

## Defy 111

Chapter 111: Not My Oracle

### Light Up The Night

If you haven't heard (and seriously, what part of the earth are you from?), the bonfire party at the Silver Glade is happening this Friday night. And trust me, you don't want to miss it. The cardinal alphas are throwing it, and if history has taught us anything, it's that these alphas know how to throw a mean party. Think roaring flames, music that'll make your heart race, and enough drama to keep us buzzing for weeks.

So grab your fanciest fits, because this is going to be the place to see and be seen. And let's not forget, the party isn't just about the good times. Oh yes, I'm talking about our very own love triangle extraordinaire.

### Queen Bee's Smokin' Move

First things first, let's give credit where it's due. Our reigning queen bee, Elsie Lyka Lancaster, has reminded everyone why she's at the top of the food chain. The way she claimed Asher in the Silvered Court was nothing short of iconic. Her bold kiss was a statement to everyone in the room, especially a certain purple-haired whirlwind, that Asher Nightshade is hers.

And let's be honest, man, was that kiss freaking hot! If I could give awards for public displays of affection that double as power moves, Elsie would be walking away with gold. At least now, Violet gets a firsthand lesson in how it's done and Queenbie Elsie has a masterclass in claiming what's hers. But—plot twist alert!—did it work?

### Asher's Romantic Confession: Love or Strategy?

Let's rewind to that verbal sparring session between Asher and Violet at history class. Asher's words still have me swooning:

"I would treasure her. She'd be my queen, my everything. I'd dedicate my life to making her happy, to protect her from anything that could harm her. Nothing would matter more than her."

Okay, stop. Is this not the most romantic thing you've ever heard? Was Asher confessing his love for Violet right in front of the whole class? If that's the case, this love story just took a turn that none of us saw coming. All this time, we thought Violet was the storm wrecking Asher and Elsie's ship. But it seems the tides have turned, and now it might be Elsie who finds herself in the way of a love that's blooming fiercer than our bonfire.

Can someone hand me some tissues? Because if this is a love story in the making, I'm here for it.

#### A Kick To Remember

But let's not get caught in tonight's excitement and forget Violet's moment of glory. Combat class gave us the highlight of the day when Violet delivered a very direct message to Asher, right to his family jewels.

I mean, we all love a strong woman, right? Sure, Asher was a little naughty for picking an unwilling partner (we see you, Mr. Nightshade), but Violet kicking him where it hurts was the cherry on top of this drama sundae.

Note to Violet: You might want to watch out for the Nightshade clan. They probably aren't thrilled with the idea of their heir potentially losing his ability to, well, produce heirs.

#### What's Next?

With all this tension—sexual and otherwise—between Violet and Asher, I'm on the edge of my seat waiting to see what the bonfire party brings. Will Elsie take another sexy stand? Will Asher and Violet finally settle their differences, or will the other Cardinal Alphas have their screen time with our purple storm, especially after that rainstorm last night. Conspiracy wink.

One thing's for sure: this party is going to be legendary. So, Lunaris babes, dress to impress, bring your best vibes, and don't forget your dancing shoes. Because this Friday night, the Silver Glade is where all the magic, drama, and tea are going to unfold.

As always, I'll be watching (and sipping tea) to bring you the juiciest updates. Until next time, keep your claws sharp and your secrets sharper.

The Oracle.

"Ahh!!!!!" Elsie's scream reverberated through her massive walk-in closet, right before she smashed her phone against the wall.

The shattered pieces of the expensive device littered the floor, but Elsie was obviously not satisfied as she stomped on them furiously. Her face was contorted with fury, her blue eyes blazing with rage.

"Elsie, try to calm down," Grace said tentatively, stepping closer to her friend. If she could even be called that.

But Grace's attempt to pacify her backfired on her. Elsie's manicured nails dug into Grace's chin as she grabbed it roughly, forcing her to meet her gaze.

Grace winced from the sharp pain but she dared not resist her. Around them, the other girls sat frozen, exchanging uneasy glances but none of them did anything to intervene. They knew better than to cross Elsie when her temper flared.

