

Defy The Alpha(s)

#Chapter 1: Special Skills - Read Defy The Alpha(s)

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Today was the *Marked Day*.

Every eighteen-year-old girl like Violet Purple had waited for this day from the moment they entered high school.

It was the day when young women from all districts were given the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to become a member of Lunar Academy.

An academy that wasn't just a school, but a ticket out, a chance to rise above, to be *chosen*.

It was no secret that the top-performing human students ended up marrying alphas, the apex of werewolf society.

After all, the war two centuries ago had decimated the werewolf population, particularly the she-wolves. With only ten percent of them left, alphas had turned to humans for their mates, creating an uneasy yet necessary alliance.

The werewolves had been initially strong and persistent during the war but a virus, designed by human scientists, had ravaged the werewolf population, killing eighty percent of their female population. The werewolves, faced with extinction, had no choice but to call for a cease-fire and peace was brokered between the two races.

But it wasn't true peace. There were rules, agreements, and an ever-present tension that underscored the delicate balance. Perhaps to symbolize this coexistence, the alpha king had married a human, a woman he met at Lunar Academy, giving the school its fame and regality.

"School, my ass," Violet Purple muttered under her breath, casting a disbelieving glance at the teacher in front of the classroom.

The woman was holding up the official-looking application form, droning on about the importance of making a good impression and how the form could be the key to changing their futures.

Everyone knew the academy was less about learning and more about matchmaking. But no one would say it aloud, not when they needed a shot at a life they couldn't otherwise reach.

"Make sure you fill in every section carefully," the teacher instructed. "Lunaris Academy will only select one student from each district, and with two other schools in our district, the competition is fierce. So use all the skills you have. Make your form irresistible. Ask your parents for help if you need it. Some of them have gone through this process, and their experience might guide you. And remember, submit your forms first thing tomorrow. The law mandates that you apply, and non-compliance comes with heavy penalties. Treat this form like your very life. Good luck. "

As if on cue, the bell rang, signaling the end of the lesson. The classroom erupted into chaos as students rushed to pack their bags and head home, their conversations buzzing with excitement, as they gossiped about the upcoming selection.

Violet shoved her books into her backpack, her fingers trembling slightly from the tension that had settled deep in her bones. This was a chance she didn't know whether to take or reject.

Even if by zero point zero chance that she won the spot at Lunaris Academy, she wasn't interested in being the princess in distress who needed to be saved. Nor was she stupid to fall for the stupid fallacy called love – her mother's occupation had ruined any appeal such emotion might hold for her.

Also, she knew the game was rigged. Alphas didn't marry girls like her—poor, broken girls with nothing to offer. They married beauties, winners, and girls who knew how to play the game. Violet wasn't one of them.

"Hey, purple whore," a voice jeered from behind.

Violet froze, her breath catching in her throat.

Not today, she thought, squeezing her eyes shut, praying they would leave her alone.

Maybe if she ignored them, they would lose interest. But she should have known by now, they wouldn't. They never did.

"Hey, you deaf?" the voice called again, closer now. Violet could feel the malicious eyes on her back as her tormentors gathered behind her. The same group that had made her life a living hell for years.

One of them shoved her forward. Violet stumbled, gripping her desk for support. A wave of bitter anger surged through her, but she forced the emotion down. She was honestly not in the mood to get her fist dirtied, not to mention she had more important things like the Lunaris Academy form in her bag to think about.

"You think you're gonna get into Lunaris, huh?" Jasmine, their leader sneered, her voice thick with disdain. "Don't make me laugh. They wouldn't want trash like you anywhere

near them. I mean with a used hole like yours, I bet any dick that goes in there would be lost."

The other girls laughed at the cruel joke, emboldened by their leader's malice.

Violet's fists clenched, her nails digging into her palms as her pulse quickened. Blood pounded in her ears, the sting of their words sinking deep. Being an orphan adopted by a prostitute was the only reason they had chosen to pick on her, like hyenas circling a wounded animal.

It didn't help that her mother's idea of a joke was to call her "**Violet Purple**" because of the unnatural color of her hair.

