

Chapter 15 Never lose her again

Ethan

Whatever I was expecting, it wasn't this.

After I saw Jane's ghost holding a child identical to Paisley at the restaurant, I immediately demanded the manager print out a copy of her credit card receipt. There in black and white I found her new name: Elise Carrington, founder and CEO of La Louve fragrances.

I was almost positive the woman I saw was, in fact, my wife, but I couldn't be sure until this moment. Now it's painfully obvious my chosen mate did not die after all, but she certainly hasn't stayed the same. This Jane is so unlike the woman I knew I can scarcely believe it. She's every bit as beautiful, but infinitely more confident and powerful. She smells like an alpha, and she's charming even as she argues with me. The stubborn thing even threatened me, which I have to admit I found nothing short of delightful.

My wolf is roaring in my head, demanding that I claim her here and now. I want to do nothing more than shut her saucy little mouth with my own, but I have a feeling she won't submit as easily as she used to. Of course, making her submit would be half the fun.

Kiss her. My wolf urges.

Not yet, I answer, If I try now she'll only fight.

Let her try. He insists, She's your mate, she won't last long.

She's not going to admit she's my mate if I force her. I counter, I have to be smart about this.

Coward. My wolf snorts.

We lost her once. I remind him sharply. Do you want to lose her again?

That shuts him up. Focusing my full attention back on Jane, I realize she's glancing around in search of an exit, and a low rumble bubbles up in my chest. "Don't even think about it."

Her stunning green eyes jump to mine, sharp and unforgiving. "Do not presume to order me around." Jane bites, her velvety voice like music to my ears. "As far as I'm concerned our contract is void."

"That would be a mistake." I inform her, "unless you want to pay the termination fee."

I've never been more thankful for my lawyers than I am at this moment. When the business opened they advised including cancellation penalties in every agreement drafted, and I know Eve already submitted an advance payment for this order. If Jane backs out now, she'll have to pay the price.

Her full lips purse, and I can see the wheels turning in her head. I'm sure she wants to throw caution to the

wind and tell me to go to hell, but the loss would be significant. I'm sure she can afford it, however that doesn't change the fact that it's simply bad business.

"If I sign, I want your word that I'll only deal with Eve in the future." Jane requests, tilting her chin up.

Offering her a wolfish grin, I chuckle. "No. When you sign, you'll deal only with me."

Fury flits across my mate's face, and I swear I hear the whisper of a growl in her throat. She's so riled up her hackles are fully raised, and I can't remember ever seeing anything cuter. It takes a few moments for Jane to reign in her temper, but she finally succeeds. "Fine." She snaps, stomping back into the room and swiping her signature over the thick stack of pages.

Triumph soars in my chest, now she's stuck with me, and she knows it. "Smart move." I purr, swiftly counter signing the documents. "And I presume you saw the clause we added this morning?" I add, knowing this was impossible, given the fact that my lawyers only sent the amendment over half an hour ago. "Requiring you to remain in the city through the launch so that we can ensure the process goes as smoothly as possible?"

A livid flush consumes Jane's cheeks, and I eagerly wait to see what she'll say next. Unfortunately Eve chooses that moment to come sashaying through the door, and our verbal sparring match is cut short. Annoyance roils in my blood. I was already displeased with Eve when I

learned about her corrupt business practices but after I discovered Jane owns La Louve, I realized Eve saw and spoke with her the other day. She knew my mate was alive, and not only did she fail to tell me, she lied right to my face when Paisley and I came searching.

Eve's smile falters when she sees my expression, so she turns to Jane instead, "Miss Carrington, it's so lovely to see you again. Are you ready to sign the contract?"

"Actually we've already signed." Jane grumbles ruefully.

"Oh," Eve looks taken aback.

"Yes." I add, "I've decided to manage the La Louve account myself. We can't afford any more mistakes."

Batting her eyelashes, Eve closes the distance between us and Presses both palms to my chest, leaning into my body with a simpering sigh, "Whatever you think is best, Ethan. Thank you so much for looking out for me."

Pulling away from the odious she-wolf, I only feel slightly remorseful when she loses her balance and topples over. I've been trying to discourage Eve's affections since before Jane and I divorced, but she never seems to take the hint. At first my guilt over Jane's responsibility for Eve's disability prevented me from holding it against her, but as time has passed the situation has gotten out of hand. I don't want to give Eve any encouragement, and I don't want Jane to think there's anything between us.

I look over to try and gauge my ex-wife's expression, but

I realize she's already walking out. Leaving Eve whining on the ground, I follow Jane out the door, trying and failing to avoid staring at her lovely behind as she walks.

Jane

Stupid, stupid, stupid!

I can't believe I let my temper get the better of me. I can't believe I signed the contract under Ethan's unreasonable conditions. I can't believe I let him get under my skin that way... I can't believe how badly I wanted him to kiss me. ⓘ

The man is a monster. I remind myself. Nevermind that he's a wonderful father or that he just rejected Eve right in front of me, it's probably all a trick to enslave me again. I don't trust that man as far as I can throw him - which isn't very far at all.

Grumpily pulling out my phone, I pull up my email and start the process of canceling my plane tickets to return home. I can't leave now, not when I foolishly signed our contract without first checking to make sure nothing in the agreement had changed. I'm so angry at Ethan I could scream. The launch will take weeks, and now I'm going to be stuck here working with him.

I've barely made it two blocks when a luxury SUV pulls up beside me, and one of the tinted windows rolls down. Ethan grins out at me from the back seat, "Get in."
