

THE ALPHA'S BRIDE

Chapter 1051 Alpha Violet (8)

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Violet could feel Ashton's lust increasing exponentially, and she thought he would give in to his urges and pounce on her wildly, but he didn't.

After removing their clothes completely, Ashton kissed her slowly and unhurriedly, making her relax as she melded into him, and their legs moved bit by bit to inch toward the cot.

Violet loved feeling his firm back under her palms and the way his strong arms held her gently. His calming scent of carnations didn't match the way his presence dominated hers. But then, everything about Ashton was a mix of contradictions.

By the time they reached the cot, she was sure that even her bones had turned soft.

They spent the night together, kissed many times, and did much more than kissing, but it was never like this, all-consuming and mind-altering in a way that made her soul stir. Ashton's emotions were washing over her, and she could feel his yearning and impatience, and his restraints cracking under the knowledge that he won't wait much longer.

The air around them was different, sizzling with anticipation because he will mark her soon.

Ashton was on top of Violet, their bare bodies ablaze already under the influence of the sparks of their bond that flared wherever they touched, which was a lot.

"Vi." Ashton's voice was a deep rumble. "Last chance."

She wriggled under him, anticipating him settling down there and stretching his insides, and she didn't expect he will say such a thing. "For?"

"To change your mind."

Violet blinked from her lusty haze. "What?" Why would she change her mind?

"Once I put my mark on your neck, there is no going back. This is your last chance. Are you sure you want a forever with me?"

'Silly man,' Violet thought. Ashton was always considerate, even though his Alpha position and power allowed him to do as he pleased. Five years ago, the image of a nice guy with a bit of mischief suited him, but he returned to her with experience of many battles, and she could feel he was different.

The truth was that Violet didn't know this Ashton. He changed fundamentally and had some mystery around him, but she was confident he was the one for her because their souls understood each other. It was just like humans would say, for better and for worse, until death tears us apart... or something like that.

"Do you feel this, Vi?" He pressed his erection at the cradle of her thighs, and the sparks of their bond

stimulated all the right places, making them both moan. "This is how much I want you now and There was sharpness around him, more muscles, and those tattoos that made him look like a total bad boy. Ashton Pascal was a bad boy who saved himself for her. Violet knew how hard it was for Alphas not to sleep around because they had a huge libido. Violet was not spared of it either, and she had no idea how much Ashton was holding back when numerous females threw themselves at him, but he did it so he could give her his first time because he knew she was saving herself for her mate. For him. That alone was confirmation that Ashton was the only one who deserved her.

"Yes. Yes. YES! I want my forever with you, Ash. Only with you. If you will have me."

His insides shook.

"IF?" What was she talking about? Violet was admirable and perfect in every way possible, and he could see that with or without their mate bond. Any guy would be an idiot to refuse her. However, she was his. Wasn't he the lucky one?

"Do you feel this, Vi?" He pressed his erection at the cradle of her thighs, and the sparks of their bond stimulated all the right places, making them both moan. "This is how much I want you now and tomorrow, until my last breath, and in my next life. Forever, Vi."

She smiled. "Sounds wonderful."

Ashton's head dipped, and he kissed the left side of her neck, right where her pulse vibrated against his lips, right where his mark will come.

He imagined this moment many times with long foreplay and his lips and tongue covering every inch of her body, but Violet released the sweetest moans, and he couldn't wait any longer.

Ashton reached for her right leg and raised it slightly so he could settle between her legs properly.

The scent of her arousal was driving him mad since they arrived in this cave, so he didn't need to check if she was ready for him.

Violet's eyes rolled at the back of her head, and she saw stars in broad daylight as Ashton made his way inside her. The delicious friction came with an electrical current that traveled up her spine to buzz her brain and leave her dazed, craving more.

She reached down and dug her fingers into his firm ass, pulling him closer.

Ashton rocked into her and enjoyed every sigh and moan that escaped her lips as he kissed her neck sloppily. She tasted like heaven, and she felt like heaven too. The sparks flared over his cock that was sheathed in her heat and moisture, and he was confident that he will never get bored of that sensation.

His body swelled with power as his blood turned into fire, flames coursing through his veins, and his every cell urged him to claim mate.

"Vi, Violet... my beautiful mate," he chanted between kisses, and Violet shuddered under the vibration of his voice against her neck.