As long as Violet could remember, her hair had been black at the roots and purple at the tips. It would have been better if her mother had called her "**Violet Black**," but no, the woman—likely high on drugs at the time—had literally announced to the world that she was adopted and denying her any claim to her surname.

Not that Violet knew which would have been worse: being Nancy's real daughter or just a replacement.

Violet had despised her name and appearance for as long as she could remember. Once, in a fit of rage, she had chopped off the purple tips of her hair, but they grew back just the same, marking her as a freak in everyone's eyes. That, combined with the shame of being adopted by a prostitute, was all the ammunition the bullies needed.

Violet knew they wanted a reaction, but she refused to give them the satisfaction. Instead, she straightened her spine, adjusted the strap of her bag on her shoulder, and attempted to leave, but they blocked her path.

"Get out of my way," she said coldly, her voice steady despite the heat of anger bubbling beneath her skin. She didn't want to fight, but if push came to shove, she'd handle it. A week of punishment or community service was nothing new, and neither was taking on all five of them at once. This wouldn't be the first time.

And it certainly wouldn't be the last.

Another one called Anisha laughed, "What are you gonna do about it, huh? Hit me? You might have defeated us in the past but we wouldn't let you win this time."

Violet ignored them knowing it was all talk and no action.

"Oh look, she's ignoring us again," one of the girls, Marissa, drawled, her voice dripping with false pity. "Do you think she's too dumb to understand? Or just too scared?"

"Bet she's scared," another one chimed in. "She's probably shaking in her boots, thinking about all the dicks she might have to suck at Lunar Academy if she unluckily gets chosen."

The girls laughed once more.

Something inside Violet snapped. She lunged so quickly startling the girls and they stumbled back. Her heart hammered in her chest, her fists trembling at her sides. She could feel the fury burning through her, every word they had ever thrown at her fueling the fire. She wanted to hit her, to wipe that smug look off her face.

But before she could fulfill that urge, a teacher came into the room and said, "what is going on here?"

No one replied, however, the man could sense the tension in the air. Not to mention, Jasmine and her crew were notorious bullies in the school.

"Alright, that is it. I want all of you out of the class and headed home." he commended them.

Violet was the first to move. With one last burning glare, she shoved her way past Jasmine and her lackeys. She wasn't going to waste her energy on them. It wasn't worth it.

Their school was a public one, which meant it had a huge population. Violet quickly lost herself in the crowd, hence her bullies would not find her to start trouble again.

Walking home, Violet let her eyes roam the destruction still lingering from the war. The humans might have won, but the damage was irreversible.

Buildings were left in ruins, streets cracked and scorched from explosions, and the air still carried a faint scent of ash and devastation. Two hundred years had passed since the final bombs of destruction fell, but the Earth had never fully healed.

It wasn't long before Violet reached the patch of land that housed a vast number of trailers. It was the only form of shelter for people like her. After the war, the poverty rate had skyrocketed, leaving only a privileged few able to afford a proper house, no matter how small.

Even the houses were guarded and isolated from the crumbling world outside. Her mother had always said they were lucky to have a trailer. She had bought it second-hand when a former tenant moved out, claiming she got it for a good deal.

The white trailer looked weathered, its paint peeling and faded and the inside was no better. The meager belongings they had were scattered across the tiny space, clothes draped over chairs, empty cans that had long since lost their contents, and cigarette

butts littering the table. The ashtray overflowed with half-smoked cigarettes, a pungent smell hanging heavy in the air.

It wasn't the kind of place to raise a child, but it was better than sleeping in the streets, where the bigger predators of this new world waited. Crime was rampant now, though in the trailer park, it was mostly petty theft. At least here, Violet didn't have to worry about murder.

Nancy, her mother, was nowhere to be found when Violet arrived home. The silence wasn't unusual. Nancy was rarely home and, when she was, it wasn't like she cared to interact. She had made it clear over the years that she was no maternal figure. But Violet didn't push her luck—having a roof over her head was enough.

There was no food, as usual, and Violet didn't bother looking for any. Instead, she fished out the snack bar she had been saving and sat at the table, unwrapping it slowly as her gaze fell on the form she'd been given in class.

