

Poppy POV

When I reached his apartment, angry swoops swirled in my body. I tossed my shirt in the hamper and kicked my shoes off. I was in my bra and shorts.

I rushed to the bedroom and found the bed... welcoming. It smelled of him. I crawled under the quilt over the soft and cool sheets. I buried my nose in the pillow. In his pillow, loving his scent woody and spicy smell. It calmed my nerves. My eyelids grew heavy. I realized that I was so exhausted that I was almost sleepy. I closed my eyes thinking of what to do next, but I couldn't. My heat was so high that I was... feverish. I was confused. I didn't want to let go of this delicious feeling of making my nest with my Damon and at the same time, I knew this would be pure mistake because Damon wasn't my mate. This feeling occurred only when you were close to finding your mate. And it couldn't have come at a worse time. My body must be reacting because it had sensed my mate, Nash Dawson. But why didn't I feel it at that time? So confused.

I was losing the importance of time as my eyelids sank close. I didn't know how late it was. Probably after 12AM. Maybe later. Who was bothered?

The bedroom was pitch black. I had forgotten to switch on the lights. I needed the quiet but it was nowhere inside me.

"Poppy."

I jumped. Damon's voice startled me. When did he come in? I remembered him in the midst of some commotion in the basement of the cafeteria. I remained quiet, clenching my thighs harder so that he didn't smell my arousal, but who was I fooling?

"Are you hungry?" he asked, sitting at the edge of the bed. The bed dipped slightly.

"No, thanks," I replied in a shaky voice. How could I convey that more than food, I needed him to be beside me. Tears ran down my eyelids because of all the pain I was going through, because of all the need cruising through me. He wasn't even my mate and if I got pregnant with his child, my whole life would be a complete mess.

Damon got up. He removed his pants and then went to take a bath, leaving me to my thoughts. Good. I curled under the quilt, waiting for the pain to recede, waiting for the feeling to subside, but they wouldn't. Memories flooded in my mind of my father, of my grandfather, of Hilda... Hilda. I needed the tea. I rushed to the kitchen and got myself tea. I got it back up to the room and placed it on the table, but the moment I was lying down, I forgot about it.

Damon came out, smelling of cologne and spice and I drooled. He came to sleep right beside me. On a basic instinct I turned to my back, highly aware of his presence.

And sensed that he was turned to my side, watching me.

Nothing made sense. Why was it that with him in the bed, all the worries in my mind... disappeared. The future Alpha of the Umbra Pack was lying with me in the bed, beside me, with no clothes.

I should be feeling awkward, insecure. But I felt... safe. I felt like I was ported back to the time when my mum and dad were there for me. I felt completely safe and felt that no harm would ever come in my way.

"Go to sleep, Poppy," his deep baritone voice rumbled in the dark, soothing me, as if understanding me.

And I let sleep overcome me on his command.

I woke up with a jerk, panting, still surrounded by darkness and his scent. He was closer to me was watching me. I was so wet because of sweat and all the juices in my panties. My belly and my core were aching. The waistline of my shorts was digging in my raw skin. I wanted to remove everything from my body.

I got up. My hair was sticking to my forehead and neck because of sweat. My throat was dry and my lungs needed all the air they could get. The pain was stronger and I knew that this was the worst time for a she-wolf. She could go insane if not mated. But I also heard that if your mate wasn't around for mating, he could go insane too. I was aching so

much that I was sure I would... go insane.

Damon propped his head on his hand. "Poppy, are you well?"

"No, I am not!"

"Are you worried about your safety?"

"I hate you," I sobbed. "I hate you so much." I hated everything. I hated how my skin felt so raw and that the room had become too stuffy.

"I never wanted a mate," I said. "And when I found one, he—" I sobbed again and I could feel him tensing. "He rejected me."

Damon's jaws clenched and he got up, slowly. "You have a mate?" he asked in a very low, careful voice like he was restraining himself from violence.

I shook my head. "No, he rejected me. And that's why my grandfather sent me to the Umbra academy. It was more to get rid of me than to—" Oh God, should I confess?

"To?"

"To find my wolf!" My shoulders caved in as another sob wrenched out of my body.

He took a second for the next question. "Who was your mate?"

"Nash Dawson, heir of the Nascent Moon Pack."

Damon was shocked. He had to be. After all, his betrothed was Nash's cousin. He stabbed his fingers in his hair. "I really don't want a mate now. Rejection is... painful, and— and I am on—"

"Heats?"

"Yes." I looked at him with my teary eyes that rounded at the corners. "I don't want to hook up with you. I am not telling you to do that. I—" My lips quivered. "It aches."

"But I want to hook up with you."

I froze. My brain stuttered. Damon, who was the playboy of the Umbra Academy wanted... me? Did I hear it wrong?

He brought his hand to my cheek and wiped away the tears. "I've always wanted a female of my own. The one who belongs to me, you know? Only mine."

Goddess.