

## Poppy POV

I froze when I saw the gray wolf. It stopped a few meters away from me and a low rumble emanated from its chest. It was tall, with silverish fur and was very muscular. He was partially hidden behind a thick trunk of a tree and some dense foliage. I sniffed the air in the meanwhile and smelled blood. Surely, the wolf was bleeding.

I stood petrified next to the tree, scared as hell. If he decided to kill me, he could easily do that with those sharp canines that he was showing as he was snarling. But the fact that he didn't take another step towards me was baffling.

I stared into his amber eyes as he fixed his gaze into mine. We stood there in a staring contest for a long time. The sun was rising and I could now clearly see the wolf under the dense canopy of the conifers. I was feeling weak as the time passed but I couldn't move an inch for the fear that the wolf would attack me.

The wolf took a step forward after what seemed like eternity. He dipped his head in a warning and I instinctively knew that he wasn't going to attack. So I remained fixed in my place for his next movement. He took another cautious step and I pressed myself to the tree harder.

Slowly, he covered the distance between us and came to stand right in front of me. Gods above. He was a werewolf and he was as tall as my height. He lifted his snout and sniffed me, and to my utter amusement, it sat down about two meters away from me on its haunches. His growl turned into a whimper.



I blinked my eyes once and then twice as I allowed myself to relax. I was sure that it would lunge at me and attack if I moved at all, but it sat there patiently, watching my every movement.

I drew some courage and limped towards him, cautiously. I swallowed my saliva down my dry throat and raised my hand warily. It continued to sit there quietly, still watching every movement of mine. When I was only a meter away from, I noticed that his back was bleeding profusely. There was a horrible hole on his back and I could actually see one of his bones. I let out a cry of despair. "Can I see it?" I asked in a low voice. Now I understood why he was not able to shift.

He nodded lightly and allowed me to approach him. I reached at his back and was appalled by the extent of the damage. "There's a nice stream down over there," I said, pointing to the right. "If you can come with me till there, maybe I can do something about it."

The wolf cocked his head. He sniffed me again and then got up to stand next to me. This was my cue to lead him to the stream. We both walked side-by-side in silence. I wanted to stroke his fur to make him feel relaxed, but I was too scared to even touch him at this point of time. Who was he and how did he manage to get alone? Was he a rogue? Was I a rogue?

We reached the stream in twenty minutes and as soon as we reached there, the gray wolf took to it. He jumped inside it and sat down on his four paws, allowing his blood to run with the cold water of the stream. Despite all the pain in my body, I laughed at him. Then I took my shirt out, soaked it with water and gently rubbed it on his skin, taking care not to go near the gaping wound. He whimpered and closed his eyes, resting his head on his foot.

"Who are you?" I mumbled. He seemed to have gone off to sleep because he didn't even lift his head in an answer. I chuckled and



cleaned him a little more. When I was done, the sun was shining above us. And I was too hungry. My stomach growled. His ears pricked up. He raised his head. I said, "We are done. You have to come out of the stream now." In this wilderness, I don't know why I was caring for this wolf, but I liked that I wasn't alone.

The wolf got up and lumbered to the bank of the stream. He shook himself in that wolfy way and I squealed as all the water came on me. "Bad wolf!" I chided him as I laughed. His tongue came out and he licked me. I shook my head and we both trudged to the safety of a thicket nearby.

As soon as we reached there, the wolf nudged me with his snout to go and sit up on the tree. "And where are you going?" I asked.

He nudged me again with a growl. "Very dominant, you are!" I scolded him but I climbed the tree. He marked the tree with his scent and then plodded inside the forest. "Hey!" I shouted. "Come back!" But he was gone. I wrapped my arms around my body, as a healthy dose of fear ran down me all over again. That werewolf was very selfish, I came to the conclusion. Why did he make me climb a tree only to run away? After waiting for half an hour, I started to climb down when I saw him emerging from the trees and tall grass with a rabbit in his mouth. Oh.

As soon as I was down, he dropped the rabbit on the ground. I chuckled as I picked it up. In the next hour, I skinned it, made a fire using flintstones near the stream and roasted the rabbit. I was so hungry that I ate the whole leg, while the wolf ate up the remaining.

Now that I was fed, I felt so much better. The wolf dropped to his belly next to me and I rested against him. Soon the two of us were sleeping.

When I got up, I was surprised to see that it was morning. The wolf

The Gray Wolf

was sitting next to me like a guardian.