

Chapter 0051

(James POV)

As my mother got to the end of her story, I was not sure what I should think or how I should feel.

Should I be feeling angry with my mother? Disappointed? Disgusted? Even though it happened 27 years ago, I knew that I should probably be feeling all of those things.

Watching Nick's face across the desk from me, I could tell he was feeling many of those emotions.

Me, though? To my surprise, all I really felt was.... numb.

In a way, I did find it amazing how a single story ---about something that happened before I was even born, no less--- could explain so much of my life and yet raise so many more questions. I think I felt numb partly because a big part of me was in shock and not ready to confront all of those questions yet.

I have always known that Margie had an unusual amount of control over my parents, and I have also always known how desperately my parents worked to avoid offending her and Beta Robert. However, I had always assumed that my parents behaved the way that they did because my parents were compassionate people who valued Robert and Margie's opinions. I had no idea that the real reason was

because my mother was consumed with guilt for killing Margie and Robert's first son.

Now that I knew the truth, I could not help but wonder how far-reaching Margie's control over my parents –and therefore me– really went. Was Margie the one that Dr. Hyder was warning me about? Had Margie been manipulating things behind the scenes?

I dismissed the thought almost as soon as I had it. Questions about how much of my life Margie may have manipulated... especially with respect to my life with Stephanie.. were at the top of the list of questions that I was not ready to confront.

Thankfully, as I replayed Alpha Brett's words in my head, my next thoughts offered me a brief distraction.

"No, it does not fit."

"What?"

Nick and my mother both looked at me in disbelief. That is when I realized I said my last comment out loud.

"Sorry, I did not mean to say that out loud."

"What does not fit?" Nick asked, not letting it go.

I sighed.

"Alpha Brett indicated that he is ending the treaties because his pack does not condone the abuse of females and the

use of the mate bond for torture. The story about Tyler does not involve either of those things. Either there are pieces of the puzzle that we are still missing, or Dr. Hyder wanted me to ask about Tyler for some reason completely unrelated to the reason that the treaties were broken."

"What else could there be?" my mother asked. "I have told you the entire story."

"No, there is something else you aren't telling me, or there are things that you do not know. Either way, there has to be more."

Before my mother could say anything else, I suddenly remembered the second thing that Dr. Hyder said on his way out the door.

"Hey, Nick, when is your sister's birthday?"

Nick gave me another strange look. "January 23, but you already know that."

"No, not Stephanie's. Lily's."

"Oh. Well... I am not sure."

"What do you mean that you are not sure? Don't you all celebrate it every year? Get her a cake, give her some presents, sing happy birthday, that sort of thing?"

Nick shook his head. "No, we have not celebrated Lily's birthday in a long time. I do not remember the last time that we celebrated it."

"Why not? I know your family celebrates birthdays. I have been there when you have celebrated your birthday and your parents' birthdays and Jenny's...." 1

"I don't know, Dude. I guess I never really thought about it. Ever since... well, Stephanie died... none of us have really paid that much attention to Lily."

"But she is still your sister...."

"James, back off of Nick," my mother chastised me. "You know how hard it was on their whole family when they lost Stephanie. And it is hard to want to celebrate the life of someone who contributed to the death of someone you loved."

Wow. I cannot believe my mother was just able to make that argument with a straight face. Does she have any idea how hypocritical she sounds!?

"You are right, Mother," I responded sarcastically. "And that is why it clearly does not make sense why Robert and Margie would want to celebrate your life for the past 27 years. And yet, I cannot think of a single one of your birthday parties that they have missed...."

My mother recoiled as though I had just slapped her. Good.

Maybe it was just lingering mate-bond effects messing with my head, but hearing that Lily's family has ignored her all these years —to the point that Nick does not even know when her birthday is— bothered me. And hearing my Mother

defend Margie and Robert's actions towards Lily bothered me even more.

 Comments

 Vote (4.7k) 