

Mated in the Shadow of My Sister Chapter 111

Chapter 0111

My father ultimately arranged for the transfer of power ceremony to take place three days after Kalen

recovered and came back to me. Once the ceremony was over, my parents moved to Red River along

with my younger siblings, leaving me almost completely alone.

For the next six months, my mother would call and check in on me every so often. Sometimes she would also pass messages from my father. However, other than those random messages, my father refused to

talk to me for almost six months.”

“What happened with Evelyn?” I asked, hoping to get back to the main story.

Brady took a deep breath. “I did not see her again for eight months. At first, I thought that I was the one avoiding her. But then I realized that she was not even around for me to avoid. I tried to ask her parents

how she was doing and where she was, but they were angry with me and did not want to tell me very much. I decided not to use my alpha command on them, knowing that it would only make things harder

for me when Evelyn and I got back together.

Meanwhile, Kalen begged me multiple times per day to find Evelyn and take back the rejection, but I repeatedly refused. I knew that I had rejected Evelyn for a reason, and I felt like I needed to follow the

plan. That way, when I found her, I could give myself to her completely and without any reservations.

About two months after the rejection, I implemented the plan. Kalen fought me the whole way. I had to

put up really big blocks on him in order to sleep with the other she-wolves. But I did. I probably slept with

at least one, sometimes two, she-wolves a day for three weeks.

Every last one of them sucked. None of them could hold a candle to what it felt like to be with Evelyn,

and not one of those lays did anything to cure the huge hole that I felt in my heart. After a while, I

realized that sex meant nothing to me without romantic feelings.

I also realized that I had made a huge mistake, and that I needed to get Evelyn back as soon as possible.

Unfortunately, I learned that she moved away shortly before my alpha ceremony, with the blessing of my

father. She intentionally did not tell any of her friends or family members where she was going, because

she did not want them to be alpha-ordered to disclose her location.

I spent the next several months desperately searching for her.

I finally found her by total chance at a pack in Canada that I had visited for a conference. When I saw

Evelyn, she was sitting at a table outside by herself, eating some sort of snack. I immediately went up to

her, apologized, and begged her to take me back.

Unfortunately, it turned out that I was too late. Evelyn met her second chance mate, Andrew, three

months after she left Black Moon. Andrew was a Beta at the Canadian pack that we were visiting.

And that was not even the worst part. The worst part was that Evelyn was eight months pregnant with

son. Sammy was conceived on Evelyn's birthday, which was the only time that we ever had sex without a

condom.

Thankfully, my father had started to talk to me again and had come to the conference with me. If my

father had not been there, I would have killed Andrew.

After a lot of begging and negotiation, Evelyn refused to take me back, but she did agree to let me be

part of my son's life."

"Wow." That was all I could think of to say. Just... wow.

Brady sat up and looked at me. "Lily, I know how horrible I sound in that story, but you have to believe me. I have spent the past several years regretting what I did. I have worked hard to become a better wolf, and I promised myself that, if I was ever lucky enough to find love again, I would hold on to it an

fight for it.

That is why I am unwilling to let you go. James deserves to lose you, just like I deserved to lose Evelyn. I am a changed wolf now, and you are the very first female that I have had any real feelings for since

Evelyn." 5

I frowned, not knowing how to respond.

"Do you have a picture of Sammy?" I asked gingerly.

Brady nodded. He reached for his wallet and pulled out a picture of Sammy. It was a close-up of Brad alongside a beautiful female, who I assumed to be Evelyn.

My heart stopped as I looked at the picture.

"Brady, is this Evelyn?"

Brady nodded.

"Brady, she looks just like me."

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Chapter 0112

(Alpha Brady POV)

It has been two weeks since we returned to Black Moon. I am embarrassed to admit that I have been actively avoiding Lily since we got back. She has not tried to mind-link or come and see me, so she must

be trying to avoid me too.

I am ashamed at how I acted towards her on the airplane. Lily did not deserve my anger or the silent treatment that I gave her at the beginning. She told me that she did not sleep with James, and I believe her. Even if she did, it would have been wrong of me to blame her. James is her Goddess-chosen mate. Even a broken bond is a strong thing; I know from my experience with Evelyn.

Even though I got past my anger about her night with James, I know that I only made things worse. between us when I confessed what had happened between Evelyn and I.

1

But, Lily asked and she deserved to know. I had dreaded telling her the story; even I hate myself after listening to it. However, I had hoped that Lily's pure heart would help her see that I have changed; that I regret what I did in the past; and that I was redeemable. I had also hoped that she would see parallels

between how James treated her and how I treated Evelyn. 2

The lesson I took from what happened with Evelyn is that sometimes regret is not enough to fix the damage in a relationship. Even if someone has changed for the better, sometimes, the scars of the past are too deep and too severe, and the only healthy way to move on is to close that chapter of your life and move on with someone else. And, of course, I wanted Lily to move on with me.

