't see what I did.

You didn't have his beta calling you in a panic because he was suicidal over losing you and the pups."

"How in the hell would pushing me away protect me?" I exclaim, furious tears pouring down my cheeks. I can only handle one thought at a time, but her second point hasn't escaped me. I can't even imagine a suicidal Ethan. That's not something I would think is even in his DNA. He's always been so determined, so resilient, it seems impossible that he might consider ending it all.

"Don't you get it!?" Linda counters, sounding equally angry now. "He couldn't protect you. He found a way to fool the pack, but if anyone came after you or the pups, he'd be helpless to stop them. Besides, the longer his wolf is trapped, the more dangerous he becomes. He wasn't going to risk going moon mad and hurting you or the pups.

Pain slices through me, "I thought... I assumed he was just being prideful, that he couldn't stand the idea of being paralyzed, having to rely on others to take care of him,"

"Well you assumed wrong." Linda snaps. "He did it all for you and the pups. And yes, he was a monumental jerk when he ended things with you, but he'd only just gotten the news. When you came back and he saw how badly he'd hurt you, he decided to fight- but even then it was only in order for you and the pups to have a bright future.

He didn't give a damn about himself."

"That's why he arranged all the gifts," I guess, "that was his way of looking out for us even after he's gone."

"Yes." Linda confirms, sounding very tired now.

You're not the only one who's been hurting Jane, and you at least had the pups. Before Matthew called Nina and Paisley came back, he was coping with all this on his own."

"Wait a minute, Matthew called Nina?" I inquire, distracted again. "Nina told me Ethan reached out."

"Then she was lying." Linda explains. "Nina was there waiting when Ethan got home with Paisley.

She convinced him to let her stay and help."

"She also told me that Ethan only sent all those gifts for the pups. She insisted that everything he said to me was real." I relate, my heart suddenly pounding in my chest. Was she lying, is it possible that Ethan still cares? It feels dangerous to think that way, but my wolf is already getting carried away.

Linda rumbles a soft growl. "Then she's up to something. The gifts were as much for you as they were the pups, and though he fully intended to push you away, he never wanted to. He loves you, Jane. He loves you enough to put your well-being above his own happiness – and he always has."

"Really?" I squeak, not trusting the hope bubbling up inside me. Over the years I've learned just how dangerous hope can be, the mere hint makes my heart want to shut down, certain this is some sort of trick.

"Of course." Linda doesn't sound angry or frustrated anymore, only sad. "You have no idea how much it killed him to lie to you, to let Devon try to take his place. If you realized how deeply it pained him, you'd never even question it."

"Where exactly does Devon fit in all this?" I suddenly inquire, realizing that my would-be boyfriend must have been in on this from the beginning. This explains their conversation the other night, and Ethan's anger that Devon withheld the truth about his vampirism. If he wanted us to be safe, a vampire was probably the last thing he wanted.

"Where does Devon fit in all what?" A familiar voice sounds behind me. I turn, startled to find Devon standing behind me, a deep frown on his face.

"Speak of the devil." I sigh, for Linda's benefit. "

Linda, I've got to go. I'm sorry I came at you the way I did. Can we talk more later?"

"Of course." She agrees. "I love you."

"I love you too, talk soon." I end the call and turn to face Devon completely, feeling at a loss.

"What's going on?" He inquires, coming forward.

"Maybe you can tell me." I answer coolly. "It seems when you came clean about being a vampire you left out a few details. Like the fact that you're only here because my mate is dying and somehow convinced you to replace him."

Devon winces. "It wasn't like that. I never lied about my feelings Jane. I've always loved you, and I truly want to be with you. That's why I came clean in the first place."

"But you knew about Ethan, didn't you?" I interrogate. "You knew he still loved us and he only pushed us away to protect us. You knew that I didn't have to be suffering that way."

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