

Poppy POV

I was in the class but my thoughts were of him. The professor was teaching something about other kinds of shifters and their behavior patterns, but I couldn't concentrate. It was getting difficult to focus.

I was getting needy as hell. I needed him. Every day I was struggling with these thoughts. If I didn't make my move now, I was sure I was going to get trapped in this forever. And I didn't want to. We were enemies. Our packs hated each other. There were a thousand different reasons to stay away from him.

They say that the harder you control your feelings for someone, the harder you fall.

Ann wasn't in this class with me. I missed her. I wanted to confess to her. And I stopped myself from crying. I swallowed my tears.

The class got over and I collected my things with a heavy sigh. From the corner of my vision I saw Chris. He glanced at me and then his fingers were flying over his phone, texting someone.

I clutched the strap of my satchel closer to my chest as if clutching for my life, for my sanity. As I walked through the garden to go to the class across it, Chris came over. "Damon is

calling you over there," he said, pointing in the direction of the thicket on the left. I stifled a gasp. Was he waiting for me? All my logic pushed me to run, but my stupid feet took me to where he was. And when I reached there, Monica was waiting with her minions.

She squeezed my throat tight, slapped me hard and her minions pulled my hair to painful levels. She threatened me and asked me to leave the academy else she would kill me. Monica was so much into Damon that she was threatening to kill me, then how come Damon wasn't in the same way in her. What was it that I was missing? Why couldn't I put my finger at it?

A sudden gust of wind announced Anna's arrival. Monica and her minions ran away sensing danger. They were really scared of Anna.

"Poppy!" Anna rushed to me and helped me stand up. "Why the fuck do you put up with their shit?" she seethed. "That bastard Damon doesn't deserve you!" She was so angry that I chuckled through my pain. She was furious for me as well. She hooked her arm under my shoulder and helped me sit on a stone bench. She fished out a bottle of water from her bag and handed it to me. As soon as the cool water hit my face, I felt better.

"By Hecate!" she cursed. "I am sure going to turn them into the rodents they are, one day!" She dug out her makeup kit and handed me her hair brush. After a little help from her, I had hidden the mark on my face to a certain extent and brushed my

hair. "You have to meet Gandal," she said, more like an order. I nodded and when we got up, she grabbed my wrist. "You have to move away from Damon. He is toxic."

"I know..." I whispered as a weight fell on my chest. The idea of moving away never felt this horrible.

He was the venom and I wanted to get poisoned.

"Come!" she said and tugged my hand. "Now that you are very late for your next class, let us go to the cafeteria."

The cafeteria was empty. The only soul who was there was cleaning the counter. She flashed a smile at Anna and when she looked at me, her eyes became wide for a second as if realization dawned upon her. She poked with her thumb to the door at the back which I knew led to the basement where the fights were held. "Gandal is waiting for you down there," she informed.

My mouth dropped. I looked at Anna with a confused expression. She shrugged and said, "Go, he is there. This is important for both of you."

I didn't want to go. It felt so wrong. It felt like I was walking on thorns. But I had to. With a ragged breath, I went to the door. The two bouncers who seemed to be on duty 24x7 over there, opened the door for me with their poker faces intact.

I entered and found that the place was just as empty as the

cafeteria above except for a lonely figure sitting in the middle, looking at the iron cage where Damon fought last time with Chris. This was getting stranger by the second. What was Gandal doing here? I darted my eyes to look for Joey but there was Clyde. His eyes met mine and he waved at me. I waved back, suppressing a shiver. Gandal whipped his head towards me and he flashed a smile.

"Poppy!" he said and got up.

"Gandal!" I rasped. "What are you doing here?"

He held my hand and then gave me a friendly hug. "Sit," he said with his smile on as his gaze went to the bracelet I was wearing. "Thank you for wearing it."

I chuckled. "Thank you for the gift." I sat down opposite him. The two feet of table between us was good for my anxiety.

"I wanted to say something to you, Poppy."

I swallowed a surge of bile that threatened to come out. "Sure!" I breathed.

He lowered his gaze to his hands and then as if mustering up courage, he took a deep breath in. "I—" His eyes snapped to me. "I want us to have a chance, Poppy."

I knew where the conversation was going. So, I waited.

"You are putting up at Damon's place and I know that. And I want to win you from him. Tonight, I have challenged him to a fight and if I win, I want you to move in with me."

Goddess. My teeth crashed so hard together that it was a miracle they didn't break. "Gandal, that is ridiculous. You can't do that! It is all kinds of wrong and then some more! You can't put yourself out there to win me!"

"But I want you to—"

A loud growl shook the whole place. We whipped our heads to the right and saw Damon coming towards us with vengeance in his eyes. He looked at Gandal as if he would kill him right now. Gandal rose to his feet, giving him a ferocious snarl. The two stood nose to nose, toe to toe, in a battle of power as I sat there with goosebumps.