

# Mated in the Shadow of My Sister

## Chapter 8: Daddy's Girl

(Lily POV)

The rest of the drive to the pack house was eerily silent.

After my father and I arrived at the pack house, my father quickly exited the vehicle and headed to his office, leaving me on my own. I timidly and cautiously entered the beta suite, but I was relieved to find that my mother was already in bed. I decided to go directly to my room and try to sleep as well.

Unfortunately, I ended up tossing and turning all night. The look on my father's face when talking to the guards continued to haunt me. When I did sleep, I had nightmares. Strangely, Rose seemed restless too, but other than briefly wishing me a happy birthday after it hit midnight, she did not say anything.

I think the main thing that provoked my nightmares and kept me up was that my heart ached for my father. I knew that I wanted to help him with his pain and ease his suffering, but I was not sure what I could do or say to make things better. It has already been six years. If time has not helped heal his heart, what could I do? The truth is, I am not Stephanie and I never will be. The only thing I have ever known how to do for my father is to try to stay out of his way.

At least for my mother, I can serve as a literal punching bag to help her relieve her grief. And for others in the pack, I can serve as both a literal and metaphorical punching bag. But, I am nothing to my father: my father has neglected me and ignored the abuse I suffer from others, but he has never directly participated in any of abuse.

Perhaps that is one reason his pain upsets me more than the pain of everyone else. He is the least awful amongst my current tormentors, and I can sometimes lie to myself that he does not know or agree with how much I have suffered.

I know that it probably seems strange that my heart aches for him at all, given that he is someone who, for the most part, could care less about me. However, please understand that for my own sanity, I have chosen to remember and hold on to the good times in my childhood.

Of course, there is also the fact that... regardless of how my father currently feels about me... I have always been --and will probably always be-- a daddy's girl. It is just part of who I am.

Since I was in diapers, I have looked up to my father and considered him to be my superhero. Before Stephanie died, I never saw an ounce of weakness in him. He was my strength and my rock. I always had a strong desire to make him proud of me. He was always

the first one I ran to when I got a good grade on a test, or when I drew a picture I thought he might like.

And ...before Stephanie died... he was always the first one to dry my tears when I got hurt or to give me reassuring praise when I felt down. Even though I knew Stephanie was his favorite... even though I knew Stephanie's accomplishments would always be greater, and that he would always be more proud of her... those little things mattered to me. I lived for those moments.

Sigh.

By 5:30 am, I gave up on any hope of further sleep. Stephanie's first remembrance event was not scheduled until 11 am, so I knew I had a little bit of time. Eager to take advantage of that time and also avoid my mother, I took a quick shower, packed a small backpack, and headed out of the house.

Predictably, my feet led me to the waterfall that I had shifted in front of six years ago. I have come here at least twice a year since Stephanie died, usually on her birthday and death anniversary. The waterfall brings me an odd sense of peace. As beautiful as it is, I do not know anyone else who comes here. Perhaps that is why I like it so much.

I found a flat rock and sat down. I then took a legal pad of paper and a pen out of my backpack.

It probably sounds weird, but I am not always sure if the Moon Goddess can hear me when I pray to her silently in my head. So, about seven years ago, I began writing down my prayers. Once I am done writing them, I will seal them, kiss the paper, and then burn the prayer with a silent wish that the Moon Goddess pays attention. I do not know whether praying this way actually makes a difference, but it does make me feel better.

Wiping a few tears from my eyes, I began writing.

*Dear Moon Goddess,*

*Here I am, back at the pack once again. Today marks six years since Stephanie died. I know that I have asked you for a lot over the years, and you have usually provided... although not always in the ways that I expected.*

*James and most of the pack still believe that I am the reason that Stephanie died. For years, I have dreamed about everyone finding out the truth about what happened that night... but I have never dared to ask you to help make that a reality.*

*In fact, I have never even talked to you about what happened that night.*

*I suspect you know why I have avoided the subject.*

*The truth is, I have been a coward. I have told myself over and over again that James spread baseless rumors and that I did nothing wrong.*

*I did not want to face the possibility that maybe, just maybe, everyone is right and Stephanie's death was my fault. Today, however, I am willing to face the truth.*

*I never should have prayed that you stop Stephanie from continuing to hurt me. I realize that now.*

*Please know that I never would have asked you for to stop her if I knew it would mean the end of her life. I would have just continued to deal with it. Please, if you are with her, tell her that I am sorry.*

*I accept that what has happened to me since she died has been a way of punishing me, and I understand. The problem is that I am not the only one being punished.*

*I do not know how many more times that I can watch my father break down in tears because he misses Stephanie so much. My father never did anything to deserve this.*

*I may not have been Stephanie's biggest fan, and I may think that this pack has lost its mind half the time, but there is no denying that Stephanie was loved and valued.*

*If there is a way to turn back time, I beg you to ignore my prayer that day... or to at least take me instead of Stephanie.*

*If that is not possible, I beg you to accept my apology for my wrongdoings and help bring peace and happiness back to this pack. Please especially help my father and my family find peace. Please help the pack move on to bigger and greater things. Hell, even though I do not like him, I ask that you please even bring James a new mate who will love him and appreciate him in a way Stephanie never could.*

*It is time for the pack to move on... even if that means moving on without me.*

*If you will honor these requests, I will do everything in my power to be the best she-wolf that I can be. Rose tells me that we are special, and that we have a unique destiny in front of us. I am willing to follow that destiny wherever you want it to lead us... but please, do not let anyone else suffer any more because of me.*

*With love,*

*Lily*

As I seal the letter, kiss it, and prepare to burn it, Rose speaks to me in the link. "You know that you sound a little crazy in that letter. What happened to the strong human I have been living with the last several years, who knows that Stephanie's death was Stephanie's fault and only Stephanie's fault?"

I sighed. "It is easy to tell myself that when I am away from the pack and not having to deal with the consequences. It is a lot harder to believe that I am blameless when everyone around me is

crying and upset all the time. You saw my dad last night. That nearly broke me. He is still hurting so much."

"That does not make any of it your fault," Rose protests.

"Rose, the day before Stephanie died, I prayed that the Moon Goddess stop Stephanie from continuing to hurt me."

"She was not hurting you, Lily. She was torturing you. There is nothing wrong with you praying that it stop."

"There is if it cost Stephanie her life."

"Lily, you are not giving the Moon Goddess enough credit. You are smarter and stronger than this. You need to stop with the emotional vomit and ---"

Suddenly Rose stops talking through the link. She is pacing back in forth in my head. I have no idea what is going on, until the overwhelming scent of vanilla and coffee beans hits my nose.

"Mate! Lily, our mate is here! Mate, mate, mate, mate, mate!!!"

I stand, dust the ashes off of my jeans, and turn around. My heart drops when I recognize the werewolf standing about 200 feet away from me.

This has to be a joke. This cannot be happening.

## **Chapter 9: The Power of the Mate Bond**