Unfortunately, I do not think that is the lesson that Lily took from my story. I do not know how I expected her to react, but I know that I did not expect her to

become suddenly fixated on how similar she and Evelyn look. In fact, Lily really did not say much more after that.

I

When we got back to Black Moon, I immediately got slammed with work that had piled up while we were gone. It was a welcome distraction, but every night since we came back, I made time to go to Lily's room at the packhouse so that I could talk to her and apologize. Unfortunately, every night, I have also found myself standing outside her door giving myself a hundred excuses about why she would not want to see me yet or why I should wait and do it another day.

Now that it has been two weeks, I know that I have waited too long. Tonight, I must force myself to finally talk to her. Not only do I miss her and want to get things back on track between us, but also we have received some intelligence indicating that our enemies are actively searching for her. I need to

make sure that Lily is taking extra precautions.

again. Silence.

She does not answer. I try

I try to mind-link her, but the mind-link is not going through. She must have a block in place.

I try knocking on the door again, but all I get is more silence.

"Lily, it is me. I can understand why you do not want to talk to me, but please... I need to talk to you.

Please let me in."

Silence.

It occurs to me that she may not be in her room, but it is 9:00 p.m. I do not know where else she would

I turn to one of the guards that I have placed in charge of keeping watch on her. He tells me that she has

not come out of her room during his shift. I ask him when he last saw her, and his response enrages me:

not since the day that we returned. I mind-link the other guards who have been assigned, and they all tell

me the same thing.

I almost fire all of the guards right then and there. Hell, I also almost punch the one standing next to me.

What in Goddess' name am I paying them for? I cannot believe that Lily has been holed up in her room

for two weeks and no one has thought to question it or inform me.

I mind-link the head omega to make sure that Lily has at least been receiving her meals. She tells me Lily

has not had a meal at the packhouse since the day we returned.

Now I am not just angry; I am scared. I promised that my pack and I would protect Lily, and here we have completely let her down. I am going to be firing some wolves tonight, starting with every single security guard who was supposed to be protecting her. I pray to the Moon Goddess that nothing has happened to

her.

This time, I try Lily's doorknob. It is locked. I use my body to break the door down. Inside the room, everything looks quiet and normal. Well, everything except that Lily is not there. I check her closet and

see that most of her belongings are gone.

I am becoming more and more frantic. Then, my eyes settle on a piece of paper on the bed. As I read the letter, what is left of my heart shatters.

"Dear Brady.

I want you to know how much I appreciate you, your parents, and your pack. I do not know what would have happened to me without your support the last couple of months. You have shown me kindness that

I have never known before.

I also want you to know that I believe you when you say that you have changed. What happened with

Evelyn happened a very long time ago. It does not have to define you. I fully believe that you deserve to

be happy and find love again.

want

I know you me to be that new love for you, but I have no more interest in being Evelyn's replacement

than I had in being my sister's.

More importantly, I do not think it is fair of me to string either you or James along. I never wanted to be

part of a love triangle. My feelings are all over the place, and I do not think that is fair to either one of you.

I think at this point, it is important that I stand on my own two feet for a while. I need to take some time

to sort through my feelings and to discover who I am, what I love, and what makes me "me."

Please do not worry about me. I do not know what the dangers are exactly, but I know how to be

cautious. And I have Rose with me.

I am sure our paths will cross again soon, and I will look forward to it. In the meantime, please tell everyone how grateful I am, and how much I already miss them.

With love,

Lily"

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Chapter 0113 (Sheila POV) I am so angry that I could scream. First, James abandons me in Hawaii with Aiden and Joey. Then, when I come back to the pack, I find out that he has not come home yet. Where the hell is he? Now, I am stuck in my bedroom waiting for stupid test results.

URRRRRRRRRGGHH. James had better not be out looking for that little b&tch Lily. She is a worthless piece of crap. The only thing she was ever good at was stress relief and laying in a damn box. I smile at the memory. Whatever. It is not like she is going to want to come back here anyway. I made sure of that. Still. Where the f&&k is James? I am running out of time. I need him to make me his Luna as soon as possible. I have worked far too hard and for way too long to let that dream go. I throw myself on my bed in frustration. Just then, my phone goes off. At first, I think it is the timer, but it turns out to be a text message. Great. Just what I need to deal with right now. As though today could not get any worse.

