

Poppy POV

As soon as I accepted his rejection, I felt that something inside me wanted to be liberated. It was like this atomic bomb kind of energy that wanted to explode. I squeezed my eyes shut and reached inside. I knew my wolf was there, so close.

"Oh. My. God!" Some girl in the crowd rasped. "She is wolfless and she accepted his rejection?"

"She is so fucking shitty. Absolute dimwit!"

"Nash is an Alpha heir. She should have been wagging her tails to go to him."

I couldn't take it anymore. I opened my eyes and my vision changed. I saw Damon and Poppy who were rushing towards me, their expressions wild. I drew in a deep breath, expanding my lungs to the capacity with the warm air and filled myself to the fullest with smells of numerous shifters and mustiness of leaves and twigs, strong scent of pine and oak and birches and a distant tang of grilled meat. Then the wind shifted and I was surrounded by scent of broad daylight. I could smell the grass beneath my feet, the bursting bulbs and see the mellow sunlight that streamed through the tree leaves.

Every conversation faded in the background.

That was when my wolf came alive. She leapt for the source of scent. My bones cracked. I screamed.

The pain was nothing like I had experienced before. My joints popped, my bones reformed and rearranged, my muscles ripped and my skin broke into golden fur as in that instant, I was getting knitted into another shape. I felt myself going lower, lower until I was on all four limbs. I could see a snout under my eyes and I felt a long tongue inside me. I tried to lick my teeth with it and found myself licking my canines. I let out a howl.

A voice from inside whispered at first. 'Poppy.'

I gasped, but it came as a purr. 'I am your wolf, Auren.'

I was so desperate to meet my wolf all the time and I had thought of a thousand things to tell her, but when I met her for the first time, listened to her in my mind, I was bereft of words. I wanted to embrace my new self. It was so liberating, so exciting and this was what Hilda wanted to steal from me. I was going to give it back to her. A thousand times more than what she gave me.

'Happy to meet you,' I managed to say back, my heart swelling with emotions.

Auren chuckled. 'Nice to meet you too.'

Right in front of me I could hear every gasp that came out softly also. Nash was lying on the ground unconscious while Monica was standing and staring at me with wide eyes and something akin to... fear. Yes, I could sense their fear.

And then I smelled the most delicious scent I had ever experienced. It was woody, that of pine mixed with spices and crisp morning air. When I whipped in that direction, a growl emanated from my throat. 'Mate,' my wolf said. And I saw Damon walking towards me with pride in his eyes. While everyone else stepped back out of fear, only Damon came to me. He dropped on his knees and held my snout in his hands as if he was cupping my cheeks.

"Mate," he rasped and rested his forehead on mine. He rubbed my fur. I could feel his emotions as my wolf licked his face. She mewled and yelped and wagged her tail so hard that it was difficult to contain her excitement. "I am so proud of you, Poppy," he said, his throat hoarse with emotions.

I tried to put my feet over his thigh. No, my paw. My golden paws. I was golden. I looked up at him. He grabbed me with both hands and rested his face on my neck. "My wolf wants to meet you, mate," he said. And the next moment, he shifted into his massive black wolf.

I yipped and nipped low on his flank. I tried to walk, but I

staggered on my paws. I knew the name of Damon's wolf. Onyx nudged my flank, urging me to be steady and walk. I looked up and up—at Damon looming large above me. I was smaller than him. That was fine. Being smaller meant I was quicker.

and then zipped into the woods. I could hear Damon's wolf coming after me. It was such a wonderful feeling. I was running with my mate. There were so many things that I wanted to say, but I didn't. The topmost was why did he keep it a secret. Anger flared in me, but Auren was extremely excited and my anger washed away in her enthusiasm.

I don't know how long I ran. But I darted at every insect that was airborne, snapped my teeth at the crickets, swiped my fangs with my long tongue and tried to leap and fall over the grass, but every pain that was associated with shifting was soon forgotten into a new sensation that I was experiencing.

Onyx was right behind me, watching me carefully, keeping me under his guard. When I fell down, he would come next to me and nudge me to get up. When I became tired, and lied on the grass, he came to lie beside me. He would lick me up and snuggle into me. I loved to paw at him and he would let me do whatever I wanted.

When Auren was fresh after a rest, she would run again. She was unleashed today and she was a hyperactive ball of fur with endless enthusiasm. It was as if I was reborn.

Auren would often look at Onyx as if she wanted to chase or attack or sink her teeth into, she was just not sure of it. So she would run excitedly in a different direction.

It was at one of these moments that she lost Onyx. Scared, she came to a complete stop in the midst of tall grass beneath a dense canopy.