The Lunar Academy application form stared back at her, demanding answers she wasn't sure she had. The only reason she was even considering filling it out was the slim chance that it might get her a scholarship to a university.

Right now, university education was a privilege only the elite could afford. If she somehow managed to get into Lunar Academy and come out on top, she could escape this life. She could become someone different—someone who didn't have to live in a trailer and avoid eye contact with the wrong people.

As she chewed, she reached the question, "*if you have any special skills, state them.*"

Violet paused, staring at the words thoughtfully. What special skills did she have? Surviving? Avoiding fights? Violet tapped her pen against the table, lost in thought, when the front door creaked open.

"Welcome home—" But the rest of her words trailed off as Nancy entered, a huge, burly guy following closely behind her. The sight of him made Violet's stomach churn.

She snapped.

"You promised me you'd take your business elsewhere," Violet said, her voice sharp with outrage. "Why is he here?" She pointed an accusing finger at the man, her face twisting in disgust.

Nancy rolled her eyes, shrugging off Violet's protest. "Promises don't put food on the table. I've got work to do."

Her gaze fell on the application form, and a laugh escaped her lips. "Is that a Lunar Academy form? Good for you. Just try hard to get in, and your life will get better. If it

gets harder to land a guy, remember what I taught you. Just give his dick a good suck, and he'll be putty in your hands. You two could end up together, giving birth to beautiful werewolf babies. What a lucky bitch you are, Violet."

The blood drained from Violet's face as her mother's words sunk in. Her stomach twisted, rage boiling beneath her skin, and her hands trembled. She had never felt so humiliated, so utterly exposed. Nancy didn't care. She never had.

Hot tears burned in Violet's eyes, but she refused to let them fall. "I should have known," she said, her voice thick with bitterness. "You were never one to keep your promises."

"Oh, please," Nancy scoffed, lighting a cigarette and taking a deep drag. "I'm doing what I can to survive. What I do is the reason you eat and go to school, so don't act so high and mighty. Now, if you don't mind, I need the trailer for a few hours." She smirked, her eyes glinting with mischief. "Unless, of course, you want to stay and learn a thing or two."

Disgust curled deep in Violet's gut. She pushed past her mother, glaring at the man, who leered at her as she passed. The urge to scream, to break something, clawed at her, but instead, she stormed out of the trailer, slamming the door behind her.

Once outside, Violet's tears spilled over. She wiped them away furiously, her chest heaving with a mixture of shame and anger. She spotted some of the neighborhood kids waving at her, calling her over, but she couldn't face them. She didn't want anyone to see her like this, broken, vulnerable.

Without a word, she headed for the woods behind the trailer park. It was the one place she could be alone, away from the ugliness of her world. She found a fallen log and sat down, her hands shaking as she pulled the form from her pocket. Her vision blurred with tears, but she stared at the section asking for her special skills, her anger bubbling to the surface.

With a savage burst of fury, Violet scribbled her response:

Special skills:

- 1. Sucking a dick.**
- 2. Giving A Mean Lap Dance**
- 3. Wait till you see Me in bed.**

It felt oddly therapeutic to put those words down, even if she knew there was no way they would accept her. *Fuck this messed up world. Fuck Nancy. Fuck Lunar Academy.*

She was done.

Chapter 2: Game On

"Good morning, Principal Jameson," students echoed in the hallway as they passed the austere middle-aged woman, whose heels resounded sharply against the marble floor with a steady *click-clack*.

"Good morning. Good morning," Principal Jameson answered enthusiastically, her hawk-like eyes sweeping over the students, always on the lookout for any defaulters of the academy's rules. And today, she found more than enough.

A female student was pinned against a locker, her legs wrapped around a male student as they engaged in a passionate kiss. His hands gripped her butt as he ground against her in full view of the hundreds of students passing by. The sight was so inappropriate for an institution of learning that Principal Jameson's face flushed with anger and embarrassment.

Despite her anger, Principal Jameson approached them calmly, knocking lightly on the locker next to them to get their attention.

But they didn't budge. Or rather, they pretended not to hear her, the girl moaning louder, almost deliberately, as if to provoke her further.

