

Double-Crossed

Damon POV

"We will attack them at sunrise!" I shouted to all my warriors who had gathered there. It was 5 AM and the sun was still behind the mountains. The stars were slowly fading as the moon receded to the other side of the world.

My warriors let out a howl in my support. This was the biggest war that I was going to face in my life. With George Dawson dead I was sure that the morale of the Howler warriors was down. This would give me an edge.

After Monica killed George, she was going to be tried for treason. In our world no one was allowed to carry silver, let alone kill someone using it. And those who used it were hanged to death or faced a worse fate.

At 5:30 AM, we marched to the forest where the Howler warriors were and launched at attack. They were taken by surprise. My warriors were relentless. The Howlers retaliated in full force. There were shifters everywhere, either in their wolf form or human form, attacking each other with claws and fangs. I led my warriors from the front. I made my way through the tents to find Nash. All I had to do was kill Nash and then I would take over the Howlers pack. After that I planned on going to be with my mate.

As I made my way through it, five Howler warriors attacked me together. I was surrounded by them. They growled at me. One of them said, "We are going to take you down like a mutt you truly are!"

My wolf surfaced with the word 'mutt'. I let him free. As soon as he broke free, he charged at the man who called me mutt and sank his fangs in his neck. It happened so quickly in a flash of a second that others flinched. But I wasn't going to spare them. I lunged at them and killed them all in less than a minute. My mouth and snout were bloody. My paws were dirty as I stepped on flesh and bones and dirt. I rushed towards the Howler pack when Killian came running towards.

'Damon!' he shouted through our mind link.

'Don't stop me, Killian,' I growled back. 'I am going to make Nash pay for all that he did just because of his stupid ego!'

'Wait!' Killian demanded with a sense of urgency.

Snapping my head in his direction as I continued to run, I growled, 'What?'

'There's an attack on the Umbra pack from the opposite side!'

I screeched to a halt as I glared at Killian who too had come

to a stop. He was panting in his human form. He was all bloody. There was a large wound on his thigh. 'There's an attack from the south, Damon,' he said, gritting his teeth. 'While we were busy attacking these bastards, Nash took us by surprise. He was informed of this attack immediately and must have been around because it seems that he attacked us in less than an hour.'

I stiffened. I shifted into my human form. "What are you saying?" I snarled at him, my fists clenching on my sides so hard that my nails dug in my palm.

"Nash has cheated. This was all just a ploy!" Kilian rasped.

I scanned the battlefield around me. My warriors were still tackling the warriors of the Howler pack. There were hardly any warriors left at the Umbra pack. I was so hell bent on winning this war that I didn't even think that Nash could do this kind of a thing. This meant one thing— Cynthia double-crossed me. While she got rid of Monica, she also got rid of George. She hit two birds with one stone by using me. She led me to believe that Howlers were waiting for an order from their Alpha to attack us and so I should attack them first.

I caught hold of a Howler who was running past me. I grabbed his neck with my fingers and lifted him up. He tried his best to wriggle free but with Killian behind him, he couldn't do anything. I growled, "Did your Alpha order you to attack us?"

"No!" he wheezed. "He never ordered us to attack you. He only wanted to keep a vigil."

I left his neck and he dropped on the floor. Cynthia deceived me. She must have told Nash to look for this imperative war and suggested he attack us from the opposite side. Well played, Cynthia. But I was going to make this worse for her. I opened my mind link with warriors. 'Retreat!' I shouted an order.

'Leave and retreat! There is an attack on the southern borders!' I heard howls and snarls and growls in my mind as my warriors retreated. The Howlers were in such bad shape by now that none of them came after us. They were outnumbered when we attacked them and their number was less when we left them. However, I was sure that my warriors were tired. And I was afraid that if Nash's warriors reached inside my pack, it would be pure mayhem. There were women and pups and Elders. He was going to massacre all of them.

Along with Killian I sprinted back to my pack. And when I reached there, my jaws dropped. I could hear the loud growls and howls of my warriors who were fighting with the Howlers far in distance. I met with one of the women of my pack. She bowed to me and said, "Alpha, some women have also joined the war, but we don't know how long we will be able to hold it. Nash Dawson has come with a very large contingent of warriors.

A muscle in my jaw ticked. I opened my mind link with all my pack members. 'I want all the women and children to go .

to the packhouse. No one is going to stay in their own houses. Understood?' When I heard their affirmations, I headed to the site of war.

It was bloody and Nash had brought a large number of warriors.

So-Called Rogues

Poppy POV

Dealing with rogues wasn't difficult because they were low in strength. They were usually very thin and their wolves were also not so strong. I had heard that some rogues couldn't even shift.