This was it. She knew it because her wolf was going crazy in her mind, and her fangs were coming out against her will.

Violet hugged him tightly and kissed his neck. She lapped and sucked, to prepare him for her mark that will come there soon, but he stimulated her body in ways that made her movements clumsy, and she was mostly slobbering around.

"Vi, Vi," he called breathily. "I'm going to..."

"Go for it," she interrupted him. Violet loved that he was good at communicating, but this was not the time to give her a heads-up. This was the time to give in to their instincts, which told her to let him take the lead because he was worthy.

The way he managed to cradle her body in his strong arms and caress her gently at the same time; the way he stretched her insides in mighty strokes while ensuring that his bodyweight didn't crush her; the way he wanted to ravish her and cherish her at the same time... it was perfect. It was everything.

Ashton was lost in the sensation of her hot insides gripping his cock. This was the woman he had fantasized about for the last five years and maybe even longer.

During his absence, Ashton was looking at Violet's photos and watching her grow up beautifully, wondering how it would be when she came of age and they got to feel each other, and this was so much better than he had ever imagined.

Violet welcomed him unconditionally. Her scent, her warmth, and softness, the curves of her body... it was all perfect. The biggest turn-on was how she turned her head to expose her neck and give him better access. The gorgeous and powerful Alpha Violet was submitting to him willingly, and now that her father approved, there was no shred of reluctance in Violet's emotions, and Ashton was confident that life didn't get better than that.

Chapter 1052 Alpha Violet (9)

Violet could feel the pressure in her groin area increasing, and she knew she was almost there. Almost. With every thrust, Ashton pushed her closer to Heaven and she hugged him tightly to move with him because she didn't want to go to Heaven or Hell without him.

Her moans mixed with his name, and there it was... her body tensed for a moment, and then she exploded in an orgasm that shut down all her senses other than the pulsating pleasure in her core, Ashton above her, Ashton inside her, Ashton all around her... Ashton, Ashton, Ashton everywhere, and it was perfect.

Ashton's lips paused on Violet's neck, and his ass buckled at the same time his fangs pierced her flesh. His hips moved in jerky movements as he bit all the way.

"AHHH!" Violet cried when scorching heat invaded every cell in her body, spreading from her core and from her neck and meeting right where her heart was. She could feel herself changing under the effects of Ashton's venom, but she didn't have time to analyze it.

Violet frantically reached for his neck, and before she knew what was going on, her fangs were inside him, and she heard him groan against her flesh, and then the whole world stilled.

Invisible strings snapped around them, solidifying their bond and tying their fates to each other. That was it. The bond was completed. They were mates now in mind, body, and spirit.

Violet was aware of her erratic heartbeat slowing down. Slower. Slower. Every next beat came with more delay from the previous one. Was she about to die? If she did, this was not a bad way to go, with Ashton inside her, washed in post-orgasmic bliss.

Her heartbeat started picking up, this time with a slight echo, like there were two of them, and they were two because Ashton's and Violet's hearts were now beating as one.

They could feel each other's emotions clearly as they were forming a whole that was much more than its halves when not together.

Ashton recoiled at the sensation of new power that pulsed inside him. Violet's venom was changing his powers, making them less jagged and more solid.

'I love you, Vi,' his deep voice sounded in her mind, and she smiled, sensing that this was so much more than just a mind link; it was a soul link that allowed them to share everything like they were one, and Ashton's emotions directed at her were pure and overwhelming. He really loved her.

Violet retracted her fangs and licked the spot where she marked him to help him heal. She enjoyed the way his body shuddered in the rhythm her tongue set, and she knew exactly what he was going through because he was tending to his mark on her neck, and the sensation was electric. It was such a

sensitive spot. The best part was that he was still inside her, and every time his body twitched, it caused friction that didn't allow her to fully come down from her high, leaving her lightheaded, and she loved it.

They were Alphas and would heal in no time, but this ritual of licking the fresh mark symbolized they will be taking care of each other.

Violet blinked to notice the tattoos on his back moving and creating delicious shivers through her body.

Ashton raised his head to meet her gaze. "I have no secrets from new patterns.

"Ash? Your tattoos..."

"Can we talk about that later?" His lips moved over her skin, sending delicious shivers through her body.

