

Chapter 0077

(Several hours earlier)

(Lily POV)

After the interaction with James and Brady at the luau, I knew that I needed to clear my head and get some rest. Unfortunately, my heart was racing and nothing I tried could calm my nerves. Seeing James had absolutely affected me, just like I was afraid it might.

It was not that I wanted to be with James; I didn't. It was just that... the mate bond is hard to ignore. Even though I rejected James and he accepted the rejection, the lingering impacts of the (broken) bond continue to mess with my head and my heart in ways that I do not want it to.

I was about to try taking a sleeping pill when I heard a knock on my hotel room door. I looked at the clock and saw that it was 2 a.m. in the morning. Who could possibly be at my room at this hour?

I wrapped a robe around my nightgown and approached the door. "Who is it?" I asked without opening it.

"Lily, it's me," I heard Brady say. ¹

I quickly opened the door, only to find Brady leaning against the door jam. He was quite obviously drunk and his hair and clothes were a mess, which was a contrast to his normally

put-together appearance.

"Brady? What happened to you?!?" I exclaimed as I ushered him into my room.

I watched Brady stumble inside, and I could not help but wonder how much Brady had to drink to get to this point. This was a human resort, and as far as I knew, wolfsbane cocktails —the kinds of drinks wolves usually drink when they want to get wasted— were not available.

Without answering my question, Brady closed the door to my room. He then got a strange look on his face as he approached me, grabbed my face with both of his hands, and then began kissing me as though his life depended on it.

At first, Brady's kiss surprised me. But then, I felt myself slowly beginning to melt into it. I could feel a part of me hesitating —the same part of me that was confused and struggling with James being here—, but a bigger part of me wanted to celebrate this feeling of finally being wanted and desired.

Eventually, that bigger part of me won out, and I began to kiss Brady back. I could not help but enjoy the sensation of his soft lips on my own. When I moaned and he thrust his tongue into my mouth, I tasted the whiskey on his breath... and I strangely found it to be more of a turn-on than a turn-off.

Brady slowly walked me back to the bed, and then climbed on top of me as he continued to passionately kiss me. A

voice in the back of my head —not Rose— encouraged me to be careful, but I ignored it. Instead, I continued to savor the feeling of Brady's lips on mine. My hands danced along Brady's chest muscles as he wove his fingers through my hair. He then started to gently trace his hands south down my neck, across my shoulders, down my arms, and onto my waist.

It was only when I felt Brady reach for the tie of my robe that I finally snapped out of my Brady-trance. I broke the kiss and gently pushed him back. "Brady..."

Instead of responding to me, he removed his hands from the tie of my robe, rolled onto his side, and hugged me tightly to his chest.

"Brady..." I whispered again.

"Sshhhhhh... Just... just let me hold you, okay? I just want to hold you."

I nodded, relaxing my head onto his chest. Soon, both of us fell asleep.

Three hours later, I woke up. I was still in Brady's arms, but we must have switched positions as we slept, because my back was now against his front and we were in a spooning position. I tried to gently free myself, but my movements only led Brady to tighten his grip on my waist.

"Rose?"

"Morning, Lily."

"I am really confused, Rose."

"Me, too, Lily. Me, too."

"Is that why you did not say anything when Brady kissed me?"

"Yes. James and Luke are our fated mates, and I want us to be with them. At the same time, I do not know if we can be. I do not know if James has changed enough, and I do not know if the pack is safe for us yet. I want to believe that James and the pack have changed, but I can't be sure. What I do know is that Brady is good for you. And Kalen is kind-of cute, too."

"I thought picking a mate was an easy thing for a wolf," I half-teased Rose.

"It normally is. The game changes, however, when your fated mate's human half has spent most of his life believing he was fated to, and in love with, your human's sister," Rose responded.

I was a little surprised by Rose's bluntness, but I also appreciated that I was not the only one of us feeling confused.

"I don't think I can forgive James, Rose."

"I don't know if I can forgive him either, Lily," Rose



responded sadly.

"What do we do about our meeting with him tomorrow?" I ask her.

"Let's go and see what James has to say. That will help us make a decision about the future."

"What do we do about Brady?"

"We need to talk to him, too."

"What do we say?"

"I don't know."

I sighed. So much for clarity. I stared up at the ceiling for a while, until I finally found myself falling back asleep.

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