I took binoculars from Jose and scanned the clearing in the area where the rogues were. Usually rogues moved alone and at the most there were no more than three to four in a group. They had no allegiance and they were like rabid dogs who just looted other packs to survive. But this pack of rogues consisted of fifteen rogues. And that was odd as hell.

"Where have they come from?" I asked Jose.

"I don't know but most likely from the north," he replied, his voice and demeanor tense.

"Have they ever attacked earlier?" My eyes drifted to their encampment. Why was it that their tents looked new? Also some of them seemed well-nourished while the others were quite like... rogues. Those who looked like rogues were looking up to those who appeared stronger with fear and awe. Very peculiar behavior and a very unusual mix of rogues.

"Not in that many numbers," he said.

I was surprised to notice that they had a lot of meat being roasted on the skewers. Some of them were even wearing nice clothes. That was pretty strange. Either they had recently looted a large bounty or were they—? My body went stiff and a vision flashed across my mind. Of a very familiar figure handing them money.

"Alpha Poppy!" Jose said worriedly when I blacked out for a moment and stumbled back. He gripped me tight from my forearms. Others came behind me to help me.

I cleared my mind of the vision that flashed. "This is all staged!" I rasped.

Jose's brows furrowed. "What do you mean?" he asked, his neck muscles going taut.

"This is not the usual rogue attack. Rogues do not attack in such large numbers. They are usually only three or four. This rogue pack out there—" I waved at them. "They are minions of someone else. They are here to distract us from something very ominous!"

Jose's eyes went wide with shock. He snapped his head in their direction. "So what you do want us to do?" he asked me.

"Get a group of thirty warriors and attack them. Let two warriors take one of them. I want them destroyed so bad that no rogue thinks of coming and attacking my pack even in their dreams!" I ordered. "Make sure that you kill all of them!"

A crease formed in between his forehead and I knew that he had a lot of questions, but Jose was smart enough not to ask them. "Yes Alpha!" he breathed.

We all came back to my pack where Jose gathered thirty warriors. When he started to go with them, I stopped him. "No, you stay here. These thirty would be good enough to deal with the so-called rogues."

"Why?" His agitation was palpable because he also wanted to go and kill those bastards.

I gestured with my chin for the warriors to leave. I wanted to talk to him in private. As soon as the warriors left, I said, "I want you to send spies to the Umbra pack and the Howlers pack. I want to know what is going on out there."

"Is there something that I am missing?" Jose asked, totally not understanding my orders.

"Just do as I ask," I pushed him. "Remember that they only have to get the information of what is happening in the pack and under no circumstance will they be provoked and fight them. If they are caught, then we will deny that they were

sent by us. Do you understand?"

Jose was totally confused. He blinked at me as if trying to comprehend what I was meaning to say. "Is there anything specific that you would like for them to spy?" he probed me.

I walked to the table and picked up my phone. Then I opened my photo gallery and showed him a picture. "I want your people to know about this person in the Howlers pack. Is that understood?" When he nodded with a hard expression, I added. "Your spies will not do anything other than just know about this person."

"Yes Alpha!" he rasped. "They will be able to gather information before the sunrise. Jose opened the door and with one last look at me, he closed it softly behind him. I began pacing the room trying to put things together. I had these puzzle pieces that were not fitting. Why would there be so many rogues camping at my borders? Was it a ploy of something bigger? Or was it a distraction?"

All of a sudden, my stomach grumbled for all the wrong reasons. I rushed to the bathroom and vomited the contents of my dinner. "Goddess!" I let out a shaky breath. Was I really pregnant? Over the last week, apart from thinking about Damon which occupied all my time, I was also reading books on pregnancy. My symptoms were pretty similar to those mentioned in the book. But I remembered that Mary had asked me to confirm about it two weeks later. So I was waiting for two weeks to end.

It was 1 AM and I was still pacing the room. A loud noise on the outside made me rush out of my room. The warriors who had gone to tackle the rogues had returned with smiles on their faces. Jose was congratulating them.

"They are all dead!" he informed me with victory written all over his face. "And you were right. Some of them weren't rogues!"

I knew! "Great!" I couldn't help grinning. This was a beginning to something very large. "Any information from the spies?"

He shook his head. "But any time now." He gave me a knowing look.

I went back to my room and let the warriors celebrate their small victory. I couldn't say who was the person who hired those assassins who disguised as rogues because then it would be a declaration of war. And I had to deal with it very carefully because my pack had a smaller number of warriors.

Jose came in after two hours. He sounded extremely nervous when he said, "Alpha George is dead! His niece, Monica, killed him!"