Ashton raised his head to meet her gaze. "I have no secrets from you, Vi, but this..." He moved his hips, reminding her that he was still inside her. "I have been waiting for this forever, and I don't want to waste a single minute. Tattoos will be there in a week and in a month, and we will talk about them and anything else you want when I get my fill of you."

Violet was not the patient, and she was not used to compromising, but if she needed to choose between chit-chatting and more sex, she would pick the latter. However... "When you get your fill of me? I hope that never happens."

Ashton grinned. "I have five years of pent-up frustration. It will take a loooong time to get it out of my system."

"You sound like you have a specific timeline on your mind."

"I do.," he said with all the seriousness in the world. "I am thinking forever."

Any hostility Violet had, sizzled away that instant. His emotions were clear, and she wanted to peer into his thoughts, but there was nothing.

"Why are you shielding your thoughts from me, Ash?" Violet asked.

"I am?"

"Mhm," she confirmed with a hum. "I heard you say you love me, but after that, it was silent."

There were many things he wanted to tell her, mostly about what he had gone through during the last five years, but he didn't want to ruin their time together. This was time for him and Violet and carnal pleasures. Anything else must wait.

Ashton cocked an eyebrow at Violet. "Look who's talking."

"What?"

"I heard you love my cock inside your pussy, but that was it."

Violet's eyes widened. "You heard that?" Did he hear how much she admired him when he fought with Damon? Did he hear all her insecurities about other women who might get his attention? Can he also hear how much she loves him and that she doesn't want to part from him, not even for a minute? What if he calls her needy and clingy and gets bored of her?

"Gods, Vi!" Ashton exclaimed. How could he get bored of her? "You are perfect. Don't let anyone tell you otherwise. Not even you."

Violet smiled as she could sense his sincerity. "I am perfect for you, just how you are perfect for me."

Ashton chuckled and leaned to gently kiss his mark, which was still red and resembled two bruises that came together. He wondered how his mark will look when it heals completely. That right there was proof that Violet was his completely. Finally.

He was never that happy. It was an energetic swell in his chest that extended to all his limbs, and he feared that if he didn't find an outlet, he will explode.

Ashton's head jerked up, and he inhaled deeply to...

'AWOOOOOOO!'

His guttural howl shook the cave and resonated with Violet in ways she never thought were possible.

Her body arched on her own, and she joined him.

'AWOOOOO!'

The sound of her howl paled when compared to Ashton's in terms of volume, but it came with energy that stabilized their surroundings like it shielded nature from the harshness of Ashton's power.

"You are my other half, Vi," Ashton said with a dreamy smile. He knew they were mates, but the last twenty-four hours came with sensations he didn't think were possible.

Violet's smile reflected Ashton's. "I am your other half, and you are mine. This is how I imagined the mate bond would be."

His eyes flashed with lust. "Let me give you more notes to compare with your imagination."

His hot palm landed on her hip, and he pulled out slowly, enjoying how her jaw fell slack. She was impacted by the sparks just as he was. He pushed inside her in one mighty thrust, and her body arched in sheer pleasure.

After a few painfully long seconds of not moving, her hands moved to hold onto his ass.

"Not slow, Ash. Don't torture me."

He adjusted his position. "As you wish..."

His mate wanted him to plunder her insides and he had no intention of letting her wait.

Chapter 1053 Alpha Violet (10)

Violet was sitting on a cot and watching Ashton, who was putting his clothes on.

They spent more than a month in the cave, coming out occasionally to stretch their paws, hunt, and get some fresh air.

Violet and Ashton mated a few times in their wolf forms, and Violet was surprised how her wolf heightened all of her senses, orgasm included. Wolf or human, Ashton was always an attentive lover, intense and passionate, putting her pleasure first, and she loved him more by the second.

Making love in human form had its advantages also. They could use their hands and lips more, so Violet couldn't decide which one was better. Ashton said that they will keep alternating so she can do thorough research before deciding. Violet had no objections because that research included sex with her handsome mate.

The important part about the previous month was that the couple had time to get to know each other because no one disturbed them during their solitude. It was perfect.

Violet's brows came together as she watched the light gray fabric of bodies in order to gain abilities and boost their power. Witches' magic and human technology were involved.

the shirt slide down to cover Ashton's back. His muscular flesh was adorned with tattoos, and now Violet knew they were much more than elaborate decorations.

