

Chapter 19 The Pups Meet

Eve

"You put something in her glass!" One of the boys cried, "We saw you!"

"Do you have any idea what you've done?" I hiss. At the moment, I'm soaking wet, my head is splitting open with pain from my fall, and my plans for Paisley are in serious jeopardy. Not to mention these little devils can't be here when Ethan returns. "Get out, right now!" I order. The boys exchange a glance, and cross their arms over their chests. "No."

Raising my hand in threat, I prepare to slap the shit out of the little monsters - first one, then the other. However before I can land a single blow they fall to the ground as one, wailing at the top of their lungs and clutching imaginary injuries. "Owwww!!!" They sob, "She hit me!"

The sound sends nurses running, and the next thing I know I've been caught red handed, my palm still raised in threat, and two little fakers on the ground screaming their heads off with false accusations. The nurses look at me in horror. "What's wrong with you?!" The head nurse exclaims, "How dare you raise your hand to innocent pups?"

"I didn't!" I cry, "They're lying!"

"We just wanted to say hello!" One of the boys weeps pitifully, "We're sorry!"

"No no," another nurse soothes them, hugging them close, "You didn't do anything wrong!"

The next thing I know security is dragging me from the room, and the little brats are grinning at me through their fake tears over the nurses' shoulder.

Fucking bastards!

(Jane)

When Linda calls me at work, telling me Riley has a fever of 103 degrees fahrenheit and they're on the way to the hospital, I drop everything.

Worry consumes me completely. I was already dealing with the stress of coping with Paisley's imminent surgery, I can't bear to have another pup on the verge of death. It's not as if my kids have never had high fevers before, but a mother's mind never rests, and no matter how hard I try to stay calm, my protective instincts are thrown into instant overdrive.

I race to the hospital as fast as I can, literally running into the emergency ward and crashing head first into the very last person I wanted to see.

Ethan catches me just before our bodies collide, "Elise!" He murmurs urgently, taking my face in his hands "What's wrong?"

Abruptly shaking off his touch, I gasp, "What are you

doing here." Of course I already know the answer to this question, but I have to keep up the act.

Ethan looks as if he's already guessed this much, "My daughter is having surgery tomorrow."

"I'm sorry." I reply stiffly, "I hope she does well and has a fast recovery, but I really have to be going." If I have to talk about Paisley for another moment I'll begin to cry, and I'm still petrified for Riley.

"Are you ill?" Ethan asks anxiously, looking me over in far too much detail, turning me back and forth in his hands as if he's expecting to find a bleeding gash somewhere on my form.

"I'm fine. Just visiting." I explain, pushing him away for the second time. It doesn't escape my notice that he keeps reaching towards my hair, and somehow I instinctively understand that he might be thinking of stealing a DNA sample to test my relationship to Paisley. I know how suspicious he is of my identity, and we may be divorced, but there is still a bond between us. I know how Ethan thinks, I understand how he does business.

Pulling away from him for the third time, a wave of pure relief washes over me when a nurse walks up behind him with a stack of papers in hand. "Alpha?" She says loudly, calling his attention.

When Ethan turns to face her, I dart away towards the room number Linda texted me on the drive over, careening into the room and finding my little girl

sleeping peacefully on the bed. "What happened?" I inquire, not pausing to greet my friend.

Lind stands on the opposite side of her bed, "The doctors are treating her for the flu and dehydration." She says, "apparently it's not unusual for the sickness to come on so fast, but they want to keep her here for observation."

"Thank goodness," I breathe, looking around for the first time, "Where are the boys?"

Ryder and Parker stand on either side of Paisley's bed, causing her attention to bounce back and forth between them like a ping pong ball. "What was that all about?" The sleepy little girl asks.

"We're here with our sister. The doctor's kicked us out so they could talk to auntie Linda, but the nurse they had babysitting us got 'stracted, so we came 'sploring." Parker explains.

"I'm Ryder." His brother introduces himself, "And this is Parker."

"I'm Paisley." The girl in the bed shares shyly, "You guys look familiar."

Parker grins, "We should. You already met our sister, Riley."

"The girl who looks like me?!" Paisley chirps excitedly.

"Uh-huh!" Ryder confirms, "we're triplets, least we thought we were... we think you're our sister too."

"You mean it?!" Paisley clarifies.

"Of course." Parker replies confidently. "We can bring her by to say hi when she feels better. Why're you here?"

"My heart doesn' work like it should." Paisley explains softly. "Does this mean you know my Mommy?"

The boys nod vigorously, "And you know our Daddy! Riley told us she met him too."

"Parently they're playing hide 'n' seek." Paisley confides, "Daddy's it right now. Mommy told me she could only be my Mommy if she wins."

"What does that mean?" Parker wonders aloud, "Does that mean Mommy and Daddy will get back t'gether?"

"I dunno." Paisley shrugs, sorting through her memory. "But she didn' say she'd come home, she just said she couldn't be my Mommy." All three pups exchange worried looks, those sounded like two very different things.

"I want them to be together." Ryder decides. "I wanna be a family. All of us!"

"Me too!" Parkey and Paisley agree.

"So let's make it happen." Ryder suggests. "We can get dem back t'gether!"

"But how?" Paisley asks.

For a moment the pups think through their options, all wearing the same pensive expression their mother gets when she's faced with a difficult problem. Finally Parker

raises his head. "Paisley, the next time your Daddy comes to visit, call room 100." He instructs, "That's Riley's room. We just have to figure out when Mommy and Daddy are both here, then send them to the same place. Then they'll have to meet!"

"You're a genius!" Ryder exclaims, "But will meeting be enough?"

"Hmmm," Paisley thinks, eyeing the spilled water on her floor. "Maybe if you spill something on the floor, then Mommy will slip and Daddy can catch her."

"What is he doesn't?" Ryder worries.

Paisley frowns, "Trust me, I know Daddy. He'll catch her."

A few hours later the plan is in action. Everything happened exactly as the pups planned and the next thing they knew, Ryder and Parker were hiding around a corner watching Ethan and Jane run into each other for the second time that day.

Ethan

It seems like I'm finally catching a break. For once I see Jane before she sees me. Paisley asked me to bring her a snack from the vending machine, and it's just my luck that my mate is standing right in front of the glass case when I arrive.

She winks around when she catches my scent, her beautiful green eyes going wide and to my delight, she

even attempts to run. Of course, I'm after her in an instant, her flighty movement triggering my prey drive before I can process what's happening. The next thing I know she's slipping and skidding along a pool of water, before falling directly into my arms.

I take the excuse to hold her close, cuddling her to my chest and inhaling her delicious scent like a starving man. "Hello little wolf." I greet her huskily.

Trying to shake me off, Jane frowns, "I thought I made my feelings about that moniker clear, Mr. Blackwell."

"You did." I agree rakishly, "but I never made any promises."

Her eyes narrow. "So you're going to ignore my wishes?"

"You know, if you're so concerned about propriety, I would think you might have thanked me by now." I tease.

"I did just save your life."

Shooting me a scathing look, Jane replies, "I'd hardly call slipping on a bit of water life threatening... especially with doctors surrounding us at every turn."

"Then you and I disagree." I insist, "Still, for safety's sake I should really walk you back. Remind me, what room are you visiting?"