The next order I gave him made him jerk his head back.

A Golden Wolf

Damon POV

All my warriors were tired after fighting a battle with the Howlers in the north. The news that Nash had attacked us from the south was simply too disturbing.

A full-blown war had erupted. Even though my warriors were tired, they were doing their best to combat the Howlers. I could see Nash about a hundred meters from me tackling my warriors. The cracking sound of bones merged with other sounds as I delivered another blow to one of the Howlers who was trying to claw my torso.

His brain rattled before he fell on the ground in a mess of flesh and bones, with a loud growl. At the same time Nash punched one of my warriors across the jaw, nearly dislocating it. His head snapped around and blood sprayed on the ground. The warrior fell on the ground with a thud, going unconscious. Being an Alpha and that too highly skilled and most powerful, I was able to dodge their attacks. No one had been able to claw me even once.

Nash spun around and our gazes locked. Murderous energy flowed between us and all I wanted was to sever his head from his torso and drink his blood.

Rage seethed inside me. In all my life I hadn't seen this kind of madness. Either Nash was too egoistic or he was using the opportunity to take over his pack as well as mine. Rage was the only emotion that was surging through me. Rage over the fact that he was mindlessly doing all this when we could just coexist in peace. He wanted this battle only to prove to me that I had taken the wrong step by wooing my mate and that even if he rejected her, he had the first stake in claiming her. Bastard! Poppy was mine and he would never ever get her. I knew that he was using Cynthia. I wondered if Cynthia knew that he was using her.

With that rage seething inside me, I lunged towards Nash as he lunged towards me, but there was a distance of hundred meters between us and over a hundred warriors to deal with on each side. His wolves attacked me all over again and he was attacked by mine.

I slashed the wolf in front of me as I picked up another one and hurled him at the two who charged at me. I spun, half shifted and kicked the flank of two wolves. They were tossed in the air and landed some thirty feet away. With a roar, I shifted into my wolf and then chaos ensued.

Between me and Nash, I kept on killing and clawing and snapping the enemy, however, it just didn't end. Soon I realized that my warriors were getting tired. They started falling one by one. I didn't understand how there were so many enemy warriors we were against. Suddenly, I remembered that two Alphas whom I had called to join me had defected. But my force was any day larger than them

combined, then why was it that the enemy was gaining on us?

I opened my mind link with my gamma and asked him to carry those who were still surviving back to the pack. I wanted them to get healed because at least they had a chance to live and they weren't doing anything here.

Killian's voice floated in my mind. 'Alpha, we are falling behind. Should we retreat?'

'What is the situation like overall?' I asked him as I mauled a Howler and sank my teeth in his neck, snapping his carotid.

'It is gruesome. Nash's warriors had come prepared for this attack. I feel that they have silver hidden in their claws somewhere because the moment they attack us, our warriors fall!'

I shifted back as panic surged through me. So Nash was being sneaky. No wonder my warriors were falling so fast. Usually werewolves recovered very fast, but my people were not recovering. Instead they were falling unconscious. Fury blasted in my chest. Nash was using silver and it was banned.

I narrowed my eyes and studied his warriors and when the sun glinted on their paws, I saw how they would shift with silver jutting out of their claws while they lunged at my men.

I clenched my jaws. This had to go to the tribunal but right now all I did was to open my mind link with my warriors. 'Dodge the enemy when it lunges at you. They have silver hidden in their claws.'

There was a gasp, while some growled at how Nash deceived us, but they agreed in unison. I asked Killian to inform all our allies as well.

We continued to fight against them for the next two hours and our numbers kept dwindling. Things were getting out of hand and if this continued, I was sure that we would fall. The great Umbra pack would fall in the hands of the Howlers. At the back of my mind I was relieved that Poppy wasn't here. At least she was safe.

I wanted my men to take some rest, but I knew that Nash was not going to let us take rest. He and his men had become all the more aggressive. How long could I hold, I didn't know. There was blood and mayhem all around me and there was no escape.

When the sun was above us, I knew that we were down so much that our numbers were less than Nash's warriors. The hundred meters between us was reduced to fifty meters and now there were more of Howlers than Umbras and other packs. Five Howlers lunged at me. They shifted midair. Their claws elongated and I knew that all of them were aiming at me. I was tired and I knew that if I couldn't dodge them, they would gash me deep with silver.

As I glared at them, ready for the attack, embracing myself for the last day of my life, memories of Poppy flashed across my mind. Was she pregnant? A smile played across my lips and then with renewed energy I braced myself for the attack when all at once, in a blur of a motion, a golden wolf came in front of me, killing two Howlers with her teeth and claws.