Bubbles: "Hey, Girl." Me: "Hey." Bubbles: "How is James doing?" Me: "Hot as ever." Bubbles: "Has he been made Alpha yet?" Me: "No, his dad wants him to find a Luna first." Bubbles: "Oh. It has been a long time. I better make it back your way soon." Oh, no you don't. Not yet. Me: [rolling eyes emoji] "How is Jackson?" Bubbles: "Growing like a weed. Driving me crazy most of the time." Me: "Kids do that." Bubbles: "Still can't believe you have one." Me: "Me either. Thank Goddess that Antonio does most of the parenting. I do not have patience for that kid most of the time." Me: "You are still with Antonio? I thought you would have gotten bored of him by now. You were or only supposed to be gone for a couple of years." Bubbles: "Sex is too good. Every time I say it is the last time, he does something to up the ante. Last night he invited a male friend of his to join us. Oh, my Goddess that was fun." Me: [rolling eyes emoji] "I bet James is better." Bubbles: [angry emoji] "Girl, you know you cannot talk that way." Me: "Sure I can. You aren't here. Besides, you have your s**y Spainard Antonio." Bubbles: "Do not get too comfortable. I will come back soon." Me: "You have been saying that for a long time. It never happens." Please do not come back. Please do not come back. Please do not come back. Bubbles: "This time, I mean it. I want to see everything up close and personal anyway." Me: "Will you bring Antonio and Jackson with you?" Bubbles: "Girl, you know that would only cause problems." Yes, I know. That is why I want you to bring them. Me: "Have more faith than that. James is a forgiving guy. Plus, you know your parents will want to meet Jackson." Bubbles: "Girl, you are nothing but problems." Yes, that is my goal. Me: "Whatever. You will want to wait for James to get back anyway." Bubbles: "? Where is he?" Me: "Some alpha training out of state. He probably will not be back for another six months or so." Please believe me.

Please. I need more time. Bubbles: "Six months? Why so long? That's crazy." Me: "You know how depressed he has been. He needed to get away." Bubbles: "But what if he meets someone else while he is gone?" Me: "Relax, Girlie. Not going to happen." Bubbles: "How can you be sure?" Think, Sheila. Think. Me: "Because it is an all-male conference. Alpha heirs only. They wanted to keep females away so there are no distractions. Bubbles: "Oh. Well, that makes sense." Me: "Don't worry. I am your only competition for his heart now." Bubbles: "That sh&t isn't funny, Sheila." Me: [rolling eyes emoji] Bubbles: "I am serious, Sheila. Hands off." Me: "Whatever. If you are serious about coming back, what about doing it as a surprise? Maybe we can plan a party around it?" Bubbles: "Ooooooh! I love parties! That is a great idea." Oh, thank Goddess that worked. I need to keep her occupied while I work things out here. Me: "Okay, when should we plan it?" Bubbles. "Definitely after James gets back. Let me think about dates and I will get back to you." Me: "Sounds good, Girlie. Love you." Bubbles: "Love you, too. Byeeeeeeeeeeee." I throw my phone to the ground. That conversation was a waste of my time. At least I probably bought myself a little space. And I can check the test results now; my timer went off in the middle of our texting. I get up and go to the bathroom./I pick up the first test, and sure enough, there are two pink lines. I pick up the second test; same thing., F&&k. Sh&t. F&&k. What am I going to do? How did I let this happen? Think, Sheila. Think. There has to be a way around this. I pace around my room for twenty minutes. Finally, an idea comes to me and I smile. If my plan works, it is time to talk to Margie.

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Chapter 0114 (Sheila POV) I put the two pregnancy tests in my purse and headed over to the packhouse. I knew that I probably only had one chance to make my plan work, and that plan centered on Margie being fully on board. No one said anything to me as I made my way to the beta suite. I was a regular there, and that came with its benefits. Margie greeted me happily at the door before I even knocked. "Well, hello, dear. I did not know that you were coming by today." "Good morning, Margie. I am so sorry to bother you, but I was thinking about Stephanie and feeling down. I thought it might make me feel better to come and talk to you about her. You know her birthday is coming up." Margie frowned. "Yes, I have been thinking about her birthday as well. Why don't you come in and we can talk about her for a while. I will make you some tea." I smiled sweetly. "Thank you, Margie. I was hoping that you would say that." I walked with Margie into her kitchen and sat down on one of the bar stools. Margie fiddled around in her cabinets for a few minutes, brewed some hot water, and then handed me a cup. She then sat down on