Between lovemaking, they were talking about the last five years. Violet told Ashton about her studying, training, and preparations to take her role as an Alpha. Ashton told her about his interactions with rogues, the existence of hybrids, and the origin of his tattoos.

Violet knew that some rogues were more troublesome than others, but she didn't understand the extent of them modifying their bodies in order to gain abilities and boost their power. Witches' magic and human technology were involved.

Talia was telling Violet that some people would go to extremes for power, and Violet was unsure how much those stories were exaggerated. Until now.

Violet was blessed with an extraordinary bloodline, and she couldn't grasp the concept of weak ones struggling to survive. Of course, it was not only about survival. There was a fight for power, driven by greed, and Violet's heart ached at the thought that Ashton had gone through gruesome procedures in order to gain his abilities and be able to fight against them.

She thought that her achievements in the last five years were impressive, but compared to Ashton's, it looked like Violet was just playing. She needed to step up so she could match her impressive mate.

Violet noticed Ashton's tattoos changing patterns more than once during their time in the cave, and even though Ashton assured her regarding his tattoos, but Violet didn't trust the old witch. Violet was adamant that Cornelia should inspect Ashton. There was that he never felt better, she wanted to confirm nothing bad was happening to him. That was why they were getting ready to leave the cave.

Ashton told Violet that Evanora was the one in charge of the rituals regarding his tattoos, but Violet didn't trust the old witch. Violet was adamant that Cornelia should inspect Ashton. There was something more human in Cornelia, more approachable; maybe because Cornelia was mated to James, and she had Talia's trust, while Evanora was mostly stuck in the Castle with a bunch of witches and her Guardian mate.

Violet vowed that she would join Ashton in his fight against nasty hybrids. There was no way she would let her mate risk his life alone.

"When you look at me like that, I think we should stay here for a few more days," Ashton said, and Violet snapped out of her thoughts.

His intense gaze made her heart flip. Even without shared emotions through their mate bond, Violet could see the love, adoration, heat, and a hint of mischief. She was his whole world, and he would do anything in his power to make her happy, even if that meant getting a checkup by Cornelia.

"We can always return here later," Violet said. She was aware that just over a day had passed out there, but she still felt guilty for indulging in pleasures with Ashton for more than a month and neglecting her duties.

"Should we visit your cousins first?"

"Yes," Violet responded. "I don't want them to think we are sneaking around. If they find out we were here and didn't visit, they will be upset." And she also wanted to introduce Ashton as her mate, officially. It was a big deal.

Since they were kids, Valeria was talking about Ashton in high regard, emphasizing how handsome and intelligent he was. Violet wanted to ensure her cousin knew that Ashton was off the market and there would be no more glorifying of Ashton unless Valeria was tired of having a complete set of teeth.

...

Valeria and Edgar were on the training grounds, exchanging blows. Members of the Midnight Guardians pack gathered around to watch, as usual. It was a show of impressive skills accompanied by loud bangs, smacks, and occasional gusts of wind that raised dust in the area.

From a young age, the duo of young Alphas took their training seriously, and they each had special abilities that placed them among the best warriors of their generation.

Axel was there also. He took pride in watching his oldest twins show their power, and he was in charge of shielding other pack members from any power burst that could harm them.

With the ruckus Valeria and Edgar caused in the sparring area, no one noticed two figures approaching. Of course, Violet was an expert in concealing her presence. She got that from her mother, the only one capable of giving the slip to mighty Alpha Damon Blake.

Violet and Ashton were about ten feet away when Axel turned to them.

"Vi!" He exclaimed. "And young Alpha Ashton. To what do we owe this pleasure of unexpected visit?"

"Why are you so formal, uncle Axel?" Violet asked, and she got closer to hug him.

Ashton was not happy that Violet let go of him, and he was uncomfortable seeing her get physical with another male. He told himself to relax because Axel was her uncle, not a threat, and the hug lasted less than a second.

The commotion on the training ground stopped abruptly as the young Alpha sibling pair noticed guests and decided to join them. Usually, Valeria and Edgar wouldn't stop their training, but Violet was technically above them in ranking, and they needed to show respect.

The audience also noticed Violet, and they were quick to gather there. Violet was their future Alpha, and their admiration for Alpha Natalia spilled on Violet. No one knew the full extent of Talia's and Violet's powers, but they were all proud to have them as their leaders. Other than Talia and Violet being impressive, they also had Alpha Damon Blake and many others as their allies. Only a crazy person would dare to mess with them.

