

# The Surprise

## Poppy POV

I paused before completing my sentence just to add a mystery to it. I loved how Damon was so enthusiastic about listening to what I had in my mind.

“What is it, Poppy? Tell me now. You are killing me!” he rasped, his eyes wide and full of anticipation.

I grinned and then couldn't help laughing. I shook my head. “You are such a baby.”

He pulled me close to him and snuggled his nose in between my breasts, tickling me. I caught his head and laughed and laughed. “Leave me!”

He looked up with the most beautiful smile I had ever seen. “Tell me about it now, else I will tickle you more.”

“No, no!” I said as I wiped the water from my eyes. I gazed into his eyes and cupped his cheeks. “Damon, I have decided that the Shadow pack will be merged with the Umbra pack. Will you accept it?”

Damon's expression turned serious. He blinked at me once

and then twice. "But Poppy, your wolves would never like it!" he said with disbelief.

I brushed my thumb on his cheek. He was truly a leader. Anyone else would have jumped at the offer of merging a whole pack with theirs, but my wolf— he wanted to make sure that it was happening the right way. He didn't want disgruntled pack members. "Before I came here, I talked to my council. They have all agreed. I paid all their debts and whatever money was left, I distributed it amongst all of them so that they could start their own businesses afresh."

Damon listened to me with rapt attention. He leaned back on the tub's edge and placed his arms on its edges on both sides.

I continued as I made myself comfortable in his lap. We were having a very serious conversation in the bathtub. "When I floated this idea to them, they were a little wary, but I also told them that it would not be possible for me to stay here without my mate." I took a deep breath in because that was the truth. "One week without you was—"

He placed his finger on my lips. "It was horrible for me too. I couldn't function well, Poppy..."

I kissed his finger and drew it down my chest. "Same. I felt that I was like a husk without a heart." I pressed his hand over my heart. "It had stopped beating." When he wiped my tears, I realized that I was crying. I shook my head. "I can't

live without you Damon. It's impossible."

He pulled me close to his chest. "It is impossible to live without you, Poppy."

We both stayed there like that for a long time, forgetting everything that we wanted to say to each other. In silence, we took a bath and after drying ourselves, we came out, draped in bathrobes. Damon ordered tea and snacks and once they were sent to us, he tugged me to the bed. He poured tea for me and gave me a chicken sandwich. "So what did your pack people say about the merger?"

I munched on my sandwich. "They were reluctant earlier but when I pointed out them the benefits, they realized that there were more benefits in the merger than being alone. They have full confidence in your capabilities."

"Why?" Damon was surprised because after all, he was the number one enemy of the Shadow pack.

"Because you are the Alpha of the strongest pack and because you are my mate," I pointed out with a grin. "And they will follow their Alpha. They know that you would never go against me."

He chuckled as he wiped crumbs from the side of my lips. "Is that so?"



"Yes!" I chirped. "They have full faith in you. However, they have listed a few conditions that they want you to fulfill." I leaned a little closer to him. "Between you and me, I know that if I force this merger on them, they have to bend to my will, but I want this to come out as their choice too. Only then will the merger be successful."

Damon's lips curled up. "And that is how a leader thinks, love. Your pack members are only as happy as you are. Leadership is not about control, it's about leading your team according to their best potential."

I was overwhelmed with the way he appreciated my efforts. "After all, Umbra is another name for shadow..." I added with a blush.

He leaned over and kissed me. "Oh Poppy, I think I am the luckiest bastard on this planet!" I giggled. "What are their conditions?" he asked as he gave me another sandwich. He glanced at my tummy and his chest filled with pride. "You have to keep my pups fed in there," he said, pointing at my tummy. Damon was so excited that he was exuding it. "My pups!"

I giggled and took the sandwich. Goddess, I was so hungry that I could swallow an elephant. "I have them all written down. I will email them to you." I held his hand in mine and said, "Damon, I know that it would become too much pressure on you, but would it be, okay? I hope I am not dumping it on you."

"Are you mad?" he tapped my nose. "Anything for you, and it won't be an issue. I just have to take out some time in the beginning for your pack. Once that goes smoothly, it will be fine."

The Shadow pack and the Umbra pack were separated by the Howler pack that was situated right in the middle of them. However, with the current scenario I think even the Howler pack belonged to Damon because he defeated Nash and had taken him as a prisoner.

He removed the tray between us and crawled to my side. He rested his head in my lap and opened my bathrobe to expose my tummy. He started caressing me there and would kiss it time and again. He wrapped his arms around my waist and closed his eyes. "My Poppy. My pups. All mine." I stroked his hair as I forgot everything that we both had gone through the past years. At this moment, I was Damon and Damon was me.

He looked up after a long time and said, "Now you have to tell me how did you know that Nash Dawson had attacked us?"