

Chapter 22 - why is she pretending to be someone else?

Jane

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"Don't leave me."

I freeze and try to push him away, but he only hugs me tighter. His scruffy jaw nuzzles my neck and his hot lips move against my ear, making me tingle all over.

I don't know what to do, and then Linda's amused voice sounds from the doorway. "I thought the idea was to clean things up, not make a bigger mess."

I glance at him, now sound asleep again, clutching me to his chest as if I'm a teddy bear. "Stop teasing and help me!" I hiss at Linda, trying and failing to wriggle free.

It takes both of us to untangle me from Ethan's arms, with Linda laughing the entire time despite my frequent glares. "The doctor's on his way." Linda announced when I'm finally free. "And Ethan could probably use a few items from the penthouse. A change of clothes, toothbrush- that sort of thing. I doubt he's going to be up

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"What?" I exclaim. "You're not suggesting I go there, are you?"

"Jane, either you go there, or his mother or Eve comes here. It's the lesser of two evils, babe."

"We can just buy him new clothes." I argue.

"In the middle of the night?" Linda reminds me, "besides, someone has to notify them he won't be coming home tonight, unless you want them to come looking."

"Fine." I grumble in frustration. "But I'm not happy about it."

Arriving at the penthouse is like walking straight into the past. I haven't been here in years, and I never wanted to return in the first place. Everything looks exactly the same, at least it does until I get into the apartment. The Doorman buzzed me upstairs just like old times, and Even came to the door with a shocked look on her pretty face. "Elise, what on earth are you doing here?" She questions defensively.

"I'm afraid Ethan's been hurt." I explain softly.

"What!?" She cries, pressing her hand to her chest.

"He fell and hit his head. The doctor is seeing him now, at my friend Linda's, but I need to get him some fresh clothes and toiletries for the meantime." I sigh.

"What on earth is he doing at Linda's?" Eve demands, "How did he fall?"

Before I can answer, a dignified woman comes gliding down the hall. She's beautiful despite her advanced years,

and so elegant I ache with envy, but she freezes when she sees me, "Jane?"

"No," I deny smoothly, "I'm Elise Carrington, it's a pleasure to meet you."

"Petra Blackwell." She introduces herself, extending her hand. "Forgive me, you look so much like my former daughter in law."

"So I've been told." Pursing my lips I gravely continue, "Though I'm afraid I've come with some unfortunate news, Ethan likely has a concussion - you see I own La Louve and we were celebrating our new deal when he fell and hit his head." Lowering my voice to a whisper I add, "he had quite a bit to drink."

"Oh dear." Petra frets, anxiously looking around as if needing to make herself useful, "Of course, I'll put some things together right now."

As she and Eve disappear down the hallway, I take the opportunity to examine the apartment more thoroughly. For as similar as it appeared on the outside, it could not be more different within. Like any other home with children, the presence of a pup is immediately apparent. Paisley's mark is everywhere I look: from the stuffed animals and toys neatly stacked in the corner of the living room, to the emergency medical equipment by the door.

I'm so distracted exploring the familiar yet strange surroundings, that I barely realize I've drifted down the hall towards Ethan's room. It's not until I hear Eve's snide voice that I comprehend how far into the house I've strayed.

"Elise Carrington my ass." She's telling Petra. "Mark my words, that is Jane."

"Then why is she pretending to be someone else?" Petra murmurs.

"Why else?" Even hisses, "clearly she wants Ethan back, and clearly this is the only way she can think of to get close to him again."

"Oh Eve." Petra replies. "We can't let that happen."

"Don't worry," the petty she-wolf answers, "We won't."

Ryder and Parker had always been talented eavesdroppers.

From before they could remember, grown ups always seemed to be having secret conversations behind closed doors. They never thought they were speaking loudly enough to be overheard - that or they thought the pups could not understand.

But they did hear.

And they did understand.

Now, it wasn't all grown ups. Their mommy certainly knew better, but Auntie Linda did not. Ryder and Parker listened as the doctor checked over their Daddy, using strange words they did not recognize like concussion and contusion, then saying things that were very clear indeed. Such as, "he mustn't be moved" and "He'll need to stay here on bed rest."

"But his daughter is to have surgery tomorrow." Linda objected.

"It will have to be postponed." The doctor assessed simply. "I'm afraid the Alpha won't be back on his feet for a few days."

"Yes, Doctor." Linda agreed grimly.

The boys were both excited and concerned. The idea of finally getting to meet their Daddy was unbelievable enough, but this was even better. They might actually get to spend time with him - live with him. Still, it also meant their newfound sister would have to stay in the hospital even longer, and now she'd be more vulnerable to that terrible lady who tried to poison her than ever.

They had to do something.

The next morning at breakfast they asked their Mommy if they could come with her to pick up Riley and luckily she agreed.

Two hours later the boys stood in a dimly lit hospital

room, watching their sisters meet for the first time.

"Riley this is Paisley, Paisley this is Riley." Parker introduced them.

"See, I always knew I should have a twin!" Riley exclaimed to her brothers.

"We're all twins," Ryder corrected her.

"You know what I mean!" Riley exclaims.

"You two can switch places without anyone noticing." Paisley elaborates, reading her sister's mind. "Now Riley and I can do the same!" She frowns, "Of course it would be easier if we were all t'gether."

"Listen, we already have a plan to get Mommy and Daddy back together." Ryder shares excitedly. "But first you have to get through surgery."

"That means staying away from that mean lady." Ryder advises. "She was trying to poison you."

Both boys speak in unison then, "We know it!"

Paisley scrunches up her face, "Eve has always been a witch. And if you want Mommy and Daddy to get back t'gether, we'll have to seal with her first- she's wanted to marry him for ages."

Riley, Parker and Ryder were only too pleased to hear their new sister supporting their plans, "How d'we get rid of her?" Riley questions.