"Alright, that's enough!" Principal Jameson banged her fist on the locker, finally breaking them apart. The girl was the first to look up, her face painted with fake surprise.

"I didn't know you were here, Principal Jameson," she lied through her sparkling white teeth, still catching her breath.

The girl was Amanda Raynes, one of the rich, entitled humans. A brat she had to deal with every day.

"I bet you didn't," Jameson said coldly, "Not when your tongue was shoved down his throat." She glanced at the red-haired boy beside her, Griffin Hale, who had yet to say a word.

Amanda giggled, her eyes flashing with amusement. "It was a good 'shove,' though," she teased, casting a sultry look at Griffin.

Jameson flushed with barely contained fury but tried to maintain her composure as she turned to Griffin Hale, a brute standing at six foot two. He was just a kid but was built like a bodybuilder, an edge his werewolf lineage had given him.

Not just that, he was a "special" werewolf. Despite being a student, Griffin Hale carried the aura of someone who could snap you in half if he wanted.

"Mr. Hale," she said, her voice tight, "isn't it a little early for public displays of affection in the middle of the hallway?"

His response was a low, menacing growl. "Fuck off!"

Jameson recoiled, losing her composure for a moment. She wasn't used to being spoken to like that.

Before she could recover, Griffin continued, "Next time you interrupt me, you better be ready to offer yourself up."

"Mr. Hale!" Principal Jameson gasped, her face reddening in both fury and embarrassment. "That is an entirely inappropriate comment toward your principal!"

She glanced around, hoping no other students had heard, but of course, it was impossible in a school full of werewolves with heightened senses. Everyone was staring, and she knew this incident would be all over the academy's gossip forums by the end of the day. To make matters worse, Griffin had already turned his back on her and was walking away.

Desperate to reassert her authority, she shouted, "That's a hundred points deducted for inappropriate behavior, Mr. Hale!"

Griffin didn't even look back, he simply raised a middle finger in response, eliciting laughter from the surrounding students.

"Two hundred points, then!" she snapped, but the punishment seemed meaningless. His arrogance was unbearable, and the students' laughter only deepened her frustration.

This time, Griffin turned around and made a crude gesture, forming a circle with one hand and inserting his finger through it. The vulgar sign sent waves of laughter through the crowd.

Principal Jameson's face burned with humiliation. She wanted to shout more, to hurl further punishment at him, but the sight of students recording the scene on their phones forced her to reconsider.

Trying to salvage what little authority she had left, she turned to the group watching and announced, "Twenty points deducted, each."

Their groans brought her a sliver of satisfaction. Although it was a hollow victory. Deep down, Jameson knew the truth: she might have power over some of these students, but not all of them—certainly not the cardinal alphas. They were the kings of the academy, and she was little more than a puppet, trying to manage the chaos beneath them. Her authority only stretched so far.

As if to remind her of this reality, Roman Draven, another cardinal alpha, came hurtling down the hallway on a skateboard, shouting, "Incoming!"

Students scattered out of his way, screaming as he sped past. Even Jameson was forced to step aside, her carefully styled hair whipped by the rush of air as he zoomed by.

"That's it!" she snapped, her temper finally breaking. "Two hundred points for an unsanctioned ride in the hallway, Mr. Draven!"

But Roman did not care. He just laughed, riding away without a care in the world, the sound echoing through the hallway.

Principal Jameson felt her anger dissolve into a simmering helplessness. However, she took a deep breath, straightening her skirt and composing herself. She wouldn't let these entitled brats rattle her.

She was the principal of Lunaris Academy, a position most could only dream of. She had overseen this prestigious institution for years, ever since her predecessor had retired. The arrival of the cardinal alphas would not undo her work. She would keep order here, no matter how impossible it seemed.

With her head held high, she walked briskly in the direction of her office. She had more pressing matters to deal with, like sorting through the mountain of scholarship applications sitting on her desk.

Lunaris Academy was an elite institution, known for accepting only the rich and privileged. It had gained even more prestige when the current alpha king, who had once been a student here, married the academy's top human graduate, elevating her to queen.

Since then, alphas followed a similar pattern, seeking out the academy's outstanding female students to become their mates.

