

## Poppy POV

Did she get Nash here? Was this one of her cards in the game? I turned my head over my shoulder to see that they had begun circling, scanning each other for some weakness. They struck at each other at intervals with fists that were like anvils. I shrieked when they swung their fists on each other's faces and smashed them. Like a storm, they both lunged at each other as their heavy footsteps pounded the ground. Their punches and claws left a trail of razed wood and shattered rocks.

"This is madness!" I said and started to go and stop them but from the corner of my vision, I saw Monica swinging her fist towards me. I dodged her swing and caught her midair. Then I crossed her arms, twisted them and head-butted her face. She screamed with pain and tumbled back with surprise etched on her face. I was shocked how fast I was. With a loud racoon-like shrill scream, she charged at me. Everything went into slow motion. I waited for her to come very near to me. Her face mottled, she charged me with her hands outstretched. When she was only a few inches away, I jumped to the side. Monica went crashing into a tree. I heard a crack. I didn't know if it was her skull or the tree.

I turned my attention to Damon and Nash. With a furious charge, Damon barreled into Nash, sending them both back into the large boulders on the side. Their bodies slammed into the rocks below, which pulverized on contact. They surged over the boulders, falling into the brook, splashing

water around them.

Nash was over Damon and at one point of time I thought that he had added advantage over Damon, but soon Damon shoved him and attacked his throat with one hand while with the other he slashed his torso with his claws. Nash roared in pain as blood poured out and dropped in water. I was surprised to realize that I was entranced by the way Damon fought with Nash with such seething ferocity.

All of a sudden, I saw Killian jumping in between them, throwing his fists and elbows. He managed to separate them but not without getting hurt in the process. I saw that all three were bleeding now. I winced. My gaze landed on Monica who was shaking on her feet. Another girl had come to her rescue and my eyes went wide when I realized that it was Cynthia.

Damon turned his head to look at Nash and he spat blood. "Poppy is mine," he grated. He crossed the boulders and the brook and came next to Poppy. Grabbing her by her waist, he snatched her tightly against his chest. His massive hand splayed over her belly. He drew his lips back from his fangs. "If you come near what is mine, I will destroy you!"

Nash gnashed his teeth as he looked from Damon to me. "She can never be yours!" he snarled.

Damon snarled back as if challenging him for another round of fight. After that, he lifted me and simply swung me over his broad shoulder and started to leave the arena.

"What are you doing? Put me down!" I kicked my feet to be free.



He grabbed me tighter and growled, "I won't!" And then in a louder voice said, "If anyone is foolish enough to follow me, I will give them all of it all over again!"

"Where the hell are you taking me?" I demanded.

"To my apartment!"

Damon didn't stop even once till we reached his apartment with me on his shoulder. Thankfully, classes were going on, otherwise he had left no stone unturned to show that I belonged to him. How many rules did he break and how many rules did Nash break? It was so crazy that I couldn't wrap my head around it.

One minute, I was there in the combat class thinking I would learn new tactics and now, I was being hauled like a Neanderthal's prize.

Damon set me on the floor of our room and grabbed my nape from the back. He pulled me towards him and said, "What is it that I don't know about Nash?"

I looked up at him, one eye black, upper lip split and swollen and a horrible bruise on his cheek. There were claw marks on his forearm but they were beginning to heal. "I have told you everything," I said in a low voice, worried about his wounds.

"Did you love him?" he asked in a very dark voice as he cupped my face with his huge hands.

"If you are saying that I had fallen in love with him and then I discovered that he was my mate, then no. I came to know that he was my mate on the day I met him."

"How did you know that he was your mate?" His gaze dropped to my nose, under which blood had caked.

Memories of Nash fucking Cynthia flooded my head. I closed my eyes as a shudder passed through me. "The day I was sent to him, I found his fucking Cynthia in his office. I— I ran out of there as pain burst in my chest and stomach. After a few minutes he came out and— and rejected me."

"What about you?"

"What about me?" I asked, not understanding his question.

"Have you accepted his rejection?"

My mouth dropped. "No..."

Damon left me and turned sharply to the other side. He stabbed his fingers in his hair. His breath was labored and he appeared to me in a lot of pain. He turned to look at her again, his eyes amber. "Why haven't you accepted his rejection? Are you still pining for him?"

"No!" I hated Nash.

Damon was hurting so much that I walked to him. "Damon I —"

"Just go away, Poppy!" he growled. "Just get out!"

I was... aghast. "I didn't know that—"

"Go away!" he groaned and turned his face away.

My lips quivered. I couldn't take another rejection in my life. And for no fault of mine. "Damon..." I sobbed, but he didn't



look at me. I knew that this beautiful fairy tale was over sooner than I had anticipated. I recalled that Monica had mentioned to me that Nash and Cynthia would be joining the academy soon. So this was what she was waiting for. Timing.

Everything had fallen apart. Damon felt betrayed.

With heavy feet, I walked down the stairs, to the living room and opened the main door. But the moment I was about to step out, I heard a loud thud and then Damon's arms wrapped around my waist. He crushed me against him and buried his head in my nape. "I can't live without you. I am sorry. I love you. Madly."