

Poppy POV

To say that I was shaken was an understatement. I was quivering, traumatized as the horrors of last night wracked me again and again.

Nightmares returned with full intensity.

My father was leaving me. I heard him stopping as James Vincent came into view. "You coward!" James sneered. "You have never been able to do what was right for the pack. You were born to lead. You should have been selfless and unflinchingly dedicated to the pack. Duty above all. You have to sacrifice everything if you have to be a leader! No individual is more important than the pack. You've been a disappointment Brody!"

My father clenched his jaw. "You know what it is when your mate's pain hurts you, do you? Currently, her silence, her pain... it shreds me down to my bones. I can't bear this any further," my father said. "But how will you understand? You married the strongest she-wolf of the pack and rejected your own mate for the pack?"

"Brodyyyy!" James yelled at him.

"I was born and raised to lead a pack, but not to betray my mate and that is what I have done. I will never be able to

“forgive myself.” My father beat his chest in the center. “It feels empty. It feels devoid of air. But you won't understand because—” he cuts short on his words.

“You are a fucking shame to me!” James shouted, his anger getting out of control.

My father turned his head over his shoulder and saw little me peeping out from the door that was left ajar. His eyes were teary. He smiled at me and waved another goodbye. “Take care,” he mouthed and strode out of the room.

“Brody!” James shouted. “Just remember that once you leave you won't be accepted back in this pack!”

But my father didn't listen to him and walked out of that door, out of our life.

I ran after him. “Daddyyyy!” But James caught me from behind with his large hand. He picked me up by my collar and brought me to his eye level.

“This pup will be a constant reminder of that wretched woman!” he snarled. He walked with me all the way to my bedroom and threw me on the bed. He walked out and locked my room from outside barking an order, “No one opens this room for two days!”

I rushed after him. “Grandfather!” But the door slammed

shut in my face. I pounded on it with my little fists. "Open up!" I whined. "Open, open, open!"

And then there were gunshots.

My eyes opened with a jerk as sweat trickled down my face. My hair was stuck to my forehead. It was dark and I had to peel myself from the haze of my nightmare. Where was I? My breath was labored as I scanned my surroundings. I turned my face and saw a dark silhouette of someone sleeping next to me. Damon. His eyes were closed tight and his lips parted. His jaw appeared as if he was tense and very, very close to me. If I extended my finger to him, I would poke his chest. His woodsy and spicy scent surrounded me, wrapped around me.

Memories of the last few hours flooded my mind.

He had come to snatch me back from the world into this prison. He was the sole reason why I would never taste my freedom. Tears made my vision hazy and they ran down. But how did I come into his bedroom? As the realization hit my gut, I scrambled back from him and got up. Feeling a thousand shades embarrassed, I licked my dry lips. Did his wolf get me here? Goddess.

I needed to leave. So I gathered my wits back and rose to my feet. My head reeled and I had this urge to sleep back, but if I did, I would probably wake him up and I wasn't ready to face him. I think it was better for me to leave when he was

sleeping and save myself from awkwardness.

I tiptoed my way out, opened the door, peeped around and when I saw that it was all clear, I made my way to the exit and then dashed to my dorm.

"Poppy?" Anna's eyes were wide as saucers as she opened the door.

I ducked under her arm and rushed inside, tears running down my cheeks.

"Okay, you have to tell me what happened," she said in a voice full of shock and pity.

I just ran to my bed and flopped on the bed with my face buried in the pillow. I cried and cried until I couldn't. Anna sat down with me all the time and stroked my hair murmuring assurances, but I knew that my one and only chance at freedom was gone. She gave me a glass of water. "Please tell me from the beginning."

Between hiccups and some tears and sniffles, I narrated to her what occurred back in the train and then at the forest.

"Damn girl!" she rasped. "You encountered hunters? That's horrible! But how the hell did they know that shifters were on the train?"

"I don't know..." I shrugged, wiping my tears away with my sleeve. "Someone must have noticed us on the train."

Anna was silent for a moment. "Then I am sure that there was a hunter around you who spotted you. The hunter with you would have gone after you all the way. He would have made your life shit, Poppy! In a way, Damon saved you!"

My breath lodged in my chest. "No..." This was just a conjecture. Damon brought me back.

Anna worried her teeth over her lips. She hugged me and then said, "I don't know what to say Poppy. I am glad that you are safe, but I am angry that you could have been better?"

I understood her emotions well. I just slumped into her embrace. It was comforting.

Since it was 5AM in the morning, none of us slept. She made coffee for me and then we talked over it more. I reminded myself that I was going to have Hilda's tea after some time. It helped me heal and settle. Time slipped and it was already 8AM.

"Shit! I have to go!" Anna jumped out of the bed and headed for the bathroom. "We got biology class!" she shouted. "Get up and get ready." I was about to drag my sorry ass out when I heard another one of desperate shrieks. I ran to the bathroom and opened the door, and found her frozen under

water, her teeth chattering. "There's no hot water!"

At the same time, a knock sounded on the door. I closed the bathroom's door and as I walked to the main door, the lights of my dorm flickered and then went off. Astonished as hell, I opened the door and saw a girl on the door.

"Hi, I am Eliza!" she said with a nervous smile.