

Chapter 41 - Eve Plays the Hero

Though Eve's plans didn't always turn out as she'd intended, she was certain they were well thought out. It was people that messed things up.

With Petra, she'd always intended the elder she-wolf to survive. She needed her as an ally after Ethan divorced Jane; she needed Petra to love her unconditionally so she would help convince her son to marry Eve. The problem then was that Ethan turned out to be even more irrational than Eve could have dreamed. Instead of leaving Jane then and there, he simply punished her.

All of her previous attempts on Paisley's life had also been thoroughly researched and planned. The first time Jane's other little brats turned up out of nowhere and ruined her scheme, and the second it simply turned out that the doctors were more competent than she gave them credit for. This time however, this time there was no way she could fail: She couldn't stop the car, Paisley was perfectly aligned with the oncoming truck and completely unprotected without her seatbelt. The crash was happening, and the brat would be squished like a cockroach under a boot.

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Yet despite Eve's certainty, it seemed she failed to consider one simple variable in her plan - which was the pup's own instincts and quick thinking. As the truck charged toward her, Paisley dove out of the passenger seat and into the back of the car, curling into a tiny ball on the floor behind the driver's seat.

Eve shrieked in indignant fury, but a second later a huge crash jolted the vehicle and sent it spinning, the sound of screeching tires, breaking glass and crumpling metal filling the air. It was the loudest thing Paisley had ever heard in her young life, especially with Eve screaming bloody murder throughout the terrifying situation. The car spun like a top, bouncing back and forth between other vehicles and sending glass raining down on the little girl's head. Still, Paisley stayed curled up like a little armadillo, shielding her face and head with her hands.

When the car finally skidded to a stop, Paisley's heart was beating a mile a minute, and it was truly a testament to her renewed health and her surgeon's skill that the organ was able to withstand the strain of such

a terrifying event. The pup could hear Eve crying in the distance, forcing her car door open and stumbling out onto the pavement.

Onlookers rushed to the car, helping Eve escape the crumpled remains of her sedan and asking if she was alright. Eve waved them all off, rushing for the back door and looking down at Paisley with a look of pure hatred that she quickly disguised as relief. "Oh Paisley!" She cried, reaching down and extracting the pup from the floor. "Oh thank the Goddess you're alright."

Paisley tried to push the cloying she-wolf away, but Eve was in the middle of a dramatic performance and wasn't about to let the people surround them seeing how much she despised holding the child. "I've never been so afraid in my life, you're such a smart girl, getting on the floor that way."

Sirens sounded in the distance, and the truck driver was now out of his car and approaching Eve. "Are you crazy? Running a red light like that?"

"I don't know what happened!" Eve wails, "I tried to slam on the brakes over and over again, but they wouldn't work! I think they went out!"

"Why didn't you use the emergency brake?!" The truck driver demanded, "and why the hell was the pup in the front?"

"She wasn't!" Eve insisted instantly, "You must be confused, everything happened so fast. That's why I didn't think of the emergency brake, I was just panicking."

"Is that the Alpha's daughter?" One of the witnesses asked suddenly, when Paisley had finally managed to wriggle free enough to poke her head over Eve's shoulder.

"It is!" Someone else exclaimed. "Oh you poor thing, are you alright?"

Paisley squirmed her way free of Eve, looking up at the concerned shifters surrounding her. Eve was already furious the little brat survived, but now she was stealing the sympathy Eve had counted on for herself too. Was there no end to the injustice? To make things worse, Paisley then threw her head back and began to cry, "I want my daddy!"

Deflating all at once, Eve slumped onto the curb and watched while the crowd began to comfort the pup. "Fuck."

Ethan

I've had a horrible tangle of dread sitting in the pit of my stomach like a huge rock all afternoon. This is my first day back at work after Paisley's surgery, and I keep telling myself it's just my anxiety over being away from my pup, as well as anger and hurt over Jane's supposed engagement. Still, nothing I do can unwind the knots

twisting my insides, and a little after noon, I get up from my desk and decide to go home for lunch - just to check on things.

I hear sirens in the distance as soon as I reach the parking lot, and I don't know how I know that they have something to do with Paisley, but I do. I point the car in the direction of the penthouse and hammer my foot onto the accelerator. As I drive I imagine all sorts of calamities, her heart failing again, an intruder at the house, a kidnapping. I keep waiting for my phone to ring, but then I realize I left it in my office in my haste to leave.

The sirens are only a few blocks from the penthouse, and following my instincts, I head straight towards them rather than continuing home. When I arrive at the intersection teeming with red and blue lights, I know my fears were well founded. I can smell both Paisley and Eve though I cannot see them. All I do see is Eve's car in the middle of the road - at least, it used to be Eve's car. Now it looks more like a jumble of metal put through a trash compactor.

Jumping out of my car, the crowd instantly parts to make a path for me, and I charge towards the sound of my crying daughter, "Paisley!"

Then she's there in front of me, her clothes covered in glass, a few scratches marring her tan skin and her face

crimson and tear-stained, but otherwise unharmed. She runs toward me immediately, and I drop to my knees in front of her, love coursing through my veins as she throws herself into my arms. I'm vaguely aware of the sound of cameras clicking around us, complete with a few flashes, but the only thing that matters is Paisley, "Are you alright? What happened?"

"Ethan I'm so sorry." Eve is standing over us then, her eyes wide and bloodshot. "We were going to get some ice cream, but the breaks on my car wouldn't work." She sniffles. She too is a little bruised and scratched up, but for the most part she looks unharmed. "Paisley was so brave, she jumped out of the back seat and curled up onto the floor, I think it saved her life."

"You should have seen her, sir." One of the witnesses shared, "If I didn't know any better I would have thought it was her own daughter there, she was so worried. She wouldn't let us take her away from the wreck until she knew Paisley was safe."

Eve's lower lip is quivering dangerously, and my Alpha instincts have me extending an arm to her as well. It doesn't matter that she gets on my nerves nine times out of ten, she was almost killed, and she needs comforting. Eve collapses into my arms, and as both she-wolves cry I turn to one of the law enforcement agents standing

nearby, "I need you to call someone for me."

While the man calls Jane, and his colleagues clear the witnesses from the area, I focus on comforting Paisley and Eve. It's only later, after I've spoken with the truck driver - who insists Paisley was in the front seat and not the back - and the authorities have examined the car and confirmed the passenger side seatbelt and brakes were both disabled, that my suspicions about Eve return. Why wasn't there a car seat in the vehicle? Why would somebody target her car, when she never takes Paisley anywhere? Why not target my own car?

As the EMTs take care of Paisley, Eve and the truck driver, I pull the accident investigator aside, "I need another favor. Can you pull the traffic cameras between here and my penthouse? I want to see what was happening in the car before the crash.

The man nods, "I'm already on it sir, but you should know more than one witness said the child was in the front seat - it's not only the truck driver."


"But that seatbelt was disabled." I confirm.

He nods gravely, "if they're right your friend put the pup in the car without a belt."

If Jane hadn't chosen that precise moment to arrive, I might have turned on Eve and interrogated her right then and there, but my breath catches when I turn around and

see Jane's rushing towards the polic barricade, terror coming off her in waves. She sprints up to me, wringing her hands, "What happened?"



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