

Chapter 0044

(James POV)

My parents were not happy with my decision to leave our pack and confront Dr. Hyder in Red River, but they ultimately chose to not try and stop me. They simply demanded that I take a few guards with me as a precaution. Given that Luke was still unwilling to shift or talk to me --and given that the drive would require going through some areas known to be populated by rogues-- I agreed.

The drive to Red River took about five hours. That gave me time to think about how I would approach Dr. Hyder and what I would say when I got there. It also gave me some additional time to think about why I was going to talk to him at all.

Unfortunately, by the time that we arrived at the Red River pack, I neither had a prepared speech nor answers for why I had felt so compelled to come. Instead, I continued to feel completely, utterly confused. Those were feelings that were quickly becoming my "norm" lately. In fact, literally the only thing that I felt sure of was that coming here --and, in turn, trying to find Lily-- were somehow the right things to do.

How wrong I turned out to be.

Before I left, my father called ahead and got permission from Alpha Brett for me to enter Red River territory. That allowed us to get through border security fairly quickly, and the guards directed us to head immediately to the

packhouse and up to Alpha Brett's office. I was told that Dr. Hyder was already up there, waiting for me.

As we headed to the packhouse, I found it sort-of strange that a Red River guard was escorting us, but I assumed that was just an added security measure that Alpha Brett had implemented for all guests.

I was more nervous about seeing Dr. Hyder than Alpha Brett. I had known Dr. Hyder most of my life, but it had always shocked me that he and my parents were friends. Dr. Hyder was the sort of wolf that could make you pee your pants simply by looking at you. He had a reputation for punishing his enemies and killing wolves without remorse or hesitation. He had been the alpha of one of the most powerful packs in the nation until he took an early retirement so that he could focus on his passion for medicine. I had heard a few wolves joke that Dr. Hyder wanted to be a doctor because being an alpha did not give him enough power; he wanted to be a god.

Alpha Brett was quite a bit different than Dr. Hyder. He was just a couple of years older than me, and I knew him from alpha conferences that I had attended with my father. I liked him a lot. He was really down to earth, and we used to pal around at alpha conferences together. Despite only being in the alpha position at Red River for three years, he had already established a reputation for being a good and fair leader. Had it not been for me spending the last six years of my life in practical hibernation while grieving for Stephanie, I might have even wanted to count Alpha Brett as a friend and mentor.

When we arrived at our destination, I tried to set my nerves aside. I entered Alpha Brett's office alone, leaving my guards and the Red River Guard standing outside in the hall.

When I walked in, Alpha Brett and Dr. Hyder were sitting together, with Alpha Brett sitting behind his desk and Dr. Hyder sitting in a guest chair right in front of him. Neither of them had a friendly or inviting looks on their faces.

"Well, well. If it isn't the man of the hour himself, Mr. James Anderson," Dr. Hyder said in a mocking tone.

It had already been a long day, and after the long drive, I was not in the mood for games. I decided to skip the normal greetings and just cut to the chase.

"I am sorry, Dr. Hyder, but have I done something to offend you? The last time we saw each other, I believed that we were on good terms. However, after your words with my father earlier and that comment just now, I have to wonder if something has happened."

"You could say that," Dr. Hyder responded.

Alpha Brett stood up before I could inquire further. "James, I am going to leave you and my uncle alone to talk. However, before I go, I want to make a few things clear."

Uncle? How had I missed that Dr. Hyder was Alpha Brett's uncle?

Alpha Brett continued. "As you know, the relationship between the Red River Pack and the West Mountain Pack goes back generations. And in fact, your pack has

historically been one of our closest allies. When I granted permission for your visit this evening, I did so with those relationships in mind.

However, three hours ago, my uncle shared some information with me that I was not previously aware of. You must understand that Red River Pack is a pack that believes that morality transcends business interests. We believe in not only talking the talk, but also walking the walk. For example, regardless of alliances and history, the 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.

You should inform your father that I am terminating the peace and trade treaties between Red River Pack and West Mountain Pack effective today. I will send formal written confirmation of that tomorrow."

My jaw hit the floor. What is he talking about? I had not anticipated any of this. "I am sorry, Alpha Brett, but I have no idea what you are referring to."

"Don't you?" Alpha Brett asked me suspiciously.

"No, I really do not."

"It is a shame that I do not believe you," Alpha Brett

responded as he stood and walked towards the door. “
When you are done talking to my uncle, I will have a guard
escort you back to the border. I know it is a long drive back,
but under the circumstances, I hope you can understand
why I am not in a position to offer you and your men rooms
for the night.”


He paused, as though he was debating with himself.

“One more thing. Lily Brogan is an amazing she-wolf. You
will come to regret your actions towards her, and when you
do, you should know that I will be watching with popcorn.”

Good day.”

Before I could say anything else —or even process the full
ramifications of what he just said or what had just happened
— Alpha Brett left, leaving me alone with Dr. Hyder.

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