

## Chapter 0022

"Why do you care so much about Lily all of sudden?" he asks.

"Pack unity, Nick. Pack unity," I respond sarcastically. "Get her here."

"Man, I ---"

"NO. MORE. EXCUSES."

"Okay, okay. I get it. But I think I am going to need to carry her. I will need help to avoid aggravating her injuries. Can you send my dad back to the packhouse to help me?"

"Fine. Yes. But hurry."

"Will do."

I turn to the four parents. "Nick just mind-linked me. The Little Brat is not cooperating. She is pretending to be unconscious. Nick needs help carrying her here. Beta Robert, please go and help your son."

"James, is this really necessary? I do not understand why she needs to be here," Margie protests, for what has to be the 10th time in the past 15 minutes.

"I do not think it is necessary for me to take a chosen mate, but I am going along with your plan. The least you can do is cooperate with mine. You want pack unity, give me pack unity."

Beta Robert and Margie exchange looks. Beta Robert starts to say something, but seems to change his mind. He gives Margie a peck on the cheek and then leaves, headed for the packhouse.

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(Beta Robert's POV)

I am completely baffled as to why James cares so much about Lily all of a sudden. For years, he has done everything in his power to avoid her. And for understandable reasons.

If Lily had not been in the woods whoring herself out six years ago, Stephanie would still be here. We raised our daughters better than that, and I cannot blame James for hating Lily. If I lost Margie because of something Margie's sister did, I would hate Margie's sister too.

The only reason that I can tolerate Lily more than others in the pack is that I know that I am equally to blame for Stephanie's death. The rogues that attacked her got through our border security without detection. To do that requires help from someone on the inside, a serious breach in border protocols, or -- most likely--both. No matter what it was, it was ultimately my responsibility. I will carry that guilt around with me until I die.

Sigh.

I do not know why Lily is not here. It is completely disrespectful for her to be absent. Margie mentioned that

+15 BONUS

Lily got hurt earlier, but James is right: with or without a wolf, a fall down a single flight of stairs should not be that big of a deal for a she-wolf.

I can only guess that Lily is faking for attention. In a perfect world, I would ignore Lily and refuse her the attention that she seems to be begging for. Unfortunately, however, James is demanding that she be here.

Before I left to help Nick, I was tempted to assert rank and tell James "no"—I still outrank James until he takes over for Alpha Randall—but I decided not to. The truth is that I expected James to fight us more on the concept of taking a chosen mate. Fated mates are important to werewolves, and I know he had been holding out hope that he might receive a second chance mate.

James took the ultimatum we gave him far better than we all predicted. Margie and I had actually expected that James would push back so much that his parents would relent and give him an extra year. The fact that James is cooperating, this year, and that all he has asked for in exchange are a few minor tweaks to the plan and Lily's attendance... I can deal with that.

I just hope that Lily has a good reason for her behavior. I do not need any further embarrassment or shame cast on my family. I guess I will see for myself when I get to the packhouse.

+15 BONUS

**J** Lady Gwen  Author

" What do you think of James so far? Is he a grieving man in a tough situation, or an unredeemable a&&hole?

What about Lily's family? Is there hope for them?

Or do you feel like it is all too early to tell?

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