

Chapter 55 - Elopement

9 Years Earlier

"I don't care, I don't care if they approve or not!" Ethan was pacing back and forth through Jane's tiny bedroom like a tiger in a cage, his huge hands balled into fists.

"It's okay, Ethan." Jane assured him in a soft voice, looking on from her seat on the edge of the bed. "I always knew it would turn out this way."

Ethan pulled up short, looking at her in surprise and disbelief, "What are you talking about?"

She shrugged, squirming slightly under his dominant gaze, "I mean, you're next in line to be Alpha, and I'm... well, me!" She gestured to their meager surroundings. She and her mother were poor as church mice, while Ethan's family lived in the most expensive mansion in the territory. "Omegas don't marry alphas, and they certainly don't marry the Alpha."

Ethan stormed across the small space, kneeling down in front of her. They'd never spoken about marriage, and now that he thought about it, he realized they'd never spoken about the future at all. Every time he tried Jane changed the subject, and now he knew why. She had apparently picked up on what he had not: that while his

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It wasn't until Ethan had gone to his father the day after Jane's Eighteenth birthday, asking for his blessing to propose, that he found out just how opposed his family was to their relationship. In hindsight, he now realized all their attempts to introduce him to alpha females like Eve hadn't just been networking, but schemes to turn his head from the little omega he'd been obsessed with for the last three years. Hearing his parents talk about Jane made their attachment sound like something dirty and wrong, something they'd probably been whispering about behind closed doors since the first day he brought her home. They'd even accused her of only being with him for his money.

He'd never been more furious, at least he hadn't until he realized that it wasn't only his family who believed he would simply toss Jane aside like a used toothpick when



he was done with her, but Jane herself.

"What is the number one rule of pack status, Jane?" He demanded fiercely, catching her face between his hands.

"Alpha's are assholes, betas are bastards and omegas are obviously the best?" Jane joked, quoting a familiar saying omega children learned on the playground.

"No one tells the Alpha what to do." Ethan corrected her, the corner of his mouth twitching upward, "And that includes who to love."

"But you aren't the Alpha yet." She reminded him with a sad smile, repeating the phrase she often used when Ethan's bossiness got out of control. However this time instead of a saucy challenge, the words were spoken as a simple truth. "We don't really have a choice here. Just go marry one of those beautiful socialites they've been waving under your nose, and leave me to my lot. I'm not made to be a Luna, I'm made to bow and scrape and submit."

She reached up and wrapped her hands around Ethan's wrists, her slender fingers unable to fully circle the powerful limbs. "Your parents are probably right, Ethan. The sooner we end this, the better... it'll only be more drawn out and painful if we keep going. You'll see - you'll forget me before you know it." And I'll pine away for you for the rest of my life, she added in her head.

This was the wrong thing to say. There were very few things that could make Ethan's temper completely snap, and insults against his chosen mate were at the top of the list – even if she was the one saying them. “Don't you dare talk about yourself that way. I could never, never forget you, Jane. I don't want anyone else, and I never will.”

Jane flinched at his harsh tone, tucking her proverbial tail between her legs. “I'm sorry, I just don't see another solution. Unless you want to keep me as a mistress.” She hated the idea, but she knew it was the only possible way they could stay together and Goddess help her, she loved Ethan too much to be prideful about her position. Ethan released her so abruptly she almost fell forward, and when she looked up he was all the way across the room, his eyes glowing with rage and his muscles straining to contain his wolf. Realizing her mistake, Jane rose to her feet, but froze in place when Ethan growled. When he spoke, his voice was more animal than man, “Don't, if you come near me right now, I'll mark you.” “You will?” Jane gulped, more intrigued than frightened. “Janey, you can't look at me that way.” Ethan groaned. “This isn't how I want to do it.”

Her heart was pounding against her ribs, electricity sizzling through her veins, “How do you want to do it?”