a stool next to me. I smelled the cup of tea. “Peppermint tea. Stephanie’s favorite.” Margie smiled. “Yes. I used to hate peppermint, but Stephanie loved peppermint so much that I have. been trying to incorporate it into my diet more and more since she died. Six years later, and I am still struggling with it, but I can at least enjoy it in the tea.” I gave Margie a sad smile. “Stephanie did not care what the peppermint was in. Peppermint candy. peppermint cookies, peppermint tea, peppermint ice cream. She loved it all.” Margie reached over and gently grabbed my hand. “Stephanie was so lucky to have a friend like you. So many people in this pack have wanted to move on and forget her, but you never have. You have always done what you can to keep her memory alive.” “Of course. How could I not? She was my best friend. She was like a sister to me.” “And you were like a sister to her, too, Sheila. In fact, you were more like a sister to her than her own flesh and blood.” I nodded. We chatted for a while longer, talking about various things that Stephanie used to like and do. Finally, I decided I needed to make my move. I looked down at my hands. “Margie, I hate to bring this up, but...” “What is wrong dear?” “Oh, Margie. Nevermind. I do not want to trouble you with it.” “Sheila, you could never trouble me with anything. As long as you always make sure to honor Stephanie and her memory, you will always have a special place in my heart.” “I know, but.... It has to do with James.” “Oh, I understand now. Jane told me that he abandoned you in Hawaii. I was so upset with Jane about him doing that to you. You showed me the text messages that Stephanie sent you before she died; she wanted you to be with James if she could not be. And James clearly likes you; I do not know why he is being so stubborn.” I pretended to hold back tears. “Well, it is not entirely his fault. Something happened in Hawaii.” Margie wrinkled her eye-brows. “Sheila, what happened? Whatever it is, you can tell me.” “Are you sure? It is sort-of embarrassing, but I really do not have anyone else to talk to now that Stephanie is gone.” “Oh, honey, of course. You can tell me anything. And I will help you however I can.” I took a deep breath and pretended to compose myself. I pulled the pregnancy tests out of my purse and showed them to Margie. “I found out that I was pregnant just before we left for Hawaii.” Margie’s eyes got bigger. “What?” I nodded and forced myself to cry a little bit. “I wanted to tell James while we were in Hawaii. I thought that he would be happy and want to celebrate. But he reacted really badly. He told me that he did not want to have a pup with anyone other than Stephanie.” I paused to sniffle a few times, and I thought of every sad thing I could until tears started to fall. “And... and Margie... he even accused me of getting pregnant with someone else’s pup!”

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Chapter 0115 “HE DID WHAT?!?!?” I continued to cry and sniffle periodically. “Yes. And... and the worst part... is that... he even... denied... ever... sleeping... with... me..... Margie rubbed my back sympathetically. “Oh, Sheila. I am so sorry. I do not know why James would do that. Everyone in this pack knows about his arrangements with you.” I nodded. “But... Margie, this... this is the embarrassing part...” I did not say anything for a minute or two, waiting for Margie to urge me to speak again. “What, dear? What is the embarrassing part?” “It... it might be my fault that he thinks he never slept with me.” “What do you mean?” “Are you sure you want to know, Margie? It is really embarrassing.” “Oh, Sheila. Please stop worrying about me. Just tell me what is going on.” 1 I nod. T. I have let him pretend that I am Stephanie while we... you know. I have one of her dresses that I borrowed from her before she died, and I wear that for him. I also let him call me Stephanie when he is... you know... thrusting... Margie started to look uncomfortable, but I kept going. “At first, I thought it was just a game. That we both knew that we were pretending, and that was what he needed to you know...get erect. But after he accused me of lying about us ever sleeping together, I realized that he really believed when the lights turned off that I was Stephanie. Now I know that I... I should have told him earlier that I was not her, but I thought it was just pretend... and I loved Stephanie so much too... so I just... I let him continue. I swear, I did not realize he thought that I really was her.” Margie looked at me sympathetically. “Oh, Sheila. I am so sorry. I did not realize that that what was happening. That makes so much more sense. Poor James... and poor you.” Margie thought for a moment. “I can understand now why this would be a problem. But there is an easy fix. You can have your pup’s DNA tested...” “NOOOOO!!!” Ok, now time for the most difficult part. Please, Goddess, let Margie fall for this. “If we wait until the pup is born, my pup will not be automatically eligible to be James’ heir. Only pups born in wedlock are. And, worse than that, you know how conservative my family in Europe is. They might disown me if they find out that I got pregnant outside of marriage.” “Oh, but sweetheart, they can test DNA in utero now. It happens all the time. We will simply get you one of those tests and when we get the results back, James will be forced to marry you and make you his Luna.” I put my face in my hands and began crying as many ugly tears as I possibly could. “But... but Margie.... the doctor.... says.... that my... my uterus... is shaped in a... strange... way. It makes me high risk. If I have any of those kinds of tests done, it could risk the pup’s life. I do not want to... to lose my pup, Margie. I could not bear it...” I can feel Margie stiffen beside me. “No one should be forced by the Andersons to lose their pup, Sheila,” Margie said in sort-of an eerie voice. “I will talk to Jane. James will accept responsibility for your pup, and the two of you will be married on Stephanie’s birthday, in honor of her.” 1 I

glanced over at Margie, keeping my head in my hands. “Are.... are... are you sure? What if... what if James continues to deny that the pup is his? Or refuses to marry me?” “Do not worry about any of that, Sheila. Luna Jane and Alpha Randall will make him agree. I promise you that.” I dove into Margie’s arms and gave her a huge hug. “Oh, Margie. I knew that I could count on you. Thank you so much!!r Sheila: 1. James: 0.

