

Poppy POV

Auren whipped her head around to check where Onyx was, but all she was met with was empty woods around her. It had started to become dark as evening gave way to night. A lone star dazzled in the north. She let out a slow, hesitant growl to let him know that she was standing alone. There was no reply.

She wasn't scared that she was alone, but she was afraid that he was out in the wild, all alone. She didn't recognize these woods, but she was confident that she would make her way back to the academy. However, how could she leave him alone?

Auren drew in a deep breath and her agitation soothed when she smelled a faint smell of pine mixed with crisp morning air and spices. Excited, she followed the scent, but it weaned off near a tree a few meters away. Worried as hell, Auren sat under a tree near its bark and curled into a ball. She let out a howl and then rested her snout on her front paws.

'I am afraid for Onyx,' she said to me.

'I know. I am afraid for him too,' I replied. Somehow talking to her felt wonderful and was emotionally satisfying. Had I been alone in this situation, I would have been very frightened. But with Auren, I felt... confident.

'Where do you think he must have gone?' she asked me.

'Onyx is an Alpha wolf, Auren. He must have gone for a run. He had been guarding us for a long time.'

'I will wait for him here.'

'I would love that very much.'

'I am so happy to meet you finally, Poppy,' she said.

'Me too, Auren. I thought that—' I couldn't complete my words. Even thinking that Hilda was trying to kill her made my heart ache.

Auren continued our conversation as if knowing what I wanted to say. 'That tea that you were having was slowly killing me. I had come to the surface when you were sixteen, but then the tea that you had was laced with so many sedatives that it suppressed me. Your nanny gave you the tea regularly and she was adding a healthy dose of poison into it all the time. I am so glad that you have stopped having it. I have been dying to come out.'

Sadness wouldn't even encompass my feelings at this time. 'I am so sorry that I couldn't recognize it at that time.'

'How could you? You were just a child and your parents had

left you. Please Poppy, do not blame yourself. But I would love to meet Hilda one day.'

I chuckled. 'Yes, I am also waiting to meet her.'

All at once there was a rustle in the leaves. An enticing scent wafted and a quick movement later, Auren saw a massive silhouette of a black wolf with a bunny in his jaws. She lifted her face up, her eyes fixed at the bunny.

Onyx padded to her with the bunny dangling from his mouth. He came to stand right in front of her and dropped it there. He grunted and pawed the bunny. Auren was confused for a few moments. Onyx grunted again and nosed the bunny so that it rolled closer to her. And then Auren understood. Onyx had given a bunny as an offering to his mate.

Auren lifted her paw and tucked the bunny next to her, accepting his offering. Happy, Onyx tipped his head up to the sky and let out a howl.

After so many hours, Auren was tired and Onyx was aware. He looked at the direction where they had come from and Auren understood that she had to go back with him. Honestly, I was happy that when I shifted, I wasn't in my heats, else I just couldn't imagine what Auren would have done. She would have presented herself to him at every step. She was my beast and that was in her nature. As we walked back, she couldn't help sniffing his rear. It was embarrassing

as hell, but would Auren listen to me? And Onyx—the shameless wolf—he would let her sniff him. In fact he even stood at one place for her to sniff him. I had to use all my force to make her move forward.

Auren darted and raced with him. She slid down the moss-slick ground, lost her footing and rolled on the grass. Onyx rushed by her side and waited for her to get up, his ears pricked up. Auren yipped and bayed and got up while Onyx trotted at her side, their tongues lolling in happiness and contentment of each other's company.

I realized that my wolf lacked serious coordination and that I needed more time to be in my wolf's skin. Onyx was patient. He let me explore as much as I wanted and once Auren was tired, she started going in the academy's direction.

Once we reached there, Onyx let Damon come out while I watched him. He was naked. Auren, my embarrassing wolf, walked on her paws to him and even as he urged her to let me out, she inserted her snout right in the middle of his thighs to sniff him. Goddess.

Damon laughed but he didn't move. He was enjoying himself. Seriously, when I would come out, I was going to whack him.

Finally, he knelt on the grass and held Auren's face. "I know that you are loving it, but you have to let Poppy out." He kissed her snout as a bribe. Then he said to me, "Poppy, you

have to focus on your human self to come out. Request your wolf nicely. If you will force yourself out, she won't let you come."

Auren yipped, but she gave me way when I requested her politely. Shifting back was again very painful. The bones rearranged and I managed to shift back, panting heavily. I was in a crouching position, my eyes closed. When I opened them, I stifled a shriek of horror. I was naked. Like the day I was born. In the open. In the woods near the academy.