Full-blooded she-wolves were rare and highly coveted after the war decimated their numbers. Like an extinct level. The academy had only one she-wolf, and Jameson knew she'd be snatched up by one of the cardinal alphas by the time graduation rolled around. The one who would be king probably.

Normally, no poor human would ever get the chance to step foot in such a revered institution. But every year, thanks to the alpha king's magnanimity, one lucky student from each district was given the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to study at Lunaris Academy, regardless of their background.

And it was *her* decision who would receive that golden opportunity. The thought gave Principal Jameson a sense of power, a thrill. It was almost like playing god.

She couldn't wait to get started.

Humming a tune, Jameson entered her office and turned around, only to scream bloody murder. Someone was sitting in her chair, their back to her. Before she could say a word, the swivel chair turned, and he faced her.

Oh god, no. The blood drained from her face.

Not this one.

While all the cardinal alphas were terrifying in their own way, there was one she feared above all the others, and he was sitting right in front of her.

Asher Nightshade.

It seemed ridiculous to be so afraid of him, especially since he looked like a movie star, with his perfectly styled dark hair and shades so opaque she could barely make out his eyes.

But Jameson knew better. Asher wasn't just any student—he was a mind manipulator. If he ever took off those glasses, he could get into her head, make her do whatever he wanted. Like slit her own throat. She shuddered at the thought.

Even though Asher wore the shades to protect others from his gaze, it didn't lessen the fact that he was dangerous.

"I've been waiting for you, Jameson. You took your sweet time today," Asher drawled, his gaze trailing down her body in a way that made her shiver.

Even at forty, Jameson knew she was still an attractive woman. She worked hard to maintain her looks, eating healthy and keeping fit. Her brunette hair was slicked back into a perfect ponytail, not a strand out of place, and her form-fitting skirt had not a single wrinkle. She stood tall in her stilettos, every inch the picture of formal perfection.

Pushing her nerves aside, she forced a smile. "Mr. Nightshade, what a surprise. Though I would have appreciated if you had waited for me outside rather than breaking into my office. Don't you think so?"

He chuckled. "Where's the fun in that?"

Right. Jameson reminded herself why she avoided him whenever possible. Asher was the most unpredictable of all the cardinal alphas, chaos personified, always seeking to stir trouble.

Suppressing her unease, Jameson strode over to her desk, placed her bag on it, and asked in her most businesslike tone, "How may I assist you today, Mr. Nightshade?"

"And that's why I like you, Jameson. Always straight to the point." His voice dripped with amusement, and a prickling sensation crawled over her skin.

She wanted to demand he call her "Principal Jameson" as proper etiquette required, but the words stuck in her throat. Jameson knew better. Asher Nightshade might just be a student, but outside these academy walls, he wielded immense power. She wasn't foolish enough to get on his bad side.

"I heard you haven't approved the applications for the scholarship students yet," Asher said, his tone casual but laced with intention.

Jameson's mood shifted instantly. She eyed him cautiously. "Why, may I ask, are you interested in that, Mr. Nightshade?"

"Because I'll be the one approving the applications this year," he replied with a wicked grin.

Jameson felt the breath knocked out of her. No, no, this can't be happening.

She blinked in disbelief before finding her voice. "That's not your jurisdiction, Mr. Nightshade. I am responsible for reviewing and approving all applications. Besides, why would you care? Your role here is to study and excel, not meddle in administrative matters."

"Why, you ask?" Asher repeated, his smile widening as if she had made a joke. "Because the students you brought in last year were boring, and I'm going to shake things up this time."

Jameson bristled. She didn't know what he meant by "boring." The students she approved were always top performers with excellent potential.

"Mr. Nightshade—"

"Shall we do this the easy way, or should I make it hard? Though, honestly, it wouldn't be hard at all. You'd be a good girl in less than a second."

Jameson stiffened as Asher's hand moved toward his shades as though he were about to lower them, but instead, he ran his fingers through his dark hair. Still, the threat was clear.

"As you wish, Mr. Nightshade," Jameson conceded, knowing she had no real choice. Not unless she wanted to find out what punishment he might have in store for her. And she didn't have a death wish.

