

Poppy POV

When I opened my eyes, I found myself looking into something dark. A black bag covered my face. The usual. My hands were shackled back with silver chains which blistered my wrists to the degree that I dared not move them.

The damp and musty smell on the stone was enough to tell me that I was back in the dungeons. My grandfather would send his Beta to whip me again. Why? You can guess it. Nash Dawson rejected me. The pain of rejection was so strong that I wondered if I would feel the pain of whips lashing on my back.

I had never felt this miserable in my life. Why did my mother choose to leave me? After she left, my father drowned himself in alcohol to the extent that he could no longer be deemed as the future Alpha. My grandfather, James Vincent, was still at the helm of the Shadow Moon pack. And I? I was an abomination he had to live with every day.

Yes, this was the secret of the Shadow Pack. An heir without a wolf. An old man who was looking for a powerful heir but was handed someone like me by the moon goddess. He wanted me to be mated to Nash Dawson who was the heir to the second largest pack of America and produce a powerful heir for him. He was sure Nash's genes would give him an heir with a wolf.

Water splashed over my face and I gasped for air. The bag

was lifted from my face and I peeled open my eyes to see Axl, my grandfather's Beta, with a black leather whip in his hands. He had the same sadistic glint in his eyes which I came to realize he had when he whipped me.

"Chain her!" he yelled to the guards.

The guards yanked me up and chained me to the hooks on the wall. And then the whipping started. "Where's your wolf? Get it out!" he yelled.

My shrieks were drowned in the walls of the underground dungeon. I don't know after how many whips, but I blacked out, unable to bear the pain. The warm blood trickled down my back and pooled at my feet. I knew it would take at least a week for me to recover because I was wolf-less. Normal werewolves recovered within a day or the powerful ones within a few hours.

A week later when I woke up from my temporary unconsciousness, my nanny, Hilda, came to me with a worried expression. "Poppy," she said, "Alpha wants to see you." Alpha, not grandfather.

"Why?" I asked, my throat going dry.

"I don't know," she replied in a tone laced with pity. She handed me the usual concoction of tea that had herbs to heal my wounds. As I had the tea, she stroked my hair.

I got dressed in black leggings and a white sweater. Once again, I put my chin up to never show my weakness to the outsiders or to him. I headed straight to the Alpha's office and knocked on his door.

"Come in," his cold voice made me tremble. When I entered, he snapped. "You're late."

I remained quiet as dread skittered down my spine. At twenty-one, I had schooled myself never to go against him or reply to him. A few of my red hair had escaped my braid and were itching on my cheeks, but I didn't have the courage to remove them.

He threw a few papers in front of me and said, "I am sending you to the Umbral Academy. You will leave in a few hours. These are your admission papers."

My mouth fell to the floor. Umbral Academy? Panic bubbled in my chest. The Umbral Academy belonged to the most powerful Umbral Pack in North America and its Alpha son, Damon Lombard, was known to be the most notorious werewolf. It was said that he could kill a dozen werewolves with his bare hands.

The academy was a school for the elite of the shifters and witches where the heirs of the packs and covens were taught how to... rule and steer ahead in the power-hungry world. It was for a period of four years. And only a few made out of it. Alive.

My grandfather was never interested in making me the Alpha of the pack, so why was he sending me there? To kill me? Or was he interested in using me as marriage fodder for his political ambitions. The academy was over five hundred miles from here.

It meant only one thing – he was trying to get rid of me. The Umbral werewolves would kill me as soon as they knew that I

was weak and wolf-less. I had heard my nanny talking about how the Umbra wolves threw late night parties that ended in depravity and debauchery. And they hunted.

"But grandfather—"

A snarl slipped from his mouth. "That is Alpha for you!" His wolf tried to rear its head up as his green eyes flickered with gold speckles. His fangs sharpened. "You are going to the Umbra Academy and if you protest, I will drag you over there myself!"

My hands tightened into fists so tight that my knuckles went white. "I will go..." I managed to mutter as I winced under his Alpha aura. My grandfather was a hundred times more powerful than me. There was no point in getting mauled by him.

His wolf receded and my nerves settled a little. "Go pack your bags," he ordered. "Your flight leaves in four hours."

I nodded and came out of his office. I didn't stop until I reached my room and crashed on the bed. I knew that he must have arranged to get me murdered in the academy or maybe he hadn't because I would be killed anyhow. How convenient. At least now I won't be his problem.

My shoulders wracked with uncontrollable sobs. I was alone in this world. Until now I had a pack. They were cruel with me, but I wasn't abandoned. Those who were abandoned were called rogues. Rogues didn't have a life. They were killed as soon as they were spotted. And they were mostly spotted by the Umbra Pack warriors.

I bade goodbye to the only person who ever showed

kindness to me, Hilda. She gave me a bag that contained the herbal tea she had made for me to carry and a thick envelope. "This has money in it that I had been saving for a long time. You can use it."

"Hilda!" I was amazed. "I can't—" I shook my head.

Hilda hugged me tightly. She turned her face to my ear and whispered, "Use it to run away." A shudder passed through my body. She grabbed me tightly. "Umbra wolves are dangerous. Just get out of the academy and go to the human world. You will be safe there."

The driver stopped in front of the gates of the academy and after dropping my luggage rather quickly, he sped the car away disappearing into the thick mist. I looked up at the ominous spread of dense clouds that were hanging low.

Umbra Academy was an impressive massive structure of red bricks with tall boundary walls. There were two towers that rose on each side.

I bit my lip as I entered the heavy iron gates which rolled back when I announced who I was.

I dragged the luggage to the principal's office through a set of beautiful gardens where I was given the instructions on what to do and was handed a few cards to use. Library card was weird onyx and purple.

"You are supposed to go to your dorm and tomorrow join the class at 8AM," the moderator, a girl in black dress, informed me.

As I made my way towards the dorm using the map given by

the moderator, I could feel someone watching me. My heart raced wildly and I quickened my steps to my room.