"Well, well," Valeria said while walking to Violet and Ashton with too much sway in her hips (per Violet's observations). "If I knew you would be here, I would dress up a bit." She was obviously talking to Ashton, who was now shaking hands with Axel.

Valeria's smile stiffened when Violet wrapped her arms around Ashton.

"Hi Val," Violet greeted her cousin. "I came to say hi with my mate."

Valeria's stomach dropped as her fears materialized, showing Violet and Ashton like a perfect couple that has it all and reminding her that she didn't belong in that picture.

Despite being older than Violet, Valeria was always second. Even now.

Chapter 1054 Alpha Violet (11)

Valeria's eyes widened as she processed Violet's words.

"Mate? You and Ash?"

Valeria wanted to be happy for her cousin, but she couldn't stop the bitterness that swelled within her.

Valeria was the oldest one among cousins with the Moonrider bloodline, and she worked hard, yet she will never be a true Alpha with a pack. No matter how much their people respected and supported her father, the true Alpha of the Midnight Guardians pack was Alpha Natalia Moonrider. With Talia being the official Alpha, Talia's oldest child was set to be the next Alpha.

How Valeria saw this, Violet had it all. Superior genes, talent, looks, and smarts, and now she also snatched Ashton.

Violet was younger, yet she had found her mate!

This was one more confirmation that Valeria always came second, at best.

Valeria hoped her mate would be someone like Ashton. He was tall, handsome, kind, and smart, with undeniable skills in strategizing. Everyone knew that Ashton had tremendous contributions in dealing with rogues, and Valeria spent many days fantasizing about him, yet here he was, with his arms around Violet.

Valeria forced a smile. "Congratulations."

Violet narrowed her eyes at her cousin. If Valeria thought that her fake smile fooled anyone, she was mistaken. Violet's pride didn't allow her to let this slide.

"There is no need to pretend, Val. If you want to let out some steam, I'm available and willing to whoop some respect into you."

Ashton's brows came together in disapproval. "Angel? Don't tell me you want to fight."

Violet looked up at him. "Val's hostility is tangible. It's better to let it out than to let it fester. If she disapproves of me being your mate, she is welcome to try proving she is better."

"No one is better than you," Ashton said. "My mate is not determined by how she fights or uses abilities. You are my mate because the Moon Goddess said so, and because you are the female I dreamed of for many lonely nights, and because..."

"Thank you, Ash," Violet interrupted him, her cheeks flaming red from embarrassment. It was one thing for him to be lovey-dovey when they were alone, but now they had an audience of several dozen pack members, Axel, Edgar, and Valeria. Those last three were her relatives!

Ashton thought she was adorable. "Don't interrupt me when I'm telling you we are perfect for each other, and if anyone doubts that, they will need to deal with me."

"I know that your feelings are true. I don't doubt them," Violet said. "However, others have doubts and need to be reminded not to wish for what's not theirs. If I can't defend my right to be by your side, I'm not worthy of being your mate. Wouldn't you think the same?"

Ashton took Violet's hand into his and played with her fingers. "I don't want you to strain yourself. I don't want you to get a bruise or a cut or anything that would mar your skin. It is my duty to protect you. If you believe someone needs to be taught a lesson, I will do it for you. Will you allow me that, my love?"

Violet was lost in Ashton's deep eyes, full of emotions, and she held her breath as he went down to his knees.

"As your mate, I have the right to be your champion," Ashton said for everyone to hear, and then he added through their mind link, 'If you deny me this, it will signal you don't see me as worthy of fighting for you. Do you want your people to think of me as a weakling who hides behind his mate?'

Violet was speechless. 'You are cheating, Ash.'

'Maybe,' he drawled. 'I will do anything and everything for you, Vi. If I can go down on my knees in front of an audience, a little cheating is nothing.'

"You want to fight me?" Valeria asked Ashton in disbelief.

"No," Ashton responded without turning to look at Valeria. "I want to fight instead of my mate. It is irrelevant who the opponent is."

Valeria smiled bitterly. Her pride was hurt. "You think you can match someone from the Moonrider family?"