"Smart answer." He smiled in that unsettling way of his, a glint of satisfaction in his eyes. Jameson knew she'd made the right decision to comply.

Moments later, Jameson sat stiffly on the couch, seething in silence while Asher took her seat, rifling through the scholarship applications with a sense of ownership. The room was eerily quiet like a graveyard, except for the occasional rustling of papers. His expression was unreadable hence she couldn't tell what he was thinking. It annoyed her.

She couldn't hold back any longer. "You know, you don't have to—"

"Shh," Asher silenced her with a single raised finger, his eyes still scanning a page.

Then, for the first time, he smiled, his eyes gleaming as if he'd found a hidden treasure.

With a grin that made her uneasy, he handed the application to her.

"Approve this one."

Jameson's curiosity got the better of her as she took the paper from him, her eyes scanning the text. Almost immediately, her breath caught in her throat, her eyes widening in disbelief. "What the...?"

"It's perfect, isn't it?" Asher's voice was almost gleeful.

Fucking psychopath!

Jameson could hardly believe what she was reading. "Mr. Nightshade, with all due respect, this applicant....this girl just admitted to—" She couldn't even finish the sentence, still horrified at the explicit nature of the application.

Taking a deep breath, she continued, "I'm sorry, but I cannot approve this."

"She's issued me a challenge," Asher said, a dark gleam in his eyes.

"What?"

"*Wait till you see me in bed,*" he repeated the bold line from the application, his grin widening. "And I can't wait to find out."

"Mr. Nightshade—"

He stood up, cutting off her protest as he fixed her with an intense stare. "Approve the application. I won't ask again."

Without waiting for her response, Asher strode out of the office, confident she would follow his orders. He always got what he wanted.

Left alone, Jameson stared at the door, her pulse pounding in her ears. She hated how powerless she felt, how easily that child had dismissed her authority. Had taken her position. This was supposed to be her game and she was the god. But it seems instead, she has been dethroned.

Asher Nightshade walked down the hall, a spring in his step. For the first time in a long while, he felt alive, his blood pulsing with excitement.

The other cardinal alphas had no idea what he was up to, but it will soon hit them.

He'd just set the game in motion.

And the target was Violet Purple.

It was game on.

Chapter 3: Chosen One

"It's her, the one who messed up her Lunaris Academy application."

Violet sighed, pushing her book into her locker as the rumor reached her ears for the umpteenth time.

She was not exactly famous around here, but today seemed to be the exception. All eyes followed her the moment she stepped into the school, and it creeped her out until she found out why they were staring at her as if she had grown two heads.

Violet had no idea how they found out about the form, but apparently, teacher-student confidentiality wasn't a thing here. Not that her teacher's reaction when she received the application wasn't enough to draw attention. Violet couldn't help but recall how things had gone down that day.

"Here is my application," Violet handed the form to her homeroom teacher.

"Oh, thank the gods. You're the last to submit, and for a moment, I thought you wouldn't. I was worried you'd end up punished for not following the rules," Mrs. Florence said with relief, putting on her glasses and beginning to review the application.

Violet bit down on her lips, her heart pounding, knowing it was only a matter of time. And Mrs. Florence sure didn't disappoint as she sprang to her feet with a curse on her lips.

"What the fuck...!" she trailed off, her cheeks heating up as if finally realizing she wasn't supposed to curse before a student.

For the first time, Violet saw her teacher lose her composure as she demanded, "What is the meaning of this?"

"What do you mean, ma?" she asked innocently.

"Don't you play cheeky with me, Mrs. Violet Purple!" her teacher retorted, her eyes spitting fire. "What is this you wrote under special skills?"

"Oh, that?" Violet bit down on her lips, feigning shyness as she said, "That was my mother's suggestion."

"What?"

"You asked us to request help from our parents; that was her contribution," Violet said, looking at Mrs. Florence, who looked like she was about to faint from the way the blood had drained from her face.

Violet should have felt anxious about lying, but she didn't. Not one bit. Moreover, it wasn't technically a lie. Nancy pretty much suggested sucking a dick in the new school she had not gotten into yet—and would not get into once that form was submitted. In one word, she was innocent. She had only taken her mother's advice and put it into words.