Hesitantly moving towards him, her body quickly becoming overcome with desire, Jane still yelped when Ethan lashed out, pulling her body flush against him. Panting with anticipation, Jane wondered if he would finally claim her the way she'd been begging him to for more than a year now. Remaining a virgin when Ethan was constantly getting her all hot and bothered, giving her every other pleasure and showing her hints of the rapture that awaited them, was almost torture. She'd never understood why he always stopped them from going all the way, especially when he clearly loved exploring and indulging her body. Now she was beginning to suspect that he wanted it as badly as she did, but he knew if they took that step he'd lose control. Spinning her around and trapping Jane's hands so she could not touch him and tempt him further, Ethan confirmed her suspicions. "On our wedding night, once I'm completely buried inside you and you're screaming my name." He rumbled, nibbling the spot where her neck met her shoulder – the spot he desperately wanted to mark.

Jane whimpered with need, and Ethan offered her a sympathetic purr, "I know, baby." His tongue worked over the same spot, "But if you want it you have to marry me first."

"That's not fair." She whined, "we can't get married."

"Yes we can." Ethan answered huskily, grinding his hardness against her backside, "you just have to say yes. We can go tonight, if we elope there's not a damn thing my parents can do about it."

Jane let her head fall back against his shoulder, giving his mouth a broader canvass to kiss, lick and nip. "You're not serious."

Ethan's lips abruptly left her skin, and Jane's eyes snapped open as she was spun to face the imposing alpha. "I've never been more serious about anything in my entire life." He insisted, "Marry me, Jane. We can go to the temple in Luneste. By this time tomorrow we could be husband and wife."

"The pack will never accept me." Jane deflected, wanting to agree so badly it hurt, but trying to hang onto reality for the both of them.

"They will if I tell them to." Ethan declared, finally releasing Jane's captive hands, and encouraging her to wrap her arms around him. "I want to spend the rest of my life with you. I know you're afraid, but you're capable of so much more than you give yourself credit, baby."

"Are you sure about this?" She asked anxiously, gnawing on her lower lip.

"Yes." He vowed, hope welling inside him as Jane

softened to the idea. Kissing her deeply, he asked one more time against her swollen lips. "Marry me, say yes – I promise you won't regret it."

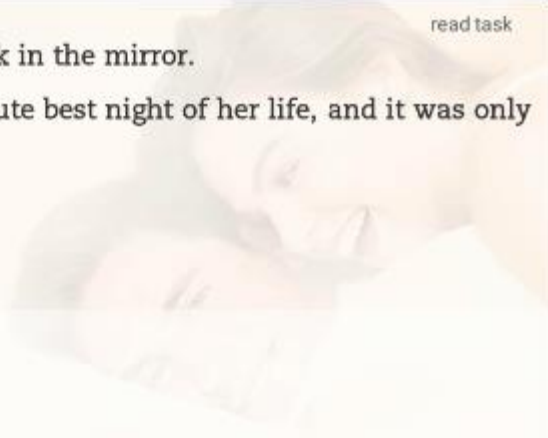
Jane offered him an incandescent smile, looking so stunning Ethan couldn't resist kissing her again before she replied. "Yes." Jane agreed when they parted. "I'll marry you."


That night they snuck out of the city under the cloak of darkness, driving away from the capital and traveling high into the mountains to the fabled temple of the Moon Goddess, where a priestess bound their hands with a ribbon of moonlight, and led them through their vows. They stood at the center of the stone circle beneath the stars and promised to love and honor each other in sickness and health, in good times and bad, and to never forsake their sacred vows.

When the ceremony was complete, the Priestess left them to consummate their marriage on that sacred plane, and Ethan finally claimed his bride the way he'd been dreaming about for so long. To Jane it all felt like a dream, a fantasy that was simply too good to be true. She never imagined she'd actually get to marry Ethan, let alone bear his mark. They stopped three times on the way home to make love again, but every time they were in the car she kept the passenger visor lowered so she could

see Ethan's mark in the mirror.

It was the absolute best night of her life, and it was only just beginning.



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