

## Chapter 0038

"Why, Jane? Why would you scale back Stephanie's memorial and take her pictures down? Please tell me why!!" Margie pleads as tears start to fall down her cheeks.

"Dr. Miller told us that James needs to avoid stress as much as possible, and ---"

"And you and Randall thought that erasing the memory of my daughter —his Goddess-chosen mate and the female that he has loved his whole life— would somehow ease his stress?"

"No, Margie. We do not want to erase Stephanie's memory. Please, just hear me out. You know that we all love and miss Stephanie, but we have been grieving her almost obsessively for years. At some point, we all have to move on with our lives."

"It is easy for you to talk about moving on with your life when you have never had to deal with the death of a child!" Margie screams.

Margie's comment strikes me to my core, but I know I need to finish this conversation. Randall and I talked about this at length.

"Margie, I thought you were okay with the pack starting to move on. It was you and Robert's idea to make James take

a chosen luna..."

"Because we knew he would never do it! And then we would get to pick someone that Stephanie would have approved of, and someone who would be willing to continue to honor her memory! We were afraid that if we waited any longer, James might find a second chance mate who would want all signs of Stephanie removed!"

"Oh, Margie. That is not what we thought you were doing this for..."

"Who cares what you thought?" she snapped. "We were trying to be the bigger people. We were trying to do right by the pack. That does not mean that we wanted to forget our daughter or pretend like she was never born!!!!"

I look at Margie sympathetically. My heart is breaking for her. [4](#)

"Margie, I do not want to diminish your suffering. I know how hard this has been for you. You are right that I have never experienced the loss of a child. It's just that... I have to think of my son's welfare too. We do not know how healthy it is for James —and all of us, really— to continue to have so many reminders of her everywhere ---"

"So, what? You think if we take down her pictures and scale back her memorial events it will make the pain of her death go away? Let me tell you something, Jane: the pain will not go away for me! IT WILL NEVER GO AWAY! Even if we scale back her memorial and take down her pictures, it does

not change the fact that she lived and that her life was important!!"

"Exactly, Margie. That is my point. We do not need all of the reminders and the big, showy events! Our memories of her will always be in our hearts. Whether we have pictures everywhere or whether we have large memorials does not change the fact that she lived and she had a great life that impacted a lot of people."

Margie wipes more tears from her face. "By taking down the pictures and scaling back her memorial events, you are saying that Stephanie is no longer as important to this pack as she used to be." 1


"No, Margie," I plead. "That is not what I am saying at all."

Margie wiped the last of her tears away, and then looked at me with a steely look on her face.

"I want the memorial events to go back to how they were, and how they have always been. And I want all of the pictures to go back up as well," Margie announced, in a tone of voice suggesting that she was ordering me not asking me.

"Margie, I am afraid we cannot do that. Randall and I have already talked, and we think it is time –"

"YOU OWE ME, JANE. Do not forget that, because I have not. I do not like playing that card, but I will if I have to. You know as well as I do that James would not be here but for me. You know what I sacrificed for him. You owe me, and

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you will fix this.”

I covered my face with my hands as the familiar and overwhelming guilt took root in my gut. She is right. She knows it, and I know it.

I sit down and try to come up with some other alternative. I come up empty.

Taking a deep breath, I looked at her again. “Ok, Margie. I will fix it. We will not scale back the memorial events and all of the pictures will go back up.”

“Thank you,” she said coldly as she stomped out of the room.

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## Chapter 0039

(Margie POV)

After Jane agreed to back off, I stomped out of the hospital and headed straight back to the packhouse. A few pack members tried to greet me as I walked by, but I ignored them. I was so angry at Jane that I would have enjoyed spitting fire at her if I was a dragon. Heck, I was so angry at Jane that I was half-tempted to hire a dragon.

I have tried very hard to forgive her for what she did. Not today, but before. It has been 27 years, but sometimes the pain feels just as fresh as it did the day that it all happened.

I know Jane still feels a lot of guilt, but after she tried to scale back Stephanie's memorial, I have to wonder if she feels guilty enough. After what she did —and after what she took from me— she should know that I am the LAST person that she should be messing with.

