

Poppy POV

"She gave me first when I was sixteen," I said in a low voice.

"I guessed so much. That was the perfect time to give it," Anna sighed. "That's when you shifters start feeling your wolf, isn't it?"

"Yes," Eliza replied, looking pale.

Anna lifted a cookie and then dipped it in her coffee. She crunched it in her jaw and for a long time only that was the sound we heard as tense silence stretched between all of us. "The ingredients were very carefully and cleverly wrapped in the tea. Yew and poppy seeds were added to keep your wolf down and sedated. And the bluebells and wolf's bane to kill it. Now you have Alpha blood," Anna said, looking at me. "Imagine the Alpha wolf you must be having. It wouldn't be easy to put it down. So, Hilda did the best she could. She kept your wolf sedated as the drugs in your system were working towards killing it."

Suddenly, everything came crashing down. My wolf wanted to come out so many times because I could feel it stirring inside me, but I would confess the feeling to Hilda and she would give me this tea several times a day under the façade that I needed to calm down. Because of her, my wolf never showed up and my grandfather beat me to a pulp. She

would show her sympathy and retrieve me from dungeons after I was beaten badly, show her affection and sympathy and then give me more tea.

Anger that blasted in my chest was sharper than any blade in the world, and it was far more welcome than any hopelessness. My fists curled into tight balls. I got up with a feral grunt and went to the window where I opened the glass pane to gulp air, to let the cold wind cool my heated body. If Hilda had been here, I would have killed her, but— I turned sharply. "I have a feeling why she is sending Sinclair here," I growled. Anger and desperation warred inside me. Hilda's nefarious schemes were so evident now. She was a white lotus whom we all trusted.

Damon narrowed his eyes on me. "I too think I know why he is coming here."

"Hey! I have more on this research!" Anna wanted us to hear about it all. She had really done hard work.

I walked to her and hugged her tightly in my arms. I buried my head in her neck and apologized. "I am so sorry for snubbing you." I whispered. "I should've—" my words choked. I didn't know how to say sorry.

Anna curled her arms around me and squeezed me tight. "What are friends for, Poppy?" She pulled herself away and said, "If I am in a dire situation, won't you reach out for me?"

"Always!" I replied. "But I seriously think that you would put the other person in a dire situation!"

"Umm... that's a different thing!"

I let out a laugh and this was the first lively moment in so many hours.

Anna went on to reveal about her research and all of it pointed to one thing – my wolf was still there but it needed a lot of healing. It was decided that I shouldn't provoke it to come out now, and that I should let it repair and build.

"It's in there!" Damon said to me with a glint of happiness. "I am going to help you with it."

"We too!" Eliza and Killian said in unison.

"And I am going to give you healing drugs," Anna said. "I will be researching about them. Until then, you won't be having that fucking tea!" She got up and went to the kitchen counter where the tea was. She picked up the packet and was about to throw it in the trash bin when she suddenly stopped. "On second thoughts, I am going to take it to my coven sisters and research more!"

The next day, Damon didn't allow me to go to the academy. He was suspended from the academy for three days and I hadn't seen a happier wolf. In those three days, all he did

was to make a trip to the market and get new stuff for the house as if he was building his nest. Killian gave him his notes for the classes.

When I went to the academy after skipping the classes for a day, I confronted Gandal. He was sulking in a corner trying to avoid me. But I went straight to him and said, "Gandal."

"Poppy!" His cheeks became pink.

"I am sorry how it all turned up, but I really like Damon. I think I am going to stick with him," I said with a sigh.

He scratched his hair and then shifted his glasses closer to his eyes. "I really liked you, Poppy, but I guess that it ends now. I wish that he leaves you, because if he does, I am going to snatch you right there and then and take you with me."

Surprised, I jerked my head back and then when his words weighed down on me, I barked a laugh. He joined me and just like that the cold air around us melted.

I went to the next class with Anna, all the time hoping that I wouldn't see Nash. Because if I saw him, the damn mate bond would start working. We were sitting in the class for Foreign Diplomacy. Professor McRieve was giving us a lecture on how to balance power and polarities amongst the various communities across shifters and other supernaturals when a crushed paper landed in front of me. I snapped my

head back to see that Nash was sitting behind me. When the hell did he come? I opened my mouth as he winked at me. Cynthia, who was sitting right next to him, threw daggers at me with her eyes. I sucked in a sharp breath and turned away. I unfolded the crushed paper.

Meet me behind the cafeteria, Poppy. Please.

– Nash.

I bit my bottom lip as I stashed the paper in my satchel. I wasn't going to meet him at all. And what was he doing in this class when he had come for just one course? I remembered what Killian had said. Nash had come here a month earlier. Well, he could go to hell.

When the class ended, he bolted towards me before I could exit the class and grabbed me by my upper arm. "Poppy!" he said, his warm breath falling over my cheeks. My body reacted to his touch as delightful shivers ran down, curling my toes in response. But gods above! I hated him.

"What do you want, Nash?" I growled.