

## Lily the Liar

Werewolves heal quickly, but even they can't recover from broken bones overnight, especially if they haven't gone through their first shift. So, when Lily woke up the next morning, her hand was throbbing painfully, her nger was purple and crooked, and her eye was still a bit swollen. Making it worse, her head was pounding from the hit to her face and she was sure she had a concussion.

It wasn't the first time her dad had left her passed out on the floor, and Lily was sure it wouldn't be the last. It never got easier to wake up alone and injured though, it never got less painful to know that her father cared that little about her. She tried to set aside her headache, focusing on the pain in her body instead and what she was going to do about it.

She knew she needed to get to the pack hospital before her bones started healing without being set properly. It might have already been too late with the way her nger looked. She knew from experience that if a werewolf's bones healed before they were properly set and stabilized, they would have to be re-broken. It had happened to her when she was ten. Her father had broken her arm and had only taken her to the hospital two days later.

As soon as she stood up, her stomach revolted, and she had to run to her bathroom to throw up. She definitely had a concussion. Lily was still in her clothes from yesterday and she couldn't face the thought of showering or changing. She couldn't do anything but leave the house wearing her old clothes, which were sweaty and dirty from lying on her bedroom floor all night. She didn't have a car and Sam wouldn't care enough to drive her to the pack hospital, so she would have to walk the one-mile distance in the summer heat to get there.

She wozzily walked down the stairs, trying to be quiet so as not to wake her father, who would still be in bed at that time in the morning. She was surprised to see her brother in the kitchen, making himself some eggs and bacon for breakfast. He looked up from the stove when he heard her walking through the room and his eyes widened when he saw the state she was in. He covered the shock quickly and his eyes returned to the cold and hard glare he reserved for his sister.

"You deserve it, you know," he said to her harshly as she continued towards the front door.

Lily stopped in her tracks, turning back towards the brother who resented her so much.

"Nobody deserves this," she whispered softly, cradling her broken hand to her chest and hating that her voice sounded so weak.

"You do. I wish you had died that day instead of her," he spat at her.

Lily felt tears forming in her eyes, the pain and guilt eating at her. "If I could change it, I would. I wish it had been me," she admitted to him. "I wish that man had taken me and left her alone. I wish that she was safe at home." Tears were owing from her eyes, and she was choking on her sobs, barely about to get the words out.

Sam looked taken aback by her words, but the hatred in his eyes didn't abate. He took a threatening step towards her and lowered his voice to a cruel taunt. "We all wish it had been you. The whole pack wishes you were dead."

His words hit their mark, sending pain through her chest. She turned and ran before he could see any more of her tears. She hated crying in front of her pack, hated showing her weakness and vulnerability. She wiped the tears from her face with her right hand and tried to pull herself together as she walked to the hospital.

Hood River was near the Mt Hood National Forest and was bordered by the Columbia River to the North and Hood River to the East. Mt Hood, with its snow-tipped and pointed peak was visible from the small town, and the mountain combined with the deep green of the surrounding forest gave Hood River a scenic and picturesque quality. The forest was also the perfect cover for werewolves who wanted to shift and run.

The werewolves lived in the north-west section of the town, closer to the tree line, while the homes of the many unaware humans in Hood River lled in the eastern section. The Alpha's house was situated close to the Columbia River and the house's backyard looked onto Wells Island, which Lily liked to kayak to when she got the chance. The island was small, and its beaches were shallow and only accessible by canoe or kayak, making it the perfect place for Lily to get some peace and quiet away from her hateful family and pack.

Lily walked South, away from Alpha Mason's house and towards the center of town. She was getting more and more sore as the movement from her steps jarred her broken hand painfully. At seven o'clock on a Sunday, the town was relatively quiet, but a few werewolves jogged past her on their morning runs, giving her curious but unsympathetic looks. Not one of them stopped and asked if she needed help, even when she stumbled and swayed with dizziness.

By the time she arrived at the pack hospital, she was covered in sweat and feeling horrendously miserable. The hospital was actually just a small unmarked white house that didn't draw any attention from humans in the town. The only staff who worked at the tiny hospital were two doctors, a nurse and a receptionist. Lily walked into the building to find the receptionist, Mrs. Joseph, and the nurse, Miss. Martin, who were both attractive young women, chatting at the front desk. Neither of them looked surprised to see Lily walking into the building-- if anything, they looked irritated at having her there yet again.