Everyone from the Midnight Guardians pack had abilities, and even though Valeria was not mated and her abilities didn't reach their full potential, thanks to her mother's bloodline, she was able to perform way above the level of an Alpha. As children, Valeria and Violet would often end their fights with a tie. Ashton was not a match for someone from the Moonrider family, no matter how impressive his fighting accomplishments were. How Valeria saw this, her fighting Ashton would be like bullying a child.

Ashton got up to his feet and faced Valeria. He would kneel only to his mate. "Your bloodline doesn't matter. A worm or a God, if they understand. Until then, you will learn through experiences that if you challenge one mated person, you are challenging her mate as well. Threaten my mate, I will be her weapon and her shield."

"Just because she is your mate?"

"Yes," Ashton responded flatly. "Once you find your mate, you will understand. Until then, you will learn through experiences that if you challenge one mated person, you are challenging her mate as well. Even if their defeat is certain, they will stand tall and do their best to protect what matters."

Ashton's every word was like a knife in Valeria's heart.

"This is between cousins. I have no interest in fighting you," Valeria said.

"How about we make it a double?" Edgar chimed in. Violet and Ashton were at a standstill, and Edgar wanted to finish his sparring. How he saw this, Ashton was not much of a problem, and Valeria could get her fight with Violet, and then they could get back to their sparring.

"Our first fight together," Violet said with a smile, and Ashton could feel her excitement. "Let's do this."

"Is using of powers allowed?" Valeria asked.

"Up to you," Violet responded. "As the unmated one, my abilities will put you at a disadvantage. But I don't mind going easy on you, like always."

Valeria sneered. "No need. Feel free to go all out. I'm sure I can handle it."

"Now, now, kids," Axel tried to defuse the situation, but he knew Valeria won't give up. Maybe it was time for her to learn the hard way. "Let me call Yasmin to set up proper barriers." If Violet and Valeria go all out, they might destroy the whole realm.

"As you wish," Violet said, and turned her attention to Ashton. "That gives us some time. Do you want me to show you around?"

"Is there a sight more beautiful than you?"

Violet giggled. "I don't know about beautiful, but it's definitely different. Come."

Valeria was fuming after Ashton and Violet. "Where are you going!?" Pack members swooning after Ashton and Violet only fueled her anger.

"Let them go," Axel said.

"They are disrespectful."

"Respect is earned, Val."

"Are you saying I don't deserve it?"

"Right now, no. They are a newly mated couple. You don't need to be happy for them, but you need to understand that they are adapting to the new bond, feeling vulnerable, and will be overprotective of each other. I know you don't get it because you didn't experience it, but a true Alpha learns and adapts without going through it herself."

Valeria lowered her head. She knew that Axel was right, and normally, she would be more patient and reasonable, but seeing Violet walk in proudly with Ashton by her side ignited all Valeria's insecurities at the same time, and she felt like an idiot. Was it too late to apologize and start again?

She glanced around. Too many people saw what happened, and if she backed down, people would label her as a weakling. It was better to fight and lose than to chicken out without giving it a try.

Chapter 1055 Alpha Violet (12)

While Yasmin came to set up barriers with the help of her younger kids and a few other witches, many pack members gathered.

The structure of the pack changed significantly since Alpha Natalia took over.

The Midnight Guardians pack had about five hundred pack members, most of them unmated. Over the years, that number swelled to more than double, with people finding mates and pups being born. They also had a branch of the Silver Flame Coven there, with more than a few dozen witches considering the Midnight Guardians pack as their home. It was lively.

Talia was popular and people admired her. In the same way, Violet brought joy and hope to the pack by just being there.

Everyone was eager to see the young Alpha Violet. She would visit the Midnight Guardians pack with Alpha Natalia, but not often enough. With the time difference between realms, even if Violet came once per week, it would be months for the members of the Midnight Guardians pack. It's not like they couldn't visit her through the portal that opened directly to the Dark Howlers pack, but this was on their home territory, and it carried a different flavor to it.

On top of that, everyone wanted to see a fight among Alphas, and the word spread that Alpha Violet had found her mate! Who wouldn't be curious to see their future Alpha (aka Ashton)?

In the blink of an eye, several stands were selling snacks and beverages, and one was taking bets. It turned into a spectacle.

The crowd was simmering with excitement, and they were wondering when young Alpha Violet and her mate would appear.

Somewhere in the territory of the Midnight Guardians pack...