Jane knows how important Stephanie was to me. How important Stephanie still is to me. Don't get me wrong; I love my other pups too. Well... mostly. I definitely love Nick. Lily is a bit of a complicated situation for me, as you might imagine. <sup>3</sup>

Regardless of how I feel about my other two pups, I will admit that I have always favored Stephanie. But, you have to understand: Stephanie was my rainbow; my present

under the sun for all the pain that I had suffered. I often do not understand some of the choices that the Moon Goddess makes, but Stephanie was an answer to my prayers. Before I found out that I was pregnant with Stephanie, I had concluded that the Moon Goddess hated me. I was sure that I had done something wrong, either in this life or a prior one, to earn her ire.

When I found out that I was pregnant with Stephanie --and so quickly at that-- it felt like a blessing. It was like the Moon Goddess was telling me that she had not given up on me, that she was not angry with me, and that things were going to be okay.

I vowed, from the moment that I found out that I was pregnant, that I was going to honor her blessing. I would give my pup the best life, and I would make sure that he or she wanted for nothing.

When I found out that my pup would be a girl, that is when everything in my mind really clicked into place. My prior suffering now made sense: it had to happen, to allow me to conceive a mate for the future alpha of our pack. Jane's pup and my pup would be mated. It would be perfect.

I knew my theory was a little bit premature, but I told Jane about it anyway. Seeing the joy and hope in my face, Jane agreed with me that our pups would most likely be mates. Jane's reaction confirmed for me that I was on the right track. I felt honored and blessed to be carrying the pack's next Luna.

Robert wanted to have a big family, so we tried to have more pups after Stephanie was born. Unfortunately, we struggled once again to conceive. I was disappointed, but it gave me even more reason to pour everything that I had into Stephanie.

Then, when Stephanie was around five years old, Robert's brother and sister-in-law died. They left behind a young son, Nick, who was about six months older than Stephanie. We immediately adopted Nick and began raising him as our own.

Our family was small, but in my mind it was perfect. Our daughter would be the future Luna and our adopted son, Nick—who had beta blood thanks to Robert's brother—would be the future Beta.

And then... somehow... I found myself pregnant for the third time. I had mixed feelings this time. In a way, I knew that the pup was a blessing. On the other hand, I felt like I had moved beyond the baby stage and I was not excited to go back to diapers and late-night feedings. Nevertheless, Lily was born, and Robert and I both loved and cared for her. 1

However, I just could not connect with Lily the same way that I had connected with Stephanie, and Lily had no grand destiny that I had to prepare her for like the one that her siblings had laid out for them. So, I sort of just went through the motions with her.

Maybe that is why Lily acted out. If I had spent more time

with her... if I had tried to love her like I loved Stephanie... would she have been whoring herself out in the woods looking for love in all the wrong places? Would she have put herself in a situation in which Stephanie had to go and rescue her in the middle of the night?

Is it, ultimately, my fault that Stephanie —my greatest blessing— died?


I admit that I have physically abused Lily on more than one occasion since Stephanie died. I also admit that I probably should not have. But... Lily looks so much like me when I was her age. She even has my bright green eyes and my reddish-brown hair. Sometimes, when I am lashing out at her, I am not sure who I am really lashing out at: Lily, Stephanie's murderer, or myself.

After the beatings, I strangely do feel better... but I have mixed feelings about whether Lily deserves the abuse.

I think that is why I reached out to Dr. Hyder a couple of years ago, when I found out that Lily had applied to his medical program. It is against pack protocol to make that kind of call without first going through our alpha, but I consider Dr. Hyder somewhat of a friend. After all, he was there on the worst night of my life 27 years ago.

I begged Dr. Hyder to accept Lily into his program as a personal favor to me. I had to ask, because I did not know if I could continue to look at Lily's face every day, and I knew if I did, the beatings would only get worse as my rage



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increased. Lily having an excuse to leave my home and this pack was a good thing, I thought.

I was so glad that Dr. Hyder listened to me.

But now... having watched what happened during Stephanie's last memorial event... I wonder if I should have gone further. Perhaps I should have begged both Dr. Hyder and Alpha Randall to prohibit Lily from ever coming back to the West Mountain Pack. I think things would have been much better if I had.

 **Lady Gwen**  Author

*" Next update on Sunday! If you are enjoying the story, please feel free to show your support with gems and reviews! :)"*

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