

Chapter 34 - Eve is Disappointed

3rd Person

Ethan was driving Jane straight up the wall. She'd never known anyone who could push her buttons like he did, and what's more - he truly seemed to enjoy riling her up. She actually wondered how much of his current ploy was actually about power, and how much was simply to tease her.

Jane glanced at Paisley, sleeping so sweetly in her bed, and felt her determination to defy Ethan waiver. He really did need to take a break, and she desperately needed some time alone to figure out what to do about their situation anyway. She couldn't think when he was in the same room, watching her and turning her on with his mere presence alone.

"Please." Jane murmured, so quietly she wasn't certain Ethan would actually hear her.

Ethan flashed her a wolfish grin, "good girl." Her eyes narrowed to slits, and her mouth opened to offer him a saucy retort, but he pressed a finger to her lips, "ah-ah, don't make me change my mind."

Jane bit her tongue until he left the room, but the moment he disappeared down the hall she let off a volley

of curses, jumping half a foot into the air when a small voice piped up behind her.

"Mommy said a bad word."

Eve checked the clock for what felt like the thousandth time. She'd been waiting for the news of Paisley's death to break since the night before, and still there was nothing: Nothing in the paper, on the morning shows or even online. What was taking them so long? Maybe Ethan prevented word from getting out so he could grieve in peace, but then why hadn't he called home?

Neither Eve nor Petra had heard a peep from the man in the last 24 hours, and while his mother might not have any reason to worry, Eve knew better. The horrible possibility that he might be seeking comfort from Jane loomed over her head, and she could barely contain her frustration. It seemed like no matter what she did, nothing was ever enough to make him abandon his mate completely. Even Petra, who had more reason than anyone to hate the she-wolf, wasn't cooperating with Eve's plans.

"I don't understand, why would she fake her death?" Ethan's mother was saying, taking a sip of her morning coffee. "How would that have helped her?"

"Because," Eve ground out through clenched teeth, "she

probably thought he'd be so relieved to find her alive that he'd forgive all her past crimes - including cheating on him with the pups' father."

"Eve, what are we going to do?" She continued a moment later, "How are we going to stop Jane and protect Paisley at the same time?"

"Well first things first, we have to expose Elise Carrington as Jane. Once the world knows she's been lying to them all this time, it will be easier to bring her down." Eve answered confidently, knowing her Paisley problem was already solved.

"That's another thing I don't understand." Petra mused aloud, "Why disguise herself in the first place? And why did she divorce Ethan if she still wanted to be with him?"

Eve was about ready to strangle the woman. If she didn't need Petra to convince Ethan to marry her, she might have done just that. "I don't pretend to understand the motives of someone who is clearly mentally disturbed." She furrowed her brow, "And truly, I hope she gets the help she so dearly needs, but we can't allow her to harm Ethan or Paisley in the process."

Petra nodded in agreement, proud of how empathetic the young she-wolf could be for someone who had caused them all so much pain, "We'll figure something out, darling. And in the meantime I'll try to encourage Ethan

to consider proposing sooner rather than later. Jane can't get her claws into him if you two are married."

"Thank you." Eve offered the elder woman a watery smile, "I don't know what I'd do without you."

Just then the front door swung open, and Ethan appeared, looking very grave indeed. Glee swelled in Eve's chest as she studied him, certain his morose demeanor was confirmation the little brat was dead. She and Petra jumped to their feet in unison, "Ethan, what's wrong?"

He looked up, as if surprised to see Eve there. Kissing Petra on the cheek and shaking off his brooding expression, he answered, "nothing. I've just come from the hospital. Paisley had her surgery a little early, but she came through like a champ and will be able to come home in a few days."

Eve felt all the color drain from her face at once. What? How is that possible? I heard the doctors running the code. She couldn't possibly have survived the poison. Was he lying? She thought, near hysterics. Why would he do such a thing? What on earth was going on? With every day that passed, some new calamity seemed to befall Eve. She felt like her life was falling to pieces around her, and it filled her with a righteous anger so volatile and violent she was certain she'd explode at any moment.