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Chapter 0116 (James POV) It has now been three weeks since I left Hawaii. Leaving there without Lily was one of the hardest things that I have ever done. Of course, letting Lily leave with Brady was even harder. Before you ask, the answer is yes: I know very well that Brady did not “drop Lily off” on his way to Black Moon. Lily clearly has been staying at his pack. She is not the kind of she-wolf who trusts easily... not after everything that has happened to her. For her to trust and embrace both Brady and his security team, it could only mean that she has gotten to know them fairly well over time. As much as I want to hate Brady for hiding my mate and trying to steal her from me, I appreciate that he has been able to make her feel safe and valued. Lily deserves that and more. I hope to one day be able to provide that kind of environment for her myself. Until then, I want Lily to continue to feel safe and protected. That is why I pretended not to know where she was staying; if she was comfortable with me knowing that information, she would have told me. That does not mean that I am a saint when it comes to the idea of Lily being with Brady. I am anything but. In fact, I regularly fantasize about punching Brady to the point that he loses consciousness. I also pray to the Moon Goddess every d&mn day that Lily does not give up on me and allow Brady-or anyone else- to touch or mark her. J In case you were wondering, I still have not been back to West Mountain Pack yet. However, my father called me a few days ago and demanded that I return to the pack. Technically, he ordered me to come back within 24 hours, but his alpha command does not work over the telephone (it only works in person or over mind-link), so I have purposely taken my time. I figure I will come back at the end of this week, I like it assuming I have done what I need to do... and assuming that I... well, feel I am actually a little surprised it took my father two and a half weeks to demand my return. Once I told Joey to tell Sheila to go to hell and find her own way back to the pack, I knew it was only a matter of time before Sheila whined to Margie, and before Margie in turn whined to my parents. I can only imagine what horrible stunt my parents and Margie are going to try to pull when I return. I am sure it will have something to do with making Sheila my luna, because that was what my mother was obsessing over before I left Whatever it is, I will deal with it. My parents have far less power over me

than they used to have. At this point, if they push too hard, I will simply walk away from the pack and my future position as alpha. Even if leaving the pack means becoming a rogue, it will be better than living without my mate. That is how In fact, I spent the first week after I returned from Hawaii exploring and staying in random hotels throughout human territory. I wanted to get a sense of whether a rogue life would be something viable for Lily and I long-term. Unfortunately, I quickly realized that it would be fine for a few weeks or even a few months....but it would be unfair to ask Luke or Rose to live that way for any longer than that. Wolves. need the ability to shift and be around other wolves. The second week, I went to Red River Pack to see Dr. Hyder again. ***FLASHBACK*** Dr. Hyder sat back in his chair, looking at me suspiciously. "To what do I owe the annoyance of this visit?" I sighed. Dr. Hyder was always such a gracious host. Best get straight to the point. "I was wondering if you know of any packs that might be willing to accept me into their pack if I renounce West Mountain?" Dr. Hyder looked at me curiously. "You would be willing to renounce your pack and your position as alpha?" I nodded. "If it means that Lily might consider being with me, then yes. She does not feel comfortable at West Mountain, and I do not feel comfortable living my life without her." "You know my son has taken quite a fondness for her himself." I cringed, but tried not to let it show. "Yes, I am aware of that." "How does that make you feel?" he asked. For what seemed like forever, I debated with myself about how to respond. I knew there were no right answers to that question; there were only wrong ones. At the end, I decided to just be honest.

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Chapter 0117 "It depends on the day, sometimes the hour. I am glad that Lily has someone around her that makes her feel safe, but at the same time, I want to punch his lights out for even considering sniffing around what is mine." Dr. Hyder leaned back in his chair and smiled. "You surprise me, Son." "How so?" "The wolf I knew six months ago was so far up his parents' a&&, he could not see straight. The wolf who came here a couple of months ago demanding information about Lily wasn't too much better. But something in you has shifted. I can see it." "You could say that. Do my feelings about Brady bother you?" I asked. "Not at all. I guessed the answer before I asked. I just wanted to see how honest you would be." "So you were testing me." "Did you expect anything less?" I shook my head. "So my question, Dr. Hyder." "Why are you asking me and not someone else? Your cousin Andrew is with a pack in Canada. Why are you not asking him?" "This is a delicate situation, as you are fully aware. An alpha wolf renouncing his position and joining another pack could easily lead to political problems if not war. We both

