

Damon POV

After hearing about Eliza, I stopped the car and stepped out, having that ominous feeling. "How did that happen? And is Poppy, okay? Where is she? Did Eliza meet with an accident?"

Bob took a deep and shaky breath. "Poppy isn't here. Her friend Anna is. Would you like to talk to her?"

"Yes! Give her the damn phone!" I stabbed my fingers in my hair as air whooshed out of my lungs, as panic skittered down my spine like icy needles.

"Damon," Anna said in a shaky voice. "There's something very terrible going on over here."

"You have to tell me everything," I rasped, burning with the need to shift and go to my mate. Onyx got very restless. "Where is Poppy?"

She let out a sob. "We found Anna in the woods. Her head was bleeding at the back. It seems someone had attacked her from the back. We also sniffed Poppy around her but she wasn't there. Your pack members and my coven sisters have combed the woods around the academy, but Poppy is nowhere to be found. I—" A wail left her. "I saw her blood splattered on the ground. Someone—" She paused.

My mind became dizzy. This wasn't possible. No. No. No. No.

Goddeas. No.

"Someone has abducted her, I think. There were signs of struggle on the spot," Anna said. "I have no idea how these two got into this situation, Damon. While Eliza is in the hospital, Poppy is at some unknown location. It's like she has disappeared from the face of earth. She must be alone and lost or... kidnapped." Anna started crying.

As for me, I sank on my knees beside my car, unable to breathe. Emotions tightened around my heart in a vise-like grip. I felt like... dying. She was my unclaimed mate and the thought of losing her was like someone had stabbed a sharp knife inside my heart and then twisted it. Tears stung at the back of my eyes and my throat choked. I cursed myself for not getting my mate with me. I cursed myself for leaving her unprotected. I cursed the Moon Goddess for being so unkind to her and to me. I needed her back. I needed her in my lair. And I needed her back in my life. Until I got her back, I won't sit.

"Damon? Are you there?" Anna said, still crying.

"I am," I replied in a forced voice that came out as a whisper.

"You have to come here. Please tell Killian about Eliza. I was scared to call him. I am so glad that your warriors are here. Do you want me to send Eliza back to your pack?" Anna asked.

I swallowed thickly. The lump in my throat only grew larger. "Y—yes," I replied with a lot of effort. At least Eliza would be safe.

“Okay...” she said.

“Where’s Monica?” I asked.

“I have no idea! I haven’t searched for her, but she must be around.”

“I don’t think so,” I murmured. “Find out about Monica and Sinclair. If you find them, keep them in the academy.”

“Why Damon?” she asked, suddenly too suspicious.

I growled “I will answer you later, but ask my people to search for them. And Anna—” I warned her. “Stay safe. Keep Bob next to Eliza.”

“Okay,” she said and I could sense anxiety in her voice.

After that there was a deafening silence between us. I didn’t want to disconnect but I couldn’t speak. I wanted to ask a thousand questions, but by the time they came to my lips, they vanished. All my thoughts were focused on one girl who I had lost even before I marked her.

“Damon...”

I closed my eyes and threw the phone down. Then I tipped my head up and a ferocious roar left my chest.

At the hospital, when I informed Killian about Eliza, he went into pure panicky mode. My mother had come by then and when she heard about it, she said, "It's time you go and get her."

"What about dad?" I glanced at him.

"I am here, Damon," she said as she placed her hands on my shoulders. "With every other pack member. You have already quashed the attack from Howlers. I don't think that the Shadows will come again for a long time. So you go and get Poppy here." She stood on her toes and kissed my cheek. "And I am so glad that Poppy is your mate. I would have never been able to judge Monica otherwise."

I pulled my mother in a tight embrace. I was the one who misjudged my parents. I went to my father, held his hand in mine and promised him that I would avenge him. After that, Killian and I rushed back to the academy. Before leaving I instructed Jack to keep me updated about the situation of the pack every day and I told him to not reduce the patrol along the border until I came back.

"What about Pike?" he asked me as he came to drop me to the helicopter that would take me back to the academy. In normal days I never used the chopper because it was mainly for my father. He was a busy man. But this time I urgently needed to get back to the academy and so here I was.

"When you find Pike, tell him to stay beside father at all times. How is his family doing?"

Jack shook his head. "His wife is all panicky!"

I didn't know what words I could offer. I clasped his forearms. "I am sure things will be fine. Send a team of warriors to comb the forest around our pack's territory."

"I will."

The helicopter took us to the academy in an hour. I rushed to the hospital with Killian. I met Bob who was standing outside the room with his group of Umbra warriors. They bowed to me as soon as they saw me.

I hurried inside to find Anna sitting at the edge of the bed, talking softly to Eliza.

"Eliza!" Killian breathed. He rushed to her side and gathered her in his arms.