

The Luna and her Quadruplet Pups

Chapter 3. Four years later

Jane

I thought I knew grief.

When my husband turned me into a slave and fell for another woman, I imagined nothing could be more painful. Then my mother died. I lost all the money I won in the divorce trying to save her, and still it wasn't enough. I was alone and heartbroken, barely able to put one foot in front of the other.

My babies and hopes for the future got me through the worst of my mourning, they were a balm for my twice broken heart – becoming my entire world after the one I knew crumbled beneath my feet. I had one brief flash of joy when my children were born, filled with a light so radiant and all-consuming I thought I might burst.

Then I discovered what grief truly is. It turns out I didn't even know what love was until I became a mother myself.

My daughter is slipping away before I've even gotten the chance to know her, to show her all the love I feel. My wolf is howling mournfully in my head as I rock back and forth, cradling the fragile bundle against my breast. She can't die. I won't let it happen.

"There has to be a way." I cry, pressing my lips to the baby's downy head. "There has to be something you can try."

"Jane," my doctor begins softly. "We've done everything we can here. There is only one surgeon on the continent who could possibly help her, and..."

"What?" I demand, the taste of my own tears linger on my tongue. "If they can help her, why aren't we trying to get them?"

My doctor purses her lips. "Jane," She says again, in a placating tone I'm beginning to hate. "You can't afford him."

Righteous, maternal fury consumes me in a great explosion of flames. Is everything about money? Even saving lives? "I might not be able to afford him," I growl angrily, "but her father can."

"You made us promise never to notify Ethan." The physician reminds me tentatively.

Staring down at my tiny, perfect daughter, I know none of my past feelings or concerns are important anymore. My children are the only things that matter now. I can't let her die, this miracle who I haven't even had a chance to name.

"That was before." I hiccup, feeling fresh tears slide down my cheeks. "If it means she can live... I'll do whatever it takes."

"I understand. We'll notify him right away." She replies.

"Wait!" I catch her arm. "I- I'm an omega. If he knows about the other babies he'll take them from me. He'll make me his slave again and I'll let him in order to be near them." I implore her to understand, "I can give her up to save her life, but Ethan can't know about the others. He can't know I'm alive."

"You're asking me to lie to an Alpha?" The doctor clarifies warily.

"I'm asking you to help me save my daughter's life." I correct, "and prevent my other babies from being separated from their mother. So, will you help me, or not?"

Ethan

"That's not possible." I insist, staring at the tiny creature the nurse just pushed into my arms. The world is spinning around me in a sickening whir. In the space of thirty seconds I learned that my wife died bearing me a daughter, when I didn't even know she was pregnant.

"I'm very sorry, Alpha." The doctor murmurs, "but it's true. I've been caring for Jane for the last six months."

"Where is she?" I choke, my eyes burning with unshed tears. "I want to see her."

I don't believe this. I would feel it if Jane was dead. I'd be able to tell, I know I would. My wolf is in a complete rage, clawing at the surface of my skin, demanding to be let out, to track down our chosen mate and prove this ridiculous woman wrong.

"I'm sorry, Ethan." She answers, "Jane donated her body to science. You can't see it. But I assure you, this is your daughter."

"I know that!" I snarl. There's no doubting it. She looks exactly like my Jane, tiny as she is. She even smells like Jane, despite all the strange, sterile hospital scents muddying her sweet aroma. "That isn't what's in question." The woman flinches at my harsh tone, but I don't care. "I would know if my wife was dead. I'm telling you, you've made a mistake."

“It’s natural, not to want to believe a loved one is gone.” The doctor analyzes. “We all like to think we’d be able to feel it, but the truth is we can’t. Jane is gone, but this baby is not. She needs help. She needs her father.”

The baby has been sleeping from the moment the nurse placed her in my arms, but now her eyes crack open: glazed, drowsy, and as green as the forest. Jane’s eyes. My daughter blinks and coos softly, opening her mouth into a wide yawn that makes my heart wrench in my chest.

“What do I have to do?”

Four Years Later

Jane

Giving up my daughter was the hardest thing I’ve ever done, but I don’t regret it one bit. Ethan saved our baby just as I prayed he would, and one day I’ll find a way to bring her home where she belongs.

In the years since we parted, I’ve come into my own. Finally able to put my chemistry degree to good use, I started my own high-end perfume business and made my way in the world, slowly building the power I need to one day confront my ex-husband and reunite my young family.

When Ethan and I meet again he’ll find a very different woman than the one he once enslaved, but that is all a long way off. For now I’m focused on raising my pups and building my reputation as the most exclusive perfume designer on the continent.

Stepping out of the bustling airport in the Nightfang pack’s capital city, I immediately see my old friend Linda waiting for us in the passenger pick up area. She’s leaning against a sleek black SUV, idly chatting with the chauffeur and checking her watch. After a moment she looks up, and a wide smile stretches across her face.

My pups, Ryder, Parker, and Riley dash ahead of me, recognizing their beloved aunt Linda from our frequent video calls. “Linda!” They shout in unison.

My friend drops to a kneeling position, opening her arms to the toddling pups and gathering them up in a bear hug. “Oh my goodness, you’re all so big! How are you?!”

While my children chatter excitedly, sharing news of our adventures on the plane, I catch Linda in my own hug. “I’m so glad to see you,” I breathe.

“I know, I’ve missed you like crazy.” She answers, leaning her forehead against mine.

As we pile our luggage into the car, Linda pulls me aside. “The boys...” She begins, seeming unable to find the words.

"I know." I sigh, "They look just like Ethan."