know my parents are not going to accept my decision without a fight.” “That is not an answer. Why me and not your cousin?” “Two reasons. One, my cousin is close to my mother, and his pack has strong ties to West Mountain. I do not think Andrew would be willing to help me leave, and I do not trust him to not tell my mother I asked. Second, you are already aware of the problems at West Mountain, and your political relationships have already been severed. You have less to lose.” Dr. Hyder looked at me suspiciously. “How do you know Lily will agree to follow you even if you get into another pack?” “I don’t. I can only pray she considers it.” “I heard that you told Sheila to go to hell, and that you made her find her way back to the states by herself.” “I did relay that message to her, but she had two security guards with her so she was not entirely alone. Who told you about it? Are you talking to my parents?” “No, Son. I have sources in many places.” “Why does everything have to be a riddle with you?” “Next question.” “Goddess, seriously? We are back to that nonsense again?” “No. I just needed to keep you on your toes.” “Do you have any suggestions for me?” I asked, getting frustrated. “It depends.” I rubbed my temples. I was getting a headache. “On what?” “I still do not understand why you want to leave West Mountain.” “The riddles are getting old, Dr. Hyder. I already told you, and I know you already know anyway. Lily does not feel comfortable at West Mountain. After what happened on the night that Stephanie died –and given all of the pack members who I turned against her afterward- I cannot blame Lily for never wanting to go back there again.” Dr. Hyder looked at me confused. “The night that Stephanie died?” Dr. Hyder’s confusion seemed sincere, as opposed to the “I am only asking you questions that I already know the answers to” routine he had been playing up until this point. “Lily did not tell you?” “No.” “What? I thought that was what the whole riddle nonsense was about last time. You wanted me to figure out that Lily had nothing to do with Stephanie’s death.” “Son, I think that you are still missing some important pieces of the puzzle.” “So tell me what they are.” “No.” I stood up. This was getting me nowhere. “Good to see you, Dr. Hyder. Until next time.” “Son?” “You want to offer me another riddle? Ask me more personal questions?” “No. I want to offer you a list of names. I suggest you talk to them.” I watched as Dr. Hyder scribbled down a list of five names. When he handed the list to me, I was surprised. “These are all West Mountain pack members.” “No, those are all FORMER West Mountain pack members. I suggest you talk to them about why they left.” ***END OF FLASHBACK***

Week three I spent tracking down the wolves on the list that Dr. Hyder gave me. I have now talked to three of the wolves, and I have two more wolves to go. Once I am done, I will head back to West Mountain. Maybe. I admit, I am sort of curious what stunt awaits me. Maybe I will go just for fun.

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Chapter 0118 (James POV) It was now the end of the third week since leaving Hawaii. I have traveled to five different states in the United States, and I have met with all five of the wolves that Dr. Hyder suggested I talk to. Unfortunately, after that much traveling, Luke and I were exhausted. But, more than that, we were feeling incredibly frustrated. Although the meetings with the five wolves confirmed for us that there are, or were, serious problems at West Mountain Pack, we felt only somewhat closer to figuring out exactly what those problems were. Interestingly, each wolf on Dr. Hyder's list had very different circumstances: -Brandon was 33 years old and now lives in Florida with his mate and two young pups. He left West Mountain Pack eight years ago. Kelly was 27 years old, single, and lives in Texas. She left West Mountain Pack shortly after her 20th birthday. -Lynda was 60 years old, divorced, and now lives in Kansas. She left the pack four years ago. -Eric was 40 years old, married, has one young daughter, and now lives in New York. He left West Mountain Pack shortly before Stephanie died. -Dorothy was 92 years old, widowed, and now lived in Oregon. She left the pack almost eight years ago. For the life of me, I could not figure out what these five wolves could possibly have in common. At first glance, the only potential link that I could see was that four of the five left the pack in roughly the same two-year period. Despite the lack of similarities, however, each conversation ended up having similar key elements: the wolves were frustrated with my parents; they felt strong anger and bitterness towards Stephanie, Margie, and/or Sheila; they had a lot of sympathy and gratitude for Lily; and they strongly wanted to avoid being reminded of whatever it was that had happened to them in the past. For example, take the conversation that I had with Brandon: ***FLASHBACK*** "Why are you here?" Brandon asked me bitterly. "I would like to find out why you left West Mountain Pack." "My family and I are never going back there. If that is why you are here, you can leave," he said adamantly. "I do not want you to come back. I just want to understand why you left." "As if you care." I was shocked by how hostile he was. "I do care. I would not be here if I didn't." "You expect me to believe that? Your parents did not care what was happening eight years ago, so you can hardly expect me to believe their son cares now." I looked at Brandon in confusion. "You told my parents why you left?" "No. I TRIED to talk to your parents. As soon as I started explaining what happened, they cut me off and told me that I needed to talk to Margie." "Why would you need to talk to Margie?" "Your guess is as good as mine." "But... what did they tell you was the reason?" Brandon ignored the question. "Why are you really here, James? What is it that want from me?" "I already told you. I just want to understand what happened and why you left." "Bullsh&t. You probably just want to make