"What seems to be the problem this time?" Mrs. Joseph asked Lily condescendingly, giving a cursory glance to Lily's black eye.

"Broken hand and index nger, and probably a concussion as well," Lily replied stonily, refusing to be polite to people who had turned their backs on her with no remorse or guilt.

They chose to think that it was her fault that she always needed treatment, because they refused to believe that it was her father who had been sending her there for years. When she was ten, Lily had told Dr. Hansen and Nurse Martin that it was their Alpha who had been hurting her. They had looked at each other in shock and had left her alone in the examination room for a while. Lily had thought they would help her, but when they came back, they called her a liar and told her to stop looking for attention.

They had led her out to the reception area where Lily's furious father was waiting for her. When confronted with the alleged abuse, he had told the doctor and nurse that she had been hurting herself to try and get sympathy and attention. They of course had believed him. He had repaid Lily's loose lips with bruised ribs and ten whippings from his belt on her back.

Since then, she had never been welcomed back to the hospital with caring sympathy, but with detached coldness and irritation. She had once even overheard Mrs. Joseph refer to her as "Lily the Liar". They never refused to treat her, but Lily could tell they thought she deserved to live with the broken bones, because they believed she was the one causing them. So, Lily only went there when absolutely necessary, preferring to avoid their condescending and disdainful looks. Unfortunately, with a broken hand and nger, she had little choice that day.

"Hmm," Mrs. Joseph responded drily, "I'll have to see if one of the doctors has an opening to see you."

Lily looked around the vacant waiting room, too tired to argue. She chose to sit and wait for one of the doctors to attend to her, knowing she might have to wait a while. The doctors couldn't outright refuse her treatment, but they sure as hell could make her wait for it. Considering Lily had already had to go over twelve hours without treatment though, she thought she had waited enough.

She had been waiting for about half an hour, during which time no other patients had come into the building. She felt her nausea begin to rise again, but with nothing left in her stomach, she could only dry heave until her stomach settled. When it finally passed, she looked up to find Dr. Hansen and Dr. Crofton looking down at her with raised eyebrows. Dr. Hansen was an old and grumpy man, who looked as if he was close to death with his sunken eyes and pale skin. Dr. Crofton was a much younger man, probably in his late thirties, and if he were a better person, Lily would be tempted to call him handsome.

Dr. Crofton, who was somewhat kinder than his colleague, sighed heavily and gestured for her to follow him to his exam room. She stumbled after him, feeling more and more dizzy. She fell onto the hospital bed in his room, not able to stand up for any longer. She had momentarily forgotten about her hand, so she yelped in pain when she used it to try and sit up.

"I need you to get into a hospital gown. Do you need the nurse to help you?" the doctor asked, clearly seeing that she was struggling.

Lily hesitated. She didn't want Miss. Martin's help, but she couldn't deny that she needed it. "I need help," she said softly, admitting defeat.

He left the room, and soon afterwards the nurse stormed in, obviously irritated at having to help Lily. She roughly took off Lily's shoes and jeans, but after she pulled off her shirt, Lily heard her gasp. Lily turned to her to see the nurse's gaze on her back, which held scars from multiple whippings over the years.

Miss. Martin swallowed loudly before quietly asking, "How did you get those?"

"Isn't it obvious? I whipped myself with a belt because I was just looking for some attention," Lily replied snidely.

"Lily, I-" she started, sounding guilty.

"I don't want to hear it," Lily interrupted. She was in no mood to chat with one of the people who had made her wait unnecessarily to get treated by a doctor.

Miss. Martin nodded and stayed quiet while she helped Lily into a light blue hospital gown, that time being surprisingly gentle and careful. It was the first kindness that she had shown Lily in a long time, but the gesture seemed empty after so many years of cruelty.

"I'll send the doctor in," she said to Lily, her voice lacking its usual sharpness.

Dr. Crofton tested her for a concussion, shining a light in her eyes and asking her simple questions. Lily was pretty sure she got the date wrong and wasn't surprised when he confirmed that she had a concussion from the head trauma. He took X-rays of Lily's hand and they showed that most of the bones had started healing properly, which was a nice surprise. However, her index nger had to be re-broken to set it correctly. He gave her some morphine for the pain and quickly and efficiently broke the bone. She barely even felt it thanks to the drug and her familiarity with pain. He splinted the nger and put her hand in a removable cast.

