

Chapter 14 You're lying

Eve

I swear, I really will kill that brat.

As soon as Paisley started wailing, Ethan gathered her up and walked out, giving in to the spoiled pup's tantrum. It seems like no matter what the child does, it's never enough to make him see what a terror she is. He caves every time she so much as pouts, and trying to make him see the truth only makes him angry.

"I'm sorry dear." Ethan's mother, Catherine, sighs. "I tried."
"I know," I say, plastering a fake smile on my face, "thank you, I do appreciate your help."

"Just give him time." Catherine advises. "Paisley will get used to the idea eventually. It's hard with pups this age."

"I understand." I lie, "though I do think he could be more strict with her. He lets her walk all over him."

I instantly know the words were a mistake. Catherine's features harden, and she primly dabs at the corner of her mouth with her napkin. "Paisley isn't just any child. She's had to struggle to survive from the moment she was born, she's growing up with only one parent, and she's the only thing he has left of Jane." I can't believe what I'm hearing, Catherine hated Jane - I made sure of it.

As if she can read my thoughts, Catherine continues, "You know as well as anyone that I didn't care for my daughter-in-law, but Ethan took it very hard when she died. I don't know any parent that wouldn't go easy on their pup under such circumstances." Her eyes soften then, and a soft smile crosses her features, "You'll understand one day, when you have pups of your own."

I would rather cut off my own arm. I think snidely, unable to imagine anything more unpleasant.

Despite my annoyance, Catherine's words do make one thing abundantly clear: I will never get what I want so long as the brat is alive. The only hope I have is to get rid of her - for good. A plan begins to form in my mind while Catherine and I continue to chat. I've clearly been too passive thus far. I should have killed Paisley a long time ago, but it's no use dwelling on things I cannot change. I'll make up for my past mistakes in no time flat, you can count on it.

Jane

As I walk into Eve's atelier, I try to remember how to breathe. By this time tomorrow the kids and I will be on a plane home. I just have to get the contract signed, and then everything can go back to normal. No more close encounters with my ex-husband, no more painful ordeals with Paisley. The next time I see her, it will be to bring her home for good, and Ethan won't be able to do a damn

thing to stop me.

Striding through the glass doors of the boutique, I finally manage to take in some precious gasps of oxygen. Shaking off my nerves and adopting the confident persona of my alter-ego, I stride up to the receptionist, who falls all over herself to assist me. Apparently saving her life won me some favor with the woman, given how rudely she behaved the last time I visited.

She leads me straight up to the offices above the shop, asking me if I'd like any refreshments three times and only ceasing when I promise I'm fine. Pulling off my sunglasses, I gaze around the sleek offices with begrudging respect. As distasteful as I find Eve's shop, she certainly did better with the upstairs decor.

I'm still taking in my surroundings when the young she-wolf leads me into the empty conference room, "Eve will be right with you Ms. Carrington."

I've barely turned away from the door when an all-too-familiar scent reaches my nose - one that does not belong to Eve. I whip around to find Ethan walking into the small space, a lethal expression on his rugged face. "Elise Carrington, I presume?" His deep voice sends shivers down my spine, and all of my earlier bravado slips away.

Retreat. I think desperately. How could I have been so stupid? How could I let myself have anything to do with a business Ethan helped fund? How could I stay here

after running into him? It's like I was asking to get caught!

Marching forward, I make a B-line around the huge alpha, tensing up as I pass him - certain he'll reach out and grab me at any moment. Yet he doesn't, he watches me with a cocky smirk, letting me slip back out of the door but never taking his eyes off of me.

"Leaving so soon?" Ethan's magnetic power tugs at my limbs, pulling me to a stop even though I want nothing more than to run as far away as I possibly can.

I turn back only long enough to shoot the infuriating man a glare, "this meeting is over."

"If that's your attitude I'm amazed you've stayed in business so long." He counters coolly, "this is no way to treat your partners."

"The only partner I have here is Eve." I reply stiffly. "My appointment, and my business, is with her."

"No little wolf, your business is with me." Ethan corrects me sternly, "I'm the primary shareholder in the boutique, not Eve."

"Then I suppose you're the one I should hold accountable for producing and selling toxic counterfeits of my perfumes." I challenge, not sure where this sudden strength is coming from. In the past I would have collapsed under the Alpha's scrutiny, but right now I feel nothing but outrage over being tricked this way. "That's quite a serious offense in this jurisdiction."

Ethan's dark eyes flash, and he prowls forward until he's towering over me. "Is that a threat?"

"Of course not." I answer silkily, hating myself for submissively lowering my gaze, but proud I'm able to maintain my cool tone. "I would never dream of threatening an alpha. I'm merely stating an inconvenient truth. Someone has to be held responsible, and I need to know if that person isn't Eve."

"Funny," He growls ominously, "you didn't seem so concerned about accountability when you brokered this contract with us."

"This contract is in reparation for the offense." I argue, "or it was. I don't appreciate being deceived."

"Oh no?" Ethan's wolf is close to the surface now, glowing through his eyes, "You prefer to be the one telling the lies and playing the tricks, is that it?"

"I'm sure I don't know what you're talking about." I lie smoothly, arching my brow.

"Don't you?" He rumbles, raking his hungry gaze up and down my body.

My wolf is going crazy, unable to resist the call of his own. My alpha perfume might disguise my scent, but it doesn't do a damn thing to protect me from my omega instincts. Get a hold of yourself! I order her fiercely, receiving a whine in reply.

When Ethan looks at me this way, I can't help but panic. Has he recognized me?