sure that I am not disparaging your precious mate. Well, if so, do not worry. It has taken my mate and I a long time to work through what happened, but we did. We have healed. The last thing I want to do is talk about that horrible incident again. You can sleep easy; your mate's reputation is safe." "What does Lily have to do any of this?" "I am referring to Stephanie." I was taken aback. "Lily is my mate, not Stephanie. And... Stephanie was killed by rogues over six years ago." "Oh. I did not hear about that. We cut off most news from the pack when we left. Our families give us updates on how they are doing, but they know better than to talk to us about anyone in pack leadership. Rogues you say?" I nodded. "I wish I could tell you that I am sorry, but I am not. It could not have happened to a better she-wolf," Brandon added sarcastically.

Mated in the Shadow of My Sister Chapter 119

Chapter 0119 "Did Stephanie do something to you?" Brandon checked the time on his phone. "Sorry, James, but my mate and pups will be home soon. You need to be gone before they get here. I do not want you to upset my mate." "I don't want to upset her Brandon, I promise. I just want to understand." "Just seeing you will upset her. You and your parents no longer have any say over our lives. Please leave." "Tell him again that we are mated to Lily," Luke suggested in the link. "Brandon, please. I am here because I am trying to fix things. I want to make things better, and I want to make things safe for my mate. My real mate, Lily. Not Stephanie. Lily. I cannot fix anything if no one will tell me what happened. Brandon's face suddenly softened. "Your mate... is Lily? As in, Beta Robert's youngest daughter?" "Yes." "Wow. And you are okay with that?" "More than okay. "Is she okay with being mated to you?" "I am working on that part." "How... how is she doing?" he asked, sounding genuinely concerned. "She is okay," I responded as I silently prayed to the Moon Goddess that I was telling the truth. "Please tell her.... please tell her that we said thank you." I looked at Brandon in confusion. "Brandon, Lily would have only been 12 when you left the pack. What could you possibly be thanking her for?" "You really do not know, do you?" Brandon asked. "No!" I exclaimed. That is why I am here. I need to figure out what happened." Brandon sighed. "She tried to stop it. She was the only one who tried to stop it." "Stop what, Brandon?" Just then, we heard the garage door open. "My mate is here. Please, James, just go. Please." This time, I did not fight him on leaving. I could tell I was not going to get much more out of him, especially now that his mate and pups were home. ***END OF FLASHBACK*** By the end of the fifth meeting, I was ready to pull my hair out. I had absolutely no idea what could have happened to explain the hostility I was getting. One thing was becoming increasingly clear, though:

what Stephanie and Sheila did to Lily was only the tip of the iceberg. At one point as I was wracking my brain, trying to put the pieces together, Luke reminded me of what Alpha Brett said the night that he broke the alliance with our pack: "...Red River Pack will never condone the abuse of females and other vulnerable people. In addition, our pack considers the mate bond to be sacred, and we condemn any and all who would use that bond as a vehicle for torture. The information that my uncle shared with me this afternoon is sufficient for me to conclude that West Mountain Pack's values no longer align with ours, and that they have not aligned for some time." My gut told me that Alpha Brett's words were directly linked to what caused the five wolves and their families to leave the pack. But how? What could Stephanie and Sheila have possibly done? Neither of them were old enough to find their mates before Stephanie died. And how could they have done it right under my nose? Whatever it was, why would my parents ignore it? Why would they tell pack members to talk to Margie? And how was Lily involved? Nothing made sense, but once again, I knew that Dr. Hyder was telling me that I needed to find out. As much as I hated his riddles and (mostly) hated his son, I trusted him. It was time to head back to West Mountain. Not for my father, definitely not for Sheila, but for me and for Lily. But first, it was time to let Luke out for a long run. We had a lot of built-up tension that we needed to release.