Literally.

"What kind of mother does that?" Mrs. Florence said, then looked towards Violet with anger. "And you took her suggestion?"

Violet shrugged. "What am I supposed to do? Trust me, I don't want to get on her wrong side. I can't live on the street."

Mrs. Florence looked like she had something to say, but she bit back her words instead, finally plopping down in her seat with an exhausted sigh. Violet felt guilty for stressing the poor woman, but she didn't let it show.

Mrs. Florence looked up, saying. "I wish I could help you, Violet, but there are no extra forms for you to correct this mistake...." She paused as if holding back a harsher word for the situation. "Lunaris Academy is extremely strict with their rules. Each form is counted carefully according to the number of students required to sign up for the year and then sent out to the various districts to avoid any cases of malpractice. Unfortunately, I can't make any exceptions either; you're legally obligated to apply to Lunaris Academy. So, this form will be sent out as it is."

Violet could hear the unspoken truth: You won't be accepted into Lunaris Academy with this kind of application.

"Alright," she said.

"Alright?" Mrs. Florence blinked, clearly taken aback.

"You just told me I have no other option. What else can I do? I can't beat myself up over it," Violet said flatly.

Mrs. Florence's disappointment was clear.

She hesitated before asking again, "Are you sure your mother filled this out?" The raised brow made it clear she suspected otherwise.

"That's her signature right there. Trust me, she read it," Violet lied smoothly.

Nancy had not given a fuck about the form after that day. Good thing Violet was good at forgoing her signature and settled everything on her own. Nancy would have flipped out if she had learned what she wrote down. Her mother wanted her to get into Lunaris, where she — Violet — could whore around just like her, just with class. Except that wasn't happening.

Mrs. Florence glanced down at the section for the parent's signature and sighed.

She didn't suspect a thing. Good. Not that she was trying to boast of a crime, but Violet was proud of her handiwork.

Mrs. Florence looked as though she might cry, her voice soft with grief. "You know, Violet, this could've been your chance to turn things around. I'm not trying to insult your mother's profession, but you deserve better. You don't have to follow in her footsteps," she presumed Violet planned to go down the same path as her mother. If only she knew.

To be honest, something stirred inside of Violet at her teacher's concern; unfortunately, that was it—nothing more. She had learned the hard way that people's sympathy never got her anywhere. Trust was a luxury she couldn't afford, and relying on anyone else? Out of the question.

Mrs. Florence thought this was her chance to turn her life around. If only she knew she avoided a worse fate by not getting into Lunaris Academy. She wasn't her mother's daughter, and she sure as hell didn't need some prince charming to swoop in and save her.

With Lunaris out of the picture, her plan was simple. Once high school was over, she'd leave her mother's trailer behind. Sure, without a chance at university, finding a reputable job would be tougher, but she'd make it work. One thing was certain: prostitution was never going to be an option.

She had made up her mind.

"Can I leave now?" Violet asked, her impatience clear as she noticed the other teachers' eyes on her. She knew they had been eavesdropping on the conversation. This was the teachers' room, after all. Privacy didn't exist here.

"You can go," Mrs. Florence replied softly, though the pity in her eyes stung more than any words. It was a look Violet knew she wouldn't soon forget as she turned and walked out.

Back to the present, Violet rubbed the side of her temple, where she could feel a headache throbbing. She had not gotten enough sleep last night, not when she had turned and tossed around in her small, hard bed.

She was still not talking to Nancy—not after her betrayal. Unfortunately for her miserable life, she and Nancy shared the single-cramped room in the trailer, which meant she had spent it glaring at the back of her mother's head. Not that Nancy cared; she remained unaffected by her silent treatment. And that made Violet furious more than anything: her unapologetic nature.

"Violet Purple."

Violet thought she heard her name being called, but it seemed to be a fragment of her imagination until she heard it again, this time with more clarity.

"Violet Purple, you are summoned into the principal's office." The voice came from the speakers in the hallway.

"Oh fuck." Violet cursed beneath her breath, shutting her locker with a bang.

