

Chapter 72 - Telling the Pups

3rd Person

"What'd you mean, we're moving?" Riley asked in a hushed voice.

"Eric told me." Paisley confided, looking around at her siblings faces with a deep frown. "He says Mommy's taking us all back to da Dark Moon Pack and leaving Daddy here."

The other pups exchanged worried glances. They'd been afraid something like this would happen. Mommy always said they were only here for a few months and she hadn't talked to them about staying longer, even when she moved them in with Ethan and Paisley. It was part of why they'd been so eager to reunite her with the Alpha; they knew they had to work fast.

Poor Paisley on the other hand, hadn't realized that Jane was only in town for a limited time. She assumed that now that their family was together, they would stay together. If Eric hadn't told her the truth, she never would have known any differently.

However, whether the news was unexpected or not, all four pups could agree that they had to find a way to stop this from happening. "We can't leave Daddy behind."

Parker decided firmly. "He 'n' Mommy belong together, and we belong with both of 'em."

"I don' get it." Paisley complained, "Daddy's always hugging and flirting with Mommy, I know he wants to be with her."

"I think Mommy's scared." Ryder murmurs, "I dunno why, but every time she talks to Linda 'bout Daddy, she seems really upset."

"You know if we ask they'll only tell us it's grown up stuff." Riley rolled her eyes.

"An' we'll understand when we're older." Ryder and Parker supplied in unison.

"So how do we make her not scared?" Paisley asked, "how do we convince her not to leave?"

"Well first 'f all, I think we have to make them tell the truth." Riley decides, "then we can show them how much we don't want to leave."

"Good idea." Ryder concurred. "Mommy hates seeing us sad."

"So let's make sure we're very, very sad." Parker grinned. "We might get a time out, but she can't really blame us either."

"What are you talking 'bout?" Paisley questioned, not following.

"Well, don't tell Mommy, but sometimes our tantrums aren't as real as we let her think." Riley confided mischievously, sharing a knowing look with her brothers.

Paisley giggled. "That's bad!"

"No," Ryder corrected her slyly, "it's useful."

The four pups dissolved into laughter as they made their plans, and a few hours later they gathered in front of Ethan and Jane in the Penthouse's living room, serious expressions on their young faces. Ethan and Jane were seated on the couch, eager to hear about the kids' day at school and not suspecting even one bit of the mischief headed their way.

"Well what did you learn?" Jane encouraged.

"Mommy, this isn't 'bout school." Parker announced somberly.

"Oh, then what is it about?" Ethan questioned, an amused smile splitting his cheeks.

"Are we moving?" Paisley demanded abruptly, going against the script she'd planned with her siblings, but unable to withhold her curiosity.

Jane instantly paled, and Ethan frowned. "What do you mean, sweetheart?"

"Eric told me that Mommy's taking all 'f us away with her in a few months, and you're staying here." She

announced, already near tears.

Jane and Ethan both smothered curses, before exchanging a meaningful glance. Jane looked horrified, and Ethan furious. "I'll kill him." The Alpha muttered under his breath, his temper rising despite Paisley's unease.

"Is it true?" Riley questioned, crossing her plump arms over her chest.

"Kids, what you have to understand is that—"

"That's a yes!" Ryder exclaimed, accusation heavy on his tongue.

"We live in the Dark Moon pack." Jane reminds Ryder, Parker and Riley. "It's home, and I told you from the beginning that we'd be going back when my business here was finished. And you Paisley," She said, turning to her youngest. "You're well enough now to come and live with me, like you wanted."

"I wanted to live with you and Daddy." Paisley corrected her fiercely.

"Well your Daddy is Alpha here, he can't leave the NightFang pack." Jane explained, looking to her former mate for support.

Ethan wasn't quite sure how to handle this, after all he only agreed to this arrangement because he had no intention of letting it actually happen. The pups knowing about his deal with Jane complicated things beyond all

reason. He didn't want to admit he'd been playing Jane, but he also didn't want to tell the pups he was going to give them up. "We only want what's best for you." He declared slyly, knowing full well that the best thing for them was for the entire family to be together.

