

## Chapter 26 - Ethan Saves the Day

Jane

"Of course not." I deny, "But I am saying that you could use a few good bonks on the head if you still think this is appropriate."

Ethan sidles closer, towering over me and adopting a knowing leer. He looks so dangerous in this moment that every omega instinct I possess is begging me to give in. Luckily Linda seems to sense my weak resolve.

"Okay." My friend interrupts, "Why don't we all go to bed before we say anything we regret, and we can pick this up in the morning."

Staring at Ethan, I realize I don't want to stop fighting. It's clear he doesn't either, we're having too much fun. At the same time, I know every moment we keep this up is a threat to me. I need to be rid of Ethan, sooner rather than later.

"Agreed." I say, turning towards the bedroom. Ethan never agrees with us, but I feel his eyes on me until I shut the door at my back. I don't need him to tell me to understand: This is only the beginning.

Ethan

Jane

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Ethan

The doctor arrives first thing in the morning, after Jane has already roused the pups and fled the house. My naughty little mate is as skittish as a scared rabbit, and it's no wonder why. She's certainly carrying a lot of

secrets around with her, and the three biggest ones are living in the room next to mine.

Unfortunately for her, I have no intention of leaving now. I need to get to the hospital to see Paisley, but the more time that passes, the clearer it becomes that I have three other pups to worry about here. I've only met them in passing thus far and I don't even know the boys' names, but I'm going to stay here until I do.

Jane has been very clever these past few years and I don't expect unraveling her web of lies is going to be easy, but Goddess am I excited to begin. I haven't felt this exhilarated in years, and it truly amazes me I could feel so thrilled by her deception. I suppose the joy of discovering her alive has overpowered the fury I might otherwise be feeling - though I have a sneaking suspicion I won't feel that way for much longer.

The doctor is quick and professional, examining me in the privacy of Linda's guest room and gently lecturing me about the dangers of over-indulging. I don't correct the man about the source of my concussion, I plan on dealing with Jane myself, and I need him on my side in order for my plan to succeed.

"I want you to tell Linda I have to stay on bedrest here for a few more days." I quietly intone as he packs away his supplies.

"But alpha, you're more than well enough to return home."

He replies, furrowing his brow.

His confusion is understandable, but I don't show him any empathy. Pulling a handful of banknotes from my wallet, I press them into his palm. "I know your diagnosis, and I know what I said." I explain coolly. "I need to stay here a while longer, and I want you to back me up."

He frowns deeply, staring up at me as the gears work in his mind. I still haven't released his hand, and when he doesn't immediately agree I squeeze his palm more firmly, making the smaller man wince. "Yes sir." He agrees, lowering his gaze in submission.

"Thank you." I smile, letting him go at last. ①

I listen at the door as he explains the situation to Linda, grinning at the surprise in her voice and the obvious concern she feels over having Jane and I locked up in her apartment together. When she starts to approach the guest room after he departs, I quickly jump into bed and pretend to be asleep. She pushes the door open and watches me for a long moment, and I have to hope she's convinced by my act. In the end she closes the door again without speaking, either deciding to let me pretend, or believing I actually need the rest.

Thank you, doctor. I think slyly, you just bought me three

more days with Jane, and I'm not going to waste them.

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3rd Person

"Hi Danielle, this is Eve Souillon, I think I have a story for you."

Pulling out her phone, Eve dialed a reporter at the NightFang Gazette who had published pieces about her boutique when it first opened.

"Oh, hi Eve." The reporter greeted her politely, "the paper doesn't currently have any openings for a fashion piece, but I'd be happy to listen and direct you to another publication."

"Oh it's not a fashion piece." Eve corrected her deviously, "it's a criminal offense."

"Really, do tell?" Danielle invited.

"Are you familiar with La Louve?" the jealous she-wolf asked.

"Of course, who isn't?" The reporter replied. She could never afford the luxury perfume herself, but every she-wolf on the continent dreamed of purchasing the exclusive fragrance.

"Well, I'm sorry to inform you that the entire business is a fraud." Eve stated gleefully, "And I can prove it."