Mated in the Shadow of My Sister Chapter 120

Chapter 0120 (Joey POV) I have been assigned to guard the packhouse ever since we got back from Hawaii. I am grateful for the post, because it gives me a good perspective on what the higher ranked wolves are up to. Unfortunately, I am starting to see things that worry me.... as in, a lot of things. I mind-link my mate. "Babe, something is going on. Something big." "What do you mean?" "Sheila has been prancing around the pack house happy the last few days. HAPPY. Why would she be happy?" "Have any wolves discovered their mates recently?" "No." "Anyone have surgery lately?" "Not that I am aware of." "Has she been to the care home?" "No." "Anything else out of the ordinary?" "No, except that Sheila's mom is spending a lot of time here too. They have also had a tailor here measuring Sheila for a dress of some kind. Oh.... and today they have been looking through bridal magazines with Margie and Jane." "WHAT?!" "Yeah...." "Oh, Goddess. Joey! Why didn't you say that first?!? They are planning Sheila's wedding! We cannot let them force James to marry that b&&ch!!" "Maybe they plan to marry Sheila off to someone else?" "Like who?" "Me? Aiden? I don't know." I heard Jessica growl through the link. "Not. Funny." "Believe me, Babe, the thought of marrying anyone other than you makes me nauseous. And the thought of marrying Sheila

makes me want to.... I will not finish that sentence. But maybe there is another explanation.” “No, there isn’t.” I did not reply right away. I knew my mate was probably right. She usually is. Of course they want to marry James off to Sheila. This is what we have been afraid of, and what we have been working to avoid. I rubbed my neck. “Look, Babe. Sheila and James will not get married. We will think of something.” “Okay. I trust you, Joey. Have there been any sign of James?” “Not yet. Alpha Randall ordered him to come back six days ago, but so far he has not shown up.” “I bet Alpha Randall is not happy about that,” Jessica said, chuckling. I laughed as well. “I am pretty sure I have seen steam literally coming out of his ears,” I confirm. “Well, when he gets there, please let me know. I have a package to deliver to him. I will head straight over there.” “A package? From who?” “I don’t know for sure. There is no return address label on it. Normally, I am supposed to throw unmarked packages like this away.” “So why haven’t you?” “Because.... the handwriting on the label looks familiar. I may just be imagining it, but I am hoping....” “Has it already gone through the x-ray machine?” “Yes,” “And does your wolf smell anything odd about it?” “No.” o “Okay. Hide it somewhere so others in the mail room will not see it. I will let you know when James gets here.” “Thank you. Love you, Joey.” “I love you, too.” I cut the link, and sent another prayer to the Moon Goddess that we would not have to go back to our original plans, before we discovered that Lily was the Goddess-chosen Luna of our pack, (The next day) (James POV) And I am back. Here I am, standing just outside the border to West Mountain Pack. It is funny, years ago, when we would go on trips or to conferences, I-could not wait to come back here. This was my home; this was the place that I felt the most comfortable. But now? Now I feel like every time I am here I am entering the twilight zone. Nothing feels right; nothing feels true; everything feels like it is hiding something from me. How did I not notice all of these things before? my way to Sighing, I force myself to cross the border and make the packhouse. It would be faster to drive, but after the taxi driver dropped me off, I turned down the border guards’ offers for a ride. I could also shift into Luke, but neither he nor I are eager to get back. The long walk will be good for our nerves and for our growing anger. I briefly think about stopping by my waterfall, but I know that my father has had wolves watching my every move since I arrived at the border. The last thing that I want to do is ruin that special place with the guards’ watchful presence. So instead, I continue my journey to the packhouse. Once I arrive, I head up to my room. I know that proper protocol would be to visit my father first, but I have no interest in observing proper protocols anymore. At least not with him. To my surprise, Jessica-Joey’s mate- is waiting outside the door to the alpha suite when I arrive. She appears to be waiting for me. “Jessica?” “Good afternoon, Sir. This... this package arrived for you. Normally, we are

supposed to toss packages without return mailing addresses, but... I thought maybe you would want this one." Jessica hesitantly hands me a small square package. As I look at the mailing label, my heart skips a beat. "Thank you, Jessica. I appreciate it." I open the door to the alpha suite and Jessica turns to leave. However, before she can, I notice all the Stephanie portraits and mementos everywhere. "Jessica, your mate is downstairs yes?" She nods. "Would you ask him to come upstairs. I am hoping that you and him can help me with a small project." Jessica looks at me curiously, but then confirms that they would be happy to help. While she waits for Joey at the entrance to the alpha suite, I go to my bedroom, put my suitcase on the floor, and gently place the package on my bed. I am dying to know what is inside of it, but I have to get this project done first. I grab three large duffle bags out of my closet. Joey knocks on my bedroom door and I toss him and Jessica each a bag. "What are these for?" Joey asks. "I want every single picture of Stephanie, and every single memento of hers, taken down and placed in these bags. Anything that will not fit, you should take down and create a small pile on the floor." I watch as Joey and Jessica exchange looks. They are smiling. I do not bother to ask why... at least not right now. Fifteen minutes later, the three of us are about halfway through removing Stephanie from the alpha suite, when I hear a screeching voice that I unfortunately know all too well. "WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU ALL DOING?????!!?!?!?!?!?!?!?!?!?!121212212121212171*