"It will take about a week for the bones to heal completely and then you can take the cast and splint off yourself. Until then don't use that hand at all. Luckily, the effects of the concussion will be gone by tomorrow because we heal quickly," he told her atly.

"Okay, thank you," Lily responded. He may be a jerk, but he did help her after all.

She tried to get up from the bed, but he stopped her by placing his hand on her shoulder. "Lily...It's time that you stopped this. Maybe you need to see someone who can help you with whatever it is that you're going through."

"Excuse me?"

"I think you should see a therapist," he told her bluntly.

"I don't need a f\*\*\*\*\*g therapist," she replied angrily. "What I need is a doctor who believes his patient instead of his Alpha."

He sighed audibly. "Lily, you need to give this up."

Lily chose to ignore him, knowing that nothing she said would change his stubborn mind. She got off the bed, grabbed her clothes and stormed into the bathroom to get dressed. She was struggling to pull on her jeans when there was a soft knock at the door.

"Lily? I thought you might need help." Miss. Martin's voice came through the door.

Lily hated to admit she needed help but knew it would be stupid to refuse it. She opened the door, letting the nurse into the bathroom to help her change.

"Thanks," Lily reluctantly offered once she was back into her sweaty and dirty clothes.

"It was a pleasure," the woman said sincerely.

Her new attitude towards Lily was confusing, making Lily narrow her eyes at the nurse's back as they walked back to the waiting room.

"Is someone going to pick you up?" the nurse asked her before Lily could make her exit.

"Sure," Lily lied. No need to emphasize to others just how little her family cared for her.

She left the building, wondering if she should call Amanda or Eli so she did actually have a lift home. She quickly nixed the idea, knowing that she didn't want either of them to see her with a black eye and a broken hand. She started walking home, hating how hot the day was becoming. She could feel the sweat gathering under her cast and dripping down her forehead. She couldn't wait to get home and have a shower, even though it would be difficult to do without getting the cast wet.

Luckily, Lily only had to work at the coffee shop the following day, so she could spend that day resting. She knew she would need hours of sleep to recuperate and recover, especially after walking home. She had only been walking for a minute or two though, when a blue Honda pulled up next to her and she heard her name being called. She stopped and saw Miss Martin waving at her.

"Let me give you a lift home," she insisted. Lily started shaking her head, but the nurse didn't let up. "Please get in the car Lily. You have a concussion and you need to rest."

Lily sighed but got in the car. She was too tired to refuse the help. The ride to her house was awkward, with only the music playing on the radio breaking the silence. It was a short trip to her house in a car, and the air conditioning had been exactly what Lily needed--not that she would admit it to Miss. Martin.

"Here you go," the nurse said as they pulled into Lily's driveway.

"Thanks," she said grudgingly, but didn't get out of the car immediately. "Why are you being so nice to me all of a sudden?" she asked, unable to hold in her curiosity.

Miss. Martin looked down at her lap, looking ashamed. "When I saw those scars on your back, I couldn't ignore what was in front of me anymore," she admitted. "The truth is that I was too scared to go against the Alpha. I just couldn't bring myself to believe you over him, knowing the power he holds. I'm so sorry, Lily. We should have helped you." She met Lily's gaze, her eyes bright with unshed tears. "I should have helped you."

"Yes, you should have," Lily responded coldly.

She got out of the car and ran into the house and up to her room, thankful that her brother and father seemed to be out. She opened onto her bed, too physically and emotionally drained to do anything but sleep. She didn't know how to react to Miss Martin's apology. The nurse seemed sincere, but it was just too late for apologies. It was too late to undo the damage she had done by not believing Lily needed help. It was just too damn late.

Miss Martin's apology may have been sincere, but it didn't change the fact that she, like almost everyone else in the pack, had turned against and abandoned a nine-year old girl.

In three days, Lily would be turning eighteen, and all she had to show for her life was her relationship with Amanda, Eli and Bella. Other than that, there was nobody and nothing in her life she could depend on. She wasn't even sure if she would be able to depend on her mate, whoever he turned out to be. Lily was losing hope that her life would ever get better, and one apology wouldn't change the fact that she was starting to lose the will to carry on.

With every beating her father gave her, a piece of Lily seemed to disappear. She wasn't sure how many more times it would take before there was nothing left of her at all.