Why was the principal calling her? Was it because of the form? The gods help her; couldn't they take a joke? Was it that bad that she penned her sincerest thoughts, or were they concerned about the reputation of the school? Violet sensed it was the latter. Perhaps she had gone a little too far.

Only a little.

With a sigh, she walked in the direction of the principal's office. Except the action only emboldened the gossipmongers.

"I said it, there was no way she could have gotten away with that." The rumors picked up like a whirlwind.

"She's doomed. Principal Lincoln would rip her apart. I bet she didn't think about the consequences of her actions."

Violet rolled her eyes as the gossip reached her ears. Were these people jobless or what? Instead of a school, they would have done well in a hair salon.

"Could you blame her? She's only following in her mother's footsteps."

Violet halted at once. She had intended to ignore them all, but that particular comment hit home, and now she froze, turning to identify the wretch who was courting death.

The perpetrator turned out to be a red-haired girl who flinched as soon as their eyes met.

Violet began to stride toward her, and it might have been the deadly look on her face, but the girl began to shake like a leaf in winter, realizing that she had messed up.

However, Violet didn't reach her before she took off running, screaming, "I'm sorry!"

Violet might not be as popular as the queen bees who ruled the school, but she was famous for fighting off Jasmine and her gang, and that seemed to have gotten her quite a reputation, seeing the way the girl had fled.

All that was left were her friends, who were trying hard not to cower like their friend had. Violet did not speak; she let the cold fire in her eyes, the hardened look on her face, and her hands balled into fists do the talking. They swallowed, seeming to take the cue as they turned and left without a word.

Thanks to the little drama, the rumors died off and Violet walked over with her head held high. Upon arriving outside the principal's office, she took a deep breath and knocked.

"Come in." his voice echoed from the outside.

Violet turned the knob and stepped into Principal Lincoln's office. She'd been here plenty of times before, mostly for fights, and nothing much had changed.

The room was neat, and functional, with a polished desk that held a computer, phone, and an organized stack of paperwork. Shelves in the corner were filled with educational books, binders, and a few personal items, like his award from the education board.

The walls, as always, were covered in certificates, school achievements, and the usual motivational posters telling students to "Reach for the Stars." Except it never inspired anyone.

"Have a seat, Miss Purple," Principal Lincoln said, gesturing towards the chair across from him.

Violet sat down cautiously, already bracing herself for the usual scolding and inevitable punishment. But when she glanced up, ready to face his usual stern expression, she was caught off guard.

Mr. Lincoln was smiling.

That smile made her uncomfortable. Something was wrong, and Violet felt a strange tightness in her chest as she shifted in her seat. The air felt heavy with expectation.

She broke the silence first. "Why did you call me in, sir? Did I do anything wrong?" she asked, even though a part of her already knew.

Principal Lincoln leaned forward slightly, still smiling, and clasped his hands together on the desk. "The results of the application process have come in," he said slowly as if savoring the words. "I called you in to thank you."

"Thank me?" Violet frowned. What in the world was he talking about?

He nodded enthusiastically, leaning forward. "Since the scholarship program began, only three students from this district have ever been chosen. It's a rare opportunity, one that doesn't come by often. I wanted to take this moment to recognize your achievement."

A strange, creeping feeling started to slither into Violet's gut, making her shift uneasily in her seat. Her palms were clammy. A foreboding sense of dread began to pool in her stomach. No. No, there was no way. She refused to entertain the thought.

Principal Lincoln seemed oblivious to her growing discomfort as he reached into his desk drawer and pulled out a sleek, expensive-looking envelope.

"Congratulations, Violet," he said, holding it out to her. "You've been accepted into Lunar Academy."

Her ears began to ring, and for a moment, the entire world felt like it had narrowed down to that one sentence. This was impossible.

There had to be some mistake. Her heart pounded in her chest as she grabbed the envelope with trembling hands, hastily tearing it open.

And there it was.

Bold letters stared back at her.

"Congratulations, Violet Purple. You have been selected..."

No. No, no, no. This couldn't be happening. She felt her breath quicken, her chest tightening. Yet the truth stared back at her, unrelenting and undeniable.

She had been chosen for Lunaris Academy.