Luckily for her, Petra was wearing a look of identical worry, "Why did they have to take her in early?"

Ethan dragged a hand through his hair, shrugging. "Just a scheduling thing." When his hand passed over the back of his head he winced, apparently having forgotten his head wound.

"Oh darling, how's your head?" Petra fretted.

"Oh yes, we heard about your fall!" Eve exclaimed, adopting an expression of affectionate concern. "You poor thing! Does it still hurt?"

"I'm fine." Ethan rumbled absentmindedly, eyeing Eve suspiciously.

She pressed her palm to her breast, looking back and forth between the Alpha and his mother in faux confusion, "What is it? Do I have something on my face?"

"Ethan?" Petra prompted when he gave no response, watching him closely.

"Eve, can I have a word?" He asked gruffly, surprising both women.

"Of course." Eve smiled, pretending nothing was wrong.

Ethan led her into his study, shutting the door tightly behind him and turning on the she-wolf with a foreboding expression, "What are you doing?"

"What do you mean?" She exclaimed, sidling up to him

with a worried pout, "I've been so worried about you, Ethan. Ever since we heard about your concussion, and now Paisley's surgery! You must be under so much stress."

"Stop it Eve." He growled, removing her hands from his body. "I want to know why you think you can pretend like everything is fine between us, when we both know you've been here scheming against innocent people."

Primal fear sliced through Eve. Did he know? Had he figured out what she'd done? How was that possible?

"What the hell were you thinking, leaking that story to the Nightfang Gazette?" Ethan demanded, cutting off her paranoid thoughts.

Eve blinked, both relieved and outraged he had taken Jane's side over hers. "It wasn't like that!" She insisted, "The reporter misunderstood, and now the board is removing me as CEO." She cried, working herself up to a flood of pitiful tears, "It isn't fair! I've worked so hard."

"Oh give it up, Eve." Ethan snapped, cutting off her show of despair. "You tried to throw J- Elise under the bus for your own crime. No one ever had to know what you'd done, but you made it public." It didn't escape Eve that he'd almost slipped up and said, "Jane". She realized with horror that he'd already figured out Elise's true identity, and he was still taking her side.

"You can't be upset when your own sabotage blew up in

your face." He continued, pacing now, "You're lucky you're only losing your job and not your freedom - if any of the people who bought your fraudulent perfume decided to press charges, you'd be arrested."

There wasn't anything fake about Eve's tears now. How could Ethan suggest such a thing, how could he allow such an injustice to happen? "You wouldn't really let them arrest me, would you?" She whimpered.

"You're guilty, Eve." Ethan reminded her coldly. "Of course I would."

"How can you say that, after everything we've been through together?!" Eve wailed.

"And what of your loyalty to me?" Ethan thundered. "You stole from the business I helped you start. You sold poison with my name backing you, then tried to ruin the reputation of a woman I care about - and don't pretend that isn't the reason. You've been jealous of Elise from day one."

"I'm sorry!" Eve professed empty, "I didn't know what else to do! You make me crazy, Ethan, sometimes my heart just runs away with my head. Please forgive me?"

Ethan closed the distance between them, taking her chin between his thumb and forefinger and turning her face up to his. Eve's breast filled with hope as she looked up into his eyes, but it died as quickly as it began when she

saw his hard expression. "I've gone easy on you all these years because of what you suffered at Jane's hands, Eve." He informed her. "but my sympathy is running out. You are on very thin ice - one more foot out of line, and I won't be held accountable for my actions."

Eve collapsed to the ground when he released her, and he stormed from the room. Eve was still lying there sobbing when Petra found her a while later. "Darling what happened?" She inquired, overcome with worry.

"It's Jane." Eve whined, "She's turning him against me a little more every day. You have to help me, you have to convince him to marry me before it's too late!"

"I will." Petra promised, wiping away Eve's tears, "don't you worry about a thing. I'll talk to Ethan and by this time tomorrow you'll be engaged."