"What do you think?" Violet asked Ashton while gesturing below them. They were on a high rock from where they could see a crystal-clear lake and a small sandy beach nestled among rocks and trees.

Talia told Violet a story about how Damon made that beach himself. When Talia and Damon found the place accidentally, many moons ago, overgrown bushes and other plants blocked the access to the lake. When Damon saw how much Talia loved it, he cleared up the area and brought the sand. The place was difficult to find because natural arrays would make people walk back to where they started, so it provided privacy.

"Gorgeous," Ashton said, and Violet turned to see him look at her.

"Are you talking about me or about this place?" She called him out.

Ashton's lips curved into a smile. "Do you need to ask?" Of course, he was talking about her!

"We might have time for a quick dip," Violet said with a smirk and jumped off the rock to run toward the beach.

Ashton clicked his tongue. He wanted to take a dip alright, but he was not thinking about the lake.

With a whoosh, Ashton found himself next to Violet, and she exclaimed in surprise when his arms wrapped around her waist and he pulled her down to the sand.

His lips descended on hers with urgency, shattering all her defenses and reasoning as her arms snaked around his neck.

in his eyes. "I will always have time for you, Vi."

She wanted to remind him about the fight and the audience "Ash... Ash," she called between kisses. "We don't have... time for... this."

His hands under her blouse paused, and he looked at her with fire in his eyes. "I will always have time for you, Vi."

She wanted to remind him about the fight and the audience waiting, but his lips latched to his mark on her neck, and the only thing she could do was moan as her body turned soft and needy.

Newly mated couples were vulnerable and overprotective, and they felt at ease only when their bodies were entangled, connected as one, just like their souls.

For Ashton, keeping his hands (and cock) away from Violet was torturous. He thought that one month of solitude might be enough to satisfy him, but now he realized he was wrong. His hunger for Violet was intense, just as it was on the first day, and it didn't show any signs of easing up.

Ashton didn't care about the silly challenge from Valeria and Edgar. It was childish and ridiculous, and it's not like Violet would give up her Alpha position or her mate based on the outcome of the fight. Instead, he was thinking of returning to the cave for another few months, but he decided to ask her about that later.

He was careful not to rip her clothes as he removed them with haste, and he groaned when he felt her hot flesh squeezing his cock.

"Goddess, Vi! I can't get enough of you," he said like a prayer and a curse.

He looked down to meet Violet's unfocused eyes.

She reached to dig her fingers into his firm ass.

"Finish what you started, Ash," she said in a low growl.

Ashton's smile was reflected in his eyes. He was truly happy.

Over the last month, they had sex numerous times, yet every time it was better than the previous one, and every time her beauty blinded him. That was Violet, his mate. She was everything he ever imagined and so much more. She was perfect.

With a deep growl of approval, Ashton started rocking into her, enjoying every sigh and moan that escaped her lips.

...

At the training area...

Valeria and Edgar stood in the middle of the square marked with white chalk. The sounds from the crowd were muffled due to the protective shields Yasmin set up, but the excitement was tangible.

Valeria glanced at the sun.

"Do you think they chickened out and left?" Valeria asked.

Edgar snorted. "Vi? She was never the one to run away from the fight. But I wouldn't dismiss the possibility of them forgetting about us."

Valeria rolled her eyes. "You could at least pretend to support me."

"I would never support a person who gets between mates."

"That's not what I did."

"Tell that to someone who will buy it. We both know what you did and why you did it. You can't hide things from me."

"Then you know..."

Edgar made a face. "The only thing I DON'T know is what's with the hostility whenever you see Violet? How is it possible that after all this time, you are unable to accept reality?"

"Easy for you to say. You were always second." Her face fell when she realized what she said. "Sorry. I didn't..."

"You didn't mean it? I think you did. Did you say I was always second? So were you. The only difference between us is that I learned to accept my place."

Valeria pursed her lips. "What are you expecting me to do?"

"Me? Nothing. But I hope you will learn to accept that Alpha Natalia is the rightful Alpha of the Midnight Guardians pack. Father saw that a long time ago, and he did the right thing by stepping down. Even if Violet is five years old, she would still be the next Alpha; as for us, if we are lucky, she will appoint us to be her proxies or her betas. However, if you continue with that attitude, we will be lucky if we get to guard the dungeon."