

## Chapter 45 - Riley Tricks Eve

Only concern for his daughter could distract the Alpha from his line of questioning. He'd felt, at long last, like he was on the verge of understanding something which had eluded him for years, only to have it yanked out of reach at the last moment. Nonetheless, Ethan followed Jane's line of sight, watching the pups race through the indoor playground with unrestrained glee. Despite Jane's fears, he couldn't recall seeing Paisley ever looking so healthy, and he nodded happily, "Look at her, she's glowing."

Jane smiled, realizing Ethan was exactly right. Paisley did look better than she'd ever seen her, despite everything she'd been through these last few weeks. All the pups looked happier than she could recall seeing them in quite some time. Of course, what Ethan and Jane did not know was that Riley and Paisley had switched places at the very first opportunity available to them. Trading out clothes in the ball pit while the grown ups were distracted, the sisters seamlessly took up each other's identity in preparation for their scheme to bring down Eve.

Riley, Ryder and Parker had planned every last step of

their plot right down to the tiniest detail their young minds could contemplate. It wasn't a foolproof plan by any means, but Eve was so arrogant and condescending towards children that they were confident she would never see their attack coming. If they were right she would be exposed within the week, and their family would be one step closer to being reunited.

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Paisley was acting strangely. There was no other word for it. Ethan had been present for almost every day of her life, but he'd never before seen her willingly eat broccoli, insist on taking a bath by herself because she was a 'big girl', or call him Daddy quite so frequently and reverently as she had in the last 48 hours. The changes weren't major, but there were enough small oddities that he was beginning to worry spending so much time with Jane was beginning to confuse her.

The Alpha was increasingly afraid that his former mate's refusal to admit her identity was going to hurt the little girl, and now her suddenly altered behavior had him wondering if it was some sort of stress response. Sure Jane let Paisley call her Mommy, but she also insisted she wasn't Ethan's ex and he knew Paisley had overheard at least some of those conversations. It couldn't be good for her.

So when he left for work on Friday morning, knowing he would be out of the house all day with few opportunities to check in with her, he sat her down for a serious chat. "Are you sure you're okay with me leaving?" He asked somberly, "Grandma and Mr. Frank will be here, but you can come to the office with me if you want."

In truth, he was also worried that Eve would take the opportunity to try to convince Petra to help her pursue him, or god forbid make another attempt on the little girl's life. That's part of why he'd ordered Frank not to take his eyes off the child for a single second.

Unfortunately his mother was no help. Petra refused to believe any of his accusations against Eve, insisting the woman was a saint and he had to be mistaken about her intentions for Paisley. He was still trying to pretend everything was fine so that Eve would slip up and show her hand, but having her in the house was getting harder and harder. There were simply too many opportunities for her to do harm - the only blessing was that she'd have to be truly desperate to try something under their own roof. He simply had to hope she hadn't reached that point yet.

"Daddy I'm fine!" Paisley - at least, the child he believed to be Paisley - insisted with a little giggle, "go on!"

"Alright princess," He agreed with a sigh, "Be good for

Grandma and Frank, okay? Best behavior.”

“Yes Daddy.” She agreed, reaching up with both arms so he could hug her goodbye.

The moment the door was closed behind Ethan, Riley shook her head in exasperation. Paisley never told her that their Daddy was such a worry wart. She needed all the grown ups but Eve out of the house for their plan to work, or at least some alone time with the malicious she-wolf. In the two short days she'd spent living with Ethan, Riley had decided she loved her Daddy completely, and Eve was the worst shifter alive. She never passed up any opportunity to insult the little girl or sidle up to Ethan, and she was so two faced Riley was amazed her features didn't actually morph back and forth with her personality.

About an hour after Ethan left, Frank stepped into the bathroom, and Riley made her move, darting down the hallway to Eve's bedroom. Paisley had filled her in with as much information as she could possibly remember, including that Eve always slept in until about noon - even when she'd still been a CEO.

Silently cracking open the she-wolf's door, Riley scampered quietly inside and crept over to the bedside table. She snatched the cell phone charging beside the sleeping woman, and very carefully lifted Eve's thumb to the touch ID button at the bottom of the screen to unlock

the device.

Sneaking back out to the living room, Riley swiftly changed the phone password so she could get back in without Eve's thumbprint, then waited for the cruel woman to come looking for her phone. It was a little after one when Eve finally emerged, looking very disgruntled indeed. Frank was in the kitchen making Riley lunch, and the pup was sitting on the floor doing a ocean themed puzzle when the she-wolf entered.

Eve immediately narrowed her eyes on the child - little did she know that Riley had already hit record on the device's voice memo feature. "Good morning mongrel, I don't suppose you've seen my phone, have you?"

Riley didn't have to fake her surprise, no one had ever spoken to her so callously, it made her furious for what her sister had suffered while she and the boys lived so happily with Jane. "Why're you so mean to me?" She sniffled, trying to will tears into her eyes.

"Because you're a dirty little mutt who has done nothing but make my life miserable." Eve snarled in reply. "Your horrid mother kept me from Ethan when she was here, and she didn't even have the decency to take you with her when she left. I suppose she wanted you to live but Goddess knows why - you are an ugly, worthless little brat."

The need to defend her mother was so strong Riley almost forgot her mission, "I didn' do it on purpose." She whimpered.

"Oh don't give me those crocodile tears." Eve scoffed. "If you'd just done what you were supposed to and died before your surgery this could all be over. It's your fault if I have to keep coming after you, you're making me do this, Paisley, you know that?"

Riley was truly afraid now, the she-wolf was moving towards her, her wolf glowing in her eyes. It was a clear sign she was losing control, which could be as much a danger as it was an advantage. Unluckily for Eve, young Riley had the sense of invincibility all toddlers do, and continued to push. "So tha's why you tried to hurt me all dose times? Cuz I was keeping you from Daddy?"

"What is this, twenty questions?" Eve spat, "I don't owe you answers, little girl. If anything you owe me reparations for all the years you've stolen from me. If you weren't here I could have married Ethan ages ago. Don't you see that's why you have to disappear? Don't you see how much better off we'll all be without you?"

The she-wolf kneeled down in front of the child, taking her hands in hers and speaking so sincerely she might be mistaken for kind if her words weren't so foul. "You're keeping your Daddy from being happy. Do you think he

wants to spend all his time carting you back and forth to play dates and doctors appointments? He's still a young man, he's a powerful Alpha and he'd been reduced to playing nursemaid because you were born too weak to survive on your own but didn't have the grace to just die like the Goddess intended."

"But I want Daddy to be happy." Riley hiccuped, having a hard time remembering this was just an act. Because while it might not be real for her, she was only too aware that this was her sister's reality. She, Parker and Ryder had known things were bad, but they didn't realize they were this twisted. Now more than ever, she knew they had to expose this woman for the monster she was.

"Well you're keeping him from being happy, dollface." Eve answered snidely, "I want you to think about that. I want you to remember that the next time you ask him for a pretty dress or some silly toy. Every minute you spend together, is making his life worse. It's making him a weaker alpha."

"But what can I do?" Riley asked helplessly.

"You can disappear." Eve instructed her coldly, "Run away Paisley, run away and never come back. Your Daddy will be so much better off without you - we all will."