

Chapter 0093

(James POV)

As Lily and I walk back to the hotel, I notice a small outdoor sitting area. It is next to a large outdoor fireplace, and it offers an amazing view of the ocean. The best part is that — given the way the seating area and everything nearby the seating area are set up— the most logical places for Brady's men to supervise us from are between 150 and 250 feet away. This means that we would be afforded a little more privacy than what they would likely give us if we walked along the beach.

I turn to Lily.

"Instead of going on a walk along the beach, what do you think of sitting here by the fire?" I ask her.

"That sounds great to me. This spot is beautiful."

We move towards seating area. It is laid out in a capital "L" shape. A small wicker couch is on one side of the "L," and three individual chairs are on the other side. I sit down on the couch, and Lily starts to sit down on one of the chairs.

"Uh-uh," I tell her. I gently tug her hand and gesture for her to sit next to me on the couch. "This conversation is not going to be fun. We are going to need the comfort of the mate bond to get through it. Or at least I think I will. You can also see the ocean better from this direction."

"You feel the bond too?" she asks.

"Yes. It was super faint at first, to the point that I almost wasn't sure what it was, but I feel like it is getting stronger now," I admit.

"Me too. How is that possible? I know that a rejected bond does not completely go away until the mates mark others, but I have never heard of a bond re-building itself."

"I have not heard of it happening either, but honestly rejection does not happen that often. I do not know many people other than us and Brady that have ever gone through it."

"Do you know what happened between Evelyn and Brady?" she asked me.

"He still has not told you?"

"Not yet. He keeps saying that he will tell me later, but later never comes."

"Has he told you anything?"

"All I know is that he rejected her. And I only know that because I have pieced it together from other things that have been said."

"How long have you known him?"

"A while."

"How long is a while?"

"I think I met him a couple of weeks after the rejection."

"And you two are close?"

"Yes."

I sigh. Considering Brady's feelings for Lily, I think it is really strange that he has not told Lily about what happened with Evelyn yet. That is especially true given that ---even with non-fated partners--- dating in the werewolf world typically happens on a much faster timeline than in the human world.

I squeeze Lily's hand.

"As much as I would love to fill in the blanks for you, it is not my story to tell. I am sure he will tell you what happened when he is ready."

Yes, I just passed up on an opportunity to trash Brady. Something must be wrong with me.

"No, you are right. I am sorry that I asked you. So... back to our serious conversation... where should we start?" Lily asks.

"Do you want to play twenty questions?" 1

"No way," Lily says adamantly.

I look at her suspiciously. She lets out a soft giggle.

"Sorry. I just hate the twenty questions game. I think it is because I am a medical student and I like checklists and order. If people played the twenty questions game correctly, it would be fine. But no one ever does. They end up asking more than one question, or talking about something else and forgetting about the game, or forgetting to take turns. It drives me crazy."

"Are you implying that I could not follow simple game rules?"

"Yes."

I shake my head and laugh. "Okay, so how do you propose we start this conversation then? Truth or dare? Never have I ever? Would you rather?"

"Why does it have to be a game? Why can't you just ask me questions, and I will ask you questions, and we talk things through?"

"Boring."

Now it is her turn to look at me suspiciously.

"We have more than six years of hard topics that we need to talk about. If we do not try to put a little structure to it, and have a little fun with it, we could end up talking about one thing and forgetting the others. Or, you may try to run again."

"Me? Why would I run? You are the one that has had his head up his a&& this whole time. I do not think that there is anything that you could tell me that would shock me."

"Never say never... unless that is the game that you want to play."

Lily rolls her eyes but also lets out a giggle. Oh, how I love the sound of her laugh.

"Okay, James, so let me just make sure I have this right. You want us to talk about really serious subjects ...some of which could be very triggering for both of us... while playing a game?" 1

"Yes."


"You are crazy."

"Maybe. So are you in?"

"For twenty questions?"

"I am also willing to play one of the other games."

She shakes her head.


"Okay, I tell you what. We will play twenty questions, but with a twist. If either of us breaks a rule of the game, we have to remove an item of clothing." 

Lily's eyes bug out. "You are insane. I am not getting naked for you, much less out here with Brady's team watching."

"I thought you prefer checklists and order. That sounds an awful lot like someone who likes to follow the rules. If so, you have nothing to worry about."

"You are insane."

"You have said that three times already. Can I take the last one as a yes?"

"Fine. Yes, whatever. I will play your silly game." 

"Good. Now I have two conditions."

Lily looks at me like I have grown a second head. "You cannot add conditions after I have already agreed to your deal."

"Sure I can. Condition number one: complete honesty is

required, no matter how painful the answer might be. Condition number two: we each get exactly two vetoes and no more. If a veto is exercised, a different question must be asked."

"Fine. Then I will add a condition as well."

"And that is?"

I feel Lily's demeanor shift from our playful banter to a more serious tone.

"You cannot ask a question that you are not prepared to hear the answer to. If you ask a question and you lose your shirt when the question is answered, the other player has the option of either terminating the game or making you remove an item of clothing."

"I knew you wanted to see me naked."

"James."


I laughed. "Sorry. Yes, deal."

Lily put her head on my shoulder. For a brief moment, that simple action makes me consider whether I want to ask her any questions at all. Will any of the answers really make a difference? I would really rather just stay right here and spend time with her.

"We need to get the answers so that we can fix things, James," Luke reminds me.

"Fine," I link back.

"Lily, my beautiful rule follower, would you like to ask the

 +20 BONUS

first question or should I?"

"You can."

I inhale deeply.

"Question 1. What happened on the night that Stephanie died?"

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