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When Jane returned mid-morning after dropping off the pups at day care, she was shocked to discover Ethan was still at Linda's apartment. The infuriating Alpha was sitting in the living room talking with her friend, causing Jane to stop in her tracks.

"What are you still doing here?" She demanded.

Ethan only grinned, "The doctor ordered three more days of bedrest here."

"What?" Jane exclaimed, looking to Linda for confirmation. When the other woman nodded in agreement, Jane threw her arms up, "why here? Why not go be on bedrest in your own home?"

"Apparently," Linda cleared her throat, as if she too was having a hard time buying the doctor's orders, "He's still too unstable to move."

"Can't be too careful with the Alpha." Ethan announced smugly.

Jane's eyes narrowed to slits, and she seriously considered giving the man a real head injury. However before she could truly entertain the idea, her cell began ringing in her bag. Fishing it out, she brought the device to her ear. "This is Elise." She stated, earning a snort from Ethan.

"Hi Elise," A woman greeted on the other end of the line, "My name is Danielle Kincaid and I'm a reporter for the

NightFang Gazette. I'm writing a story about potential fraud at La Louve. I wanted to call and give you a chance to make a comment on the matter before we go to print."

Jane forgot all about Ethan and her personal problems, her attention instantly snapping to her business. "I'm sorry, I'm going to need more information. What fraud?"

"You deny knowing anything about it then?" The reporter questioned.

"As I said, I'm going to need more information." Jane repeated, seeing Ethan rise to his feet out of the corner of her eye. She glanced at the pair in the living room, both of whom could undoubtedly hear the other side of her conversation with their keen, shifter ears.

"Well, I received a tip that your perfumes are not actually being produced using the rare botanicals you claim. It seems there are verified cases of wolfsbane poisoning in the city, which arose from your company using the plant as a substitute in your signature fragrance line." Danielle shared, sounding thoroughly excited to have stumbled onto such a dramatic story.

The next thing Jane knew, Ethan was prying the cell phone from her hand, his expression clouded over with rage. He was giving off so much dominant energy that Jane quelled without a second thought, letting him take control even though she internally wanted to object.

"This is Ethan Blackwell." He spoke firmly into the receiver, "what is the meaning of this?"

"Oh!" Danielle's distant voice chirped, "Alpha, it's a pleasure to speak with you, I was just calling Ms. Carrington for a comment -"

"I heard." He snarled, "And I want to know where you got your information."

"I'm afraid I can't reveal my sources, even to you sir." She hedged.

"Well then let me set the record straight." Ethan growled, "because there have been a few cases like you're describing, but only from perfumes purchased at a single shop - one who's proprietor was too cheap to actually carry the fragrance line and decided to counterfeit them instead."

Heavy silence hung on the other end of the phone.

"Would that be Eve's Atelier?"

"Yes it would." Ethan rumbled ominously, "Feel like sharing your source now?"

"I- it... this is," She stammered, unsure of how to proceed.

"It was Eve herself, wasn't it?" Ethan demanded. "She tried to make Elise Carrington the villain, when in fact Elise is the one who came here to put an end to the scheme and saved countless lives in the process."



"Is that true?" Danielle squeaked.

"Do you think I would lie?" The Alpha demands, "do you think I would ever say such things about a business in which I am a key stakeholder, unless it was the truth?"

"No sir, I didn't mean -"

"If you publish a single word maligning Elise Carrington's good name, you will be out of a job in an instant." He continued, speaking so harshly that both Jane and Linda trembled reflexively.

An hour later, when Eve picked up the phone to gloat with her contact at the Gazette, she was shocked to hear the woman explain what had happened.

"What! Why would you call her!?" She screeched at Danielle.

"Because it's standard practice." The other woman informed her coldly. "And it's a good thing I did, because now I can publish the true story, instead of destroying my career with your libel."

"No - the Alpha will never allow it." Eve insisted.

"Who do you think told me to write the truth?" Danielle scoffed. "Needless to say you lost more than one friend today. Don't call me again, Eve."

When the line went dead Eve threw the device at the wall with all her strength. Shrieking in a full out temper

tantrum she roared, "I'll kill her!" Then, to herself she repeated. "I'll kill Jane if it's the last thing I do."



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