



## Chapter 0074

I rub my right hand down my face. Is Luke right?

Lily leads us away from the luau and towards some benches near the ocean. She directs us to each sit down on a separate bench. Again, I have no ability to resist her directive. It is honestly starting to freak me out.

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(Lily POV)

I hate to admit it, but my newfound ability to order James and Brady around is sort-of fun. On the way down to the ocean, I started to imagine all the things that I could make them do. Rose laughed at a couple of my ideas, but then told me that we needed to be serious.

Party pooping wolf.

I tell Luke and James to sit down on separate benches while I try to figure out what to do next. 1

"Lily, I am sorry for creating a scene back there," Brady tells me.

"Who is Evelyn, Brady?"

"He hasn't told you about Evelyn?" James asks in a judgmental tone. "Clearly the two of you are not close then."

"Shut up, James," Brady growls. "You have no idea what you are talking about!"

"Don't I?" James growls back.

"BOTH OF YOU, STOP TALKING!!!!" I yell at them.

To my shock, both of them become immediately silent. "Yeah, you gave them alpha orders again," Rose tells me.

"Oh. Oops. I'm not used to this power yet. Well, maybe it is good that they are quiet for now. I need to think."

"No, let them talk. Just tell them not to fight," Rose urges.

I sigh. "Ok, fine."

"You can both talk, but please do not fight with each other right now."

I begin to pace back and forth in the sand in front of where they are sitting.

"Lily, we... we need to talk," James says gently to me.

The sound of James' gentle voice stops me in my tracks. For some reason, it triggers something in my heart, which is now aching. "Rose, what is happening? Why is his voice getting to me? And why was it not getting to me before?"

"He is our mate. His voice is supposed to have an impact on you. It is just that this is the first time in over six years that he has talked to you with a gentle voice. With the

exception of the time at the waterfall --when he thought you were Stephanie-- every other time you have heard his voice, it has been filled with anger, hatred, or bitterness, so it did not impact you the same way," Rose explains. 1

I stop pacing as I realize that she is right. As the full weight of that realization settles in, I look at James with tears in my eyes.

"Six years, James. Do you realize that it has been SIX YEARS since you have used that tone of voice with me?"

"What tone of voice?" he asks.

"A normal one."

"Huh?"

"Until just a minute ago, I had forgotten what your regular voice sounds like. For six years, I have only ever heard the sound of your voice when you were saying something angry, hateful, or vile towards me."

James looks at me curiously. "That's not true, Lily, I ---"

"You are right. There was that time at the waterfall when you thought I was Stephanie. But I hardly think that counts, does it?"

I glance at Brady, who is looking at me sympathetically. "Lily, sweetheart, I ---"

I shake my head. "No, Brady. I can't do this right now. I am

sorry. It has been a long day and I am really tired. We planned to meet in the morning, right? Let's just all go to bed and meet in the morning like we originally planned."

I start to walk away, but then I realize neither of them are following me. "They are still under your alpha-order to sit down on the bench," Rose reminds me.

Urgh.

"Sorry – you are both free to get up," I yell back at them.

I begin walking again until James speaks. "Lily, I cannot allow you and Brady to share a room."

I let out a low chuckle. "Wow. Amazing how you think you can 'allow' me to do anything, James. But thank you for reminding me what your vile voice sounds like."

Just before I enter the hotel, I glance over my shoulder and see Brady and James not far behind me. "Not that it is any of your business, James, but Rose wants Luke to know that I have my own room. See you in the morning." 3

## Chapter 0075

(James POV)

After the interaction with Lily at the luau, I could not sleep. Instead, I tossed and turned, repeatedly replaying Lily's words and going through what had happened... not just last night, but for the past six years.

I originally told myself that the only reason that I wanted to see Lily was so that I could get more answers. I even fought with Luke about the purpose of this trip, insisting that getting answers was all that this trip was for.

But now? Now I am not so sure.

My mind and my heart are filled with the chaos of four very strong and somewhat conflicting emotions, and I do not know what to do about any of them.

The first emotion is, not surprisingly, confusion. Everything that I have known and believed for the past 26 years of my life seems to have burst into smoke. Now, nothing that I have relied on seems stable or true. Heck, at this point, I half-wonder if "James" is even my real name.

The second emotion is guilt. For six years, I punished Lily for something that she did not do. I actively took steps to ensure that she suffered, and I actively took steps to ensure that others in the pack tortured her as well. And, given what

I saw in her medical file, Lily not only suffered... she suffered to the extreme.

The third is regret. I made so many mistakes when it comes to Lily. When she told me last night that she had forgotten what my voice sounded like when it was not saying something angry, hateful, or vile, it broke my heart. My mate—my Goddess-chosen mate— had forgotten what my normal voice sounds like.

The fourth is the most surprising to me, and perhaps the most difficult to deal with: desire. I want Lily back. I have fought it and denied it and insisted it was not true... but one look at Lily last night and I realized that it was pointless to fight it anymore.

Even though our mate bond was broken by the rejection, our bond was not shattered. It can be fixed. Proof of that is that I continue to feel a strong pull to Lily that runs through every part of my body and soul. I want her smile, her laugh, her heart, her body... I want all of those to be for me.

But... is it too late? What do I even have to offer to Lily at this point? Will she ever be able to forgive me? 1

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I am now sitting at the restaurant waiting for Lily to arrive. The plan I worked out with Dr. Hyder was that I would meet Lily for breakfast today at the on-site, resort restaurant that offers outdoor seating overlooking the ocean.



I arrived thirty minutes early, not wanting to miss a minute with her.

I am not ashamed to admit that I am a nervous wreck. So much so that, as I wait, I cannot help but feel jealous of the people around me that seem to be relaxed, happy, and enjoying a leisurely meal with their loved ones.

The ocean breeze that I feel against my skin should be helping me to relax, but instead it feels like a cruel reminder of everything that this meeting will not be.

At last, I catch a whiff of Lily's faint scent —with our bond broken, her scent is weak, but I can still smell it. I stand up and watch her walk over to the table. I can tell from her eyes that she also did not sleep very much last night, but she still looks absolutely gorgeous. She is wearing a pink floral sundress that reveals ample cleavage and that immediately makes my pants feel quite a bit tighter. Her hair is worn down and wavy, with a flower tucked behind one of her ears. She is an absolute angel.

I move to pull her chair out for her, only to realize that Brady has already done it. Brady. I had been so focused on Lily that I forgot all about Brady; I did not even see him walk in with her.