

Poppy POV

"I know, but she didn't. We have to find out what is happening behind those walls of your pack. Is your grandfather also involved? And if he is then why didn't he eliminate you earlier?" Damon was trying to put sense in me and get his own theories, but I wanted to confront Hilda.

"I want to confront her!" I blurted.

"And she would deny it outright," he said. "Do you think she would commit this crime?"

I licked my dry lips. "Then what should I do?"

"For now, you will sleep. Anna tested the tea in her lab for the whole day. She wanted to come and tell you the results, but when she saw your condition, she decided to sleep on the couch in the living room."

"Oh!" I got up. "I want to meet her!"

"She is sleeping, Poppy," he said in a soft voice. "She is too tired. It's 4 AM. How about we both sleep for now and ask her first thing in the morning?"

Sleep was the last thing that was in my mind, yet Damon stripped to his boxers, caught hold of me tightly and placed his leg on my thigh and ensured that I went off to sleep. I tossed and turned, and rolled away from him, but he would pull me back in his warm embrace and again throw his heavy leg on me to pin me down so that I could sleep. After half an hour, I finally gave up and closed my eyes with vengeance. The moment I did that, I slept. Later I was told that I was even snoring. Lies. I never snore.

Eliza volunteered to make coffee when I was sitting with Anna in the living room. Gods above! Damon had trashed the house. The doors were dangling from the hinges, the mirrors were shattered, the chairs were broken and the curtains were torn. It seemed like a tornado had passed through the house.

"Don't worry," he said nonchalantly when I was assessing the damage. "It will all be taken care of in a day. I have already ordered the new things."

I shook my head and sat next to Anna. Killian was sitting opposite to us, his eyes pinned on the papers that Anna had brought. He was flipping through them one by one with extreme concentration.

"I am dying to know about it, Anna!" I said, as the hollow in my stomach increased.

"It is not good, so embrace yourself. And we have to do a lot

to undo it all," Anna said as she locked her legs beneath her thighs and picked up the papers that Killian had placed on the table. She took a pen out from her bun.

Damon came to sit next to Killian as he too looked interested as hell.

She picked up the first paper. "I tested the tea in my lab and I have to say that this was one of the best poisons I have come across so far. Not that I have come across many poisons, but this one is cool."

I smacked her with a growl.

"Ouch!" she rubbed her upper arm. "Come on, Poppy. That old woman had done some research." She chuckled. "The tea leaves are not coated in wolf's bane," she started. She pointed to her experiment. "When I boiled them, which is what you would do normally, the first ingredients that came out included catechins, flavanols, phenolic acid and their derivatives; which is... normal." She waved at the list of experiments conducted by her to determine the ingredients. "But when I tested it further, I found traces of wolf's bane. Traces of bluebells that don't grow in the normal climate and whose bulbs need to be harvested only if they have escaped the frost because only then will they have the correct amount of poison."

She flipped to the next paper. "Traces of burnt yew. Yew burnt in the fire hearth sends up a choking smog. Small

amount of poison extracted from poppy stems and seeds and then a very tiny amount of hellebore. Helleborus is death in large quantities.”

My hands slapped my mouth as I gasped.

Anna continued as if she was expecting this reaction. “Once I came to know about these ingredients, my first thought was that the leaves were coated with it, but then my colleagues said that if the leaves were coated, then the ingredients should have bleached out immediately and their power would have reduced after boiling them. But—” she looked at. “The ingredients stayed in the tea that you made in their inert form. What I mean is that once the leaves were boiled, they spilled out, but they stayed dominant until they reached your stomach. Over there they broke into their lethal poison.”

“So what are you trying to say, Anna?” Killian asked, his brows furrowed together.

Eliza had come and kept the tray of coffee on the table. No one was interested because I was sure that all of us had lost our appetite. However, Damon picked up one mug and shoved it in my hand. He signaled Eliza to get some cookies too because I had gone far too long on an empty stomach.

“What I am trying to say here is that this tea is grown in a special place. It is cultivated in a very controlled atmosphere. Hilda doesn't process the tea leaves with poison, she feeds

poison to the roots. And she feeds so much poison that it comes naturally in the leaves," Anna replied. "And then she processes the leaves and gives them to you."

"Fuck!" Killian rasped. "What a bitch. But why is she doing it? I mean what is the purpose achieved?"

Anna flipped to the third page. "I researched what all these ingredients do and this is what I found. Wolf's bane is obviously given to kill her, but it was given in very small quantities, just enough to kill her wolf."

Damon's anger was palpable. It felt like he could go on round two of shredding everything all over again.

"Goddess!" I said, as dread skittered down my spine as icy needles.

"Hilda was targeting your wolf. When did she start giving you this tea?" Anna asked.