

Mated in the Shadow of My Sister

Chapter 7: Training Protocol

(Lily POV)

I watch as my father parks his SUV car and gets out. I can tell that he is annoyed to be called to the border at this time of night.

“What seems to be the issue?” my father asks the three guards after he enters the check-in station building. His tone is gruff, annoyed, and consistent with his typical no-nonsense approach.

Marcus steps forward, points in my direction, and hands my father my driver’s license. “I am sorry to have bothered you, Beta Robert. This female here is requesting entry, but this is the identification card that she handed us. Obviously, this female is not your daughter, Sir, but she insisted that we call you.”

"Do you always honor the demands of strangers with false identification?" my father asks without even looking at me or the license. He is clearly frustrated.

I have to wonder how long these three have been working at the border; my father's frustration level should have been predictable to anyone who had served at the border for a decent amount of time.

"Well... no, Sir... but ---"

"But what, Marcus?" my father cuts in. "What does your training tell you that you are supposed to do in this situation?"

Marcus looks down. "We are supposed to run the identification card through the computer processor and then contact the officer in charge with the computer results as well as our findings and suspicions."

"Did you run the identification card?"

Marcus gulps loudly. "N-n-no, Sir."

"Am I the officer in charge?"

"No, Sir."

“What about her car? Did you follow protocol as to that?”

“W-w-we had her park her car and exit the vehicle, Sir.”

"Is that all that you were supposed to do?"

"I-I am not sure, Sir."

"After concluding that she was an imposter, did you run her plates? Did you have a wolf scent it for explosives or other occupants?"

"No, no Sir."

For some reason, Joey --who has never been known to properly gauge the temperature of a room-- decides to jump in and defend his friend. This confirms for me that they are all new to the border assignment. "Beta Robert, we just thought that because she was claiming to be your - --"

My father spins 90 degrees on his heel and looks at Joey and Aiden angrily. "Oh, so it wasn't just Marcus who forgot the training protocol? Were all three of you thinking that skipping the processing procedures and calling me instead of the officer in charge was the right thing to do?"

Now all three guards look down in shame, saying nothing. Seeing that they have no valid explanation, my father gets angrier and angrier.

"Look up! Now!" my father yells. He points to a large portrait of Stephanie that is hanging on the wall. "LOOK AT HER PICTURE!" There is a very subtle shake in my father's voice and hand. I know what is causing it, and I am starting to regret asking the guards to call him.

"In case you need a reminder, border security is one of the most important pack duties we have, if not THE most important. A lack of proper border security is what got my daughter -- YOUR FUTURE LUNA -- killed. Following protocol and the chain of command is not just a respect issue; it is a safety issue.

What if someone came on to pack land demanding to see the alpha, luna, or the alpha heir? Or one of our other critical pack members? What if this 'unknown' female here had meant to cause harm by luring one of those wolves to the border? Or what if she had been sent here as a distraction by the enemy? What if she had rogues hiding in her vehicle?

Did ANY of you bother to think about WHY we have protocols in place?

You do not know what you do not know. You do not know the enemy. You do not have the ability to determine who is a safety risk and who is not. Your responsibility is to follow the protocols. Nothing less, nothing more.

None of you have authority to decide when it is acceptable to deviate from the training protocols. You are NEVER to ignore training protocols. You are also NEVER to obey the demands of unknown persons or wolves, especially if you have reason to believe their identification has been falsified."

My father is silent for a few moments, letting his angry words sink in. The tension in the room is off the charts.

After a while, almost in a whisper, he adds, "For you all to make such critical errors the night before the anniversary of my daughter's death...." Because the guards are obediently staring at Stephanie's portrait, they do not see the tears in my father's eyes as he says that last part... but I do.

I feel a sharp sting in my heart. I know Stephanie's death anniversary is hard on my father, and I hate seeing my father cry.

As much as others in the pack blame me for Stephanie's death, I know my father blames himself. As the Beta of the pack, border security has always been one of my father's chief responsibilities. The rogue attack that killed Stephanie occurred on pack territory, after rogues were able to somehow breach our borders.

My father reacted to Stephanie's death by becoming an absolute stickler for following protocols. Any deviation from those rules he takes as a personal insult and failure.

Eventually, my father looks over at me for the first time. He glances at my driver's license, rolls his eyes, and then turns back to the guards. "I will take the 'imposter' with me. I will come back for the vehicle after the memorial events tomorrow. I recommend you three get as much sleep as you can tonight, because you will be performing clean-up duty at tomorrow's events, and at the packhouse for the next three weeks. After that, you will be sent to remedial training before you are allowed to return to regular duty."

With that, my father walks towards the exit. He gestures for me to follow him, which I do. We get in his car silently, and he starts the engine.

Once we are a few blocks from the pack border, my father glances at me out of the corner of his eye.

"You told them to call me knowing it was against protocol, did you not?"

"I did."

"Did you do so to annoy them or me?"

"Them. I got irritated with them for giving me a hard time and not recognizing me. But I am honestly surprised that they listened to me and ignored the other protocols."

"I'm not. I told Alpha Randall those idiots could not be trusted to put together a ham sandwich. I got overruled. I suppose I should thank you for proving me right."

"I am sorry that I did so tonight of all nights."

"Don't be. Since Stephanie died, there is no good night."