"But you promised!" Paisley cried, looking at her father with abject betrayal. "You promised you'd never leave me!"

"Angel, I'm not leaving you." Ethan assured her, his voice full of conviction. "I will always be in your life, no matter what." He hated this, he hated her thinking he would actually let something divide them, even if it was Jane.

"We don't wanna go back." Riley proclaimed, picking up the conversation before Paisley could get too caught up in her feelings to remember the plan. "We wanna stay here!"

"We're a family." Parker seconded, "families don't split up."

Ryder sealed the deal, looking at the Alpha with wide eyes. "Don' you want us?"

"Of course I want you." Ethan professed before Jane could stop him. "I want you all more than anything."

"But that doesn't change the fact that our lives are in different cities." Jane interjected, trying to steer them back on track. If circumstances were different, she might lie and use the Eric excuse, but she couldn't do that to the pups. Ethan was one thing – her kids were another.

"It can't be helped, my darlings. I know it isn't what you want to hear, but this is simply the way things are. Neither one of us can simply pick up our entire lives and move across the continent."

"But we 'ready have!" Riley insisted. "If we can do it for a few months, why not forever?"

"Well for one thing because Ethan and I aren't married." Jane reasoned, trying to find a way to put their situation into words the pups would understand.

"So get married." Ryder suggested, as if it were the most obvious thing in the world.

"Sweetie it doesn't work that way," Jane sighed, looking to Ethan for a bit of help. To her annoyance, he simply stared back at her, as if he didn't have any objection to this idea whatsoever. Shooting him a pointed glare, she nudged him hard with her elbow, only for Ethan to catch her and wrestle her under his arm.

Once Jane settled against him, he returned his attention to the pups. "I think what your Mommy means to say is that her business is in the Dark Moon pack and even though she can conduct it here -"

Jane elbowed him again, and he slipped his hand down to pinch her round bottom. Jane yelped and squirmed away from Ethan, but he held her tight. "Would you stop it!" She muttered under her breath. "The pups are

watching.”

Four little faces looked up at them, catching every word and interaction. “Listen,” Jane sighed, peering into their young eyes, “I love you all so much, and I want you to be happy, which is why I’m always going to do what’s best for you. And this is what’s best.”

“No!” The boys cried in unison.

“Being ‘part isn’t what’s best.” Riley added, her little face scrunching up with genuine emotion. The pups had planned to do or say whatever was necessary to convince their parents to stay together, including throwing a fit, but the longer this went on, the more real it was feeling.

“We wanna stay t’gether,” Paisley cried. “With Daddy!”

Ethan watched Jane’s face twist into a grimace, and knew she wasn’t going to give an inch in this moment. He had every intention of continuing to wear her down, but at the moment she was digging her heels in and he knew pressuring her further would only backfire. “I’m sorry, little ones.” He declared simply. “Your Mommy’s mind is made up.”

Jane’s glare pierced into him, but before she could object to him putting the blame on her, the pups were already mid-meltdown. All four kids had thrown themselves on the floor, wailing and beating their little fists on the floor. Jane dropped her head into her hands and sighed,

pushing Ethan's hands away when he tried to rub her back.

This was exactly what she'd been trying to avoid. She was worried moving into the penthouse would get the kids too attached to Ethan and it would make moving impossible, and here was the fallout. Guilt washed over her in a tidal wave, blending with her frustration and all the stress that had tormented her the last couple of weeks. After the morning she'd had, Jane had been looking forward to cuddling her pups when she finally got home, not having them scream that they hated her while sobbing into the carpet.

The final straw was when she reached for Paisley, who always wanted her even when the other kids did not, and the little girl pulled away from her, shouting that she only wanted her Daddy. With that, Jane lept from the couch and fled into her bedroom before the pups – or Ethan – could see her cry.

