

## Chapter 0043

(James POV)

I look at my parents in disbelief. "What do you mean that you do not know where Lily is? I thought you sealed the borders after Lily left the hall?"

"We did, Son. And we sent guards out looking for her. There was no trace of her. They looked everywhere."

"How that can be, Father? You saw how injured she was! At the very minimum, she had a broken leg and a broken arm. She was literally limping as she left the event hall, and she had the rejection to deal with on top of all of that. She doesn't even have a wolf! How far could she possibly have gotten?"

"I do not know what to tell you, Son. We tried to find her, but we could not," my father said sadly.

"How long did you look?" I asked accusingly.

My father looked away. An alpha never looks away from an uncomfortable conversation, which means the answer really bothers him... and which means that the answer is going to really shock and offend me.

"Two days."

"TWO DAYS?!?!? YOU HAD YOUR MEN LOOK FOR TWO

DAYS?!?!?! WE LOOKED FOR TRACES OF STEPHANIE FOR SIX MONTHS, AND THAT WAS AFTER WE CONFIRMED THAT SHE WAS DEAD AND HELD HER FUNERAL! HOW COULD YOU POSSIBLY GIVE UP AFTER TWO DAYS?"

My father continued to look away, not saying anything.

"You two are always so worried about what Robert and Margie think. Well, what about this? What do they think about the fact that you gave up the search for their only other daughter AFTER JUST TWO DAYS???"

"It was Margie's idea," my mother said softly. "She thought... she thought it was better that we all just try to move on."

"WHAT?!?!?! No, there is no way that that is true. This is the she-wolf who insists on celebrating Stephanie's death anniversary and birthday every year. She is the one who turned the packhouse into a practical museum dedicated to Stephanie's memory. She is the same one who you just got done telling me is insisting that I give a 'grand' speech to the pack at Stephanie's birthday memorial so that I can reassure her and them that Stephanie is still important to me.

There is NO WAY that Margie was okay with you giving up the search after two days! What if Lily is out there, dying? What if someone kidnapped her? What if... what if she is... what if she...."

"Relax, Son," my father cut in. "Lily is alive, that much I am confident of. We would have found her body or evidence if she was not. Like you said, she could not have gotten far on

her own. My best guess is that she got help from someone.”

“Who?”

“I have no idea.”

I ran my hands through my hair, and began to pace back and forth in the room.

“Why are Margie and Robert okay with this? How can they be okay with not knowing where their daughter is?”

“Ever... ever since you told them about what Lily did the night Stephanie died, their relationship with Lily has been strained,” my mother explained.

“So you are saying that this is my fault?!?” I snapped back.

“No, James, I am not saying that. It is just that, their relationship with Lily is complicated.”

Whatever. I am tired of trying to understand the mental gymnastics of Margie’s mind.

“Have you tried calling Red River Pack to find out if Lily made it back to school?”

“I did.”

“And?”

“And Alpha Brett told me that he had not seen or heard from Lily since she left for Stephanie’s memorial.”

“What about that doctor friend of yours? Dr. Hyder? The

one who runs the medical school there? Maybe Lily reached out to him?"

"My understanding is that Jay has been out of town on business for the past three or four weeks. Alpha Brett texted me this morning telling me that Jay just got back this morning. I was actually going to call Jay later on today to see if he could tell us anything."

"Okay," I said, calming down a bit.

"James," my mother began hesitantly, "why do you care so much about where Lily is? You did not seem very happy to be mated to her, and that was an ugly fight that the two of you had during the memorial."

I sighed. "I don't know," I replied honestly. "I am not happy that the Moon Goddess paired us together. I do not understand it at all. But... I just feel like there is some unfinished business between us. I need to find her and figure out what that is."

My father furrowed his eyebrows at me. "An accepted rejection should cut off any sense of unfinished business between the two of you."

"Maybe it should, but it didn't. All I know is that I need to find her and make sure that she is safe. I do not know what the Moon Goddess was thinking mating us, but I do know that the Moon Goddess decided that I should be the one to love and protect her. Maybe once I find her and confirm that she is safe, I will feel better."

My father nodded. "Sit back down, Son. I will go ahead and call Jay now."

"Thank you."

I sat down and watched as my father picked up his phone and called Dr. Hyder. I heard my father greet Dr. Hyder and explain the reason for his call.... and then I watched as my father's facial expressions changed from polite calmness to shocked rage.

Eventually, my father hung up without saying anything else.

"What did Dr. Hyder say?" I asked.

"His exact words were, 'I would rather my wolf f&&k you in the a&& than ever tell you anything about that girl. If you care about your pack, you will never, ever call me again.'" 1

"What?" my mother and I said in unison.

"I thought you were friends?!"

"So did I," my father said in angry confusion. "I mean, we really have not talked much the last couple of years, but I thought we were just both really busy."

"Well, at least we know where to start looking," my mother offers, trying to be helpful.

"Maybe, but he is never going to tell us," my father counters.

"Jay isn't like other wolves. Once he makes his mind up, he is not going to budge."

"He is never going to tell us anything by phone," I concede. " But I am going there now, and I am not going to take 'no' for an answer."

"James, no," my mother protests as she stands up.

"This is not up for discussion," I state matter of factly as I walk out of the office.

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