"I do not subscribe to her magazines, fund her lifestyle, and support her platform only to have that nonsense written about me!" Elsie snarled, her voice dripping with venom. "Who does that bitch think she is?"

With a sharp shove, she released Grace, who stumbled back and rubbed her aching jaw. The tension in the room was so tensed that no one dared to breathe too loudly, fearing they might become the next target of Elsie's wrath.

"Cancel my subscription to the Oracle's magazine," Elsie barked, pacing back and forth like a caged lioness. "Put out a post and let my followers know I'm boycotting her! And make it clear to them that whoever doesn't stand with me is against me. And do you know what I do to my enemies, Grace?"

Grace hesitated, glancing nervously at the others before murmuring, "You... crush them."

"Exactly!" Elsie spat, her fist clenching as her lips curled into a cruel smile. "I crush my enemies. That little gossipmonger is going to regret the day she thought she could cross me."

#### Chapter 112: When Loyalty Is Questioned

"What are you still standing there for? Get moving!" Elsie barked at Grace, who jumped at the loud command.

Without hesitation, Grace snatched up her phone and began typing, her fingers shaking a little. The outside world saw Grace as lucky since she was Elsie's efficient and indispensable assistant who managed all her accounts and activities. If only they knew the poor girl lived in pained paradise.

The uncomfortable truth was that Grace was Elsie's servant who was bound to her by a debt of gratitude and a ruthless hierarchy. Elsie didn't care about her in the slightest.

Grace wasn't an elite; she was simply a poor human she had plucked from obscurity. Everything Grace had, the fame, respect, admiration, and wealth, it all came from her. Without Elsie, Grace would be nothing, and both of them knew it.

Before Grace could finish typing, a voice broke through the room. "And you think that's a good idea?"

Every head in the room, including Elsie's, turned as Natalie Avax entered the closet with an elegance that could rival any runway model. She moved with effortless confidence, her presence undoubtedly magnetic. Such that even in a space filled with the finest luxury items, she was the one thing everyone couldn't help but notice.

Elsie's face hardened into a scowl as she turned toward Natalie, her voice filled with irritation. "I believe I called for you hours ago?"

But Natalie barely spared her a glance, walking past her as though she weren't worth acknowledging. Her sharp eyes scanned the room, taking in the opulence without a hint of awe.

"Don't push your luck, Elsie," she said coolly. "I'm not Grace, someone you can order around, and I'm certainly not jobless enough to come running like a dog to its master."

The jab hit its mark, and Grace flinched, her face reddening as she risked a glance upward. Her gaze briefly met Natalie's before she jerked her head down again, too humiliated to hold the contact.

A muscle twitched in Elsie's jaw as she regarded Natalie. Natalie had never been an enemy, but she wasn't a friend either. It was her brazen arrogance that infuriated Elsie the most. As the reigning queen of the academy, Elsie was used to being worshipped, feared, and obeyed. But not Natalie.

And for good reason.

Natalie was an Avax. The Avax family was a powerhouse, tech giants with wealth and connections that dwarfed even Elsie's. Even the human president and the werewolf king relied on their support.

Nearly every student at Lunaris came from money, but no one matched the Avax family's clout. Their connections, especially with the underground, made them untouchable. To cross them was a fool's errand, and Elsie knew better than to try.

"Fine," Elsie said through gritted teeth, forcing a tight smile. "If you were busy, then..."

Her words were an attempt to save face, but inside of her, anger and hatred burned. If Natalie weren't so rich and untouchable, Elsie would have taught her a lesson long ago.

Natalie, unfazed by Elsie's attempt at reconciliation, strolled over to the upholstered storage bench where three other elite girls sat, their postures stiff with unease.

"Hello, girls," Natalie greeted them with a breezy wave, her tone light and unconcerned.

The three girls exchanged hesitant smiles and awkward waves in return. They were already aware of the tension between Elsie and Natalie, and it made their presence feel painfully awkward. They buried their faces in magazines they clearly weren't reading, however, they pretended to be disinterested in the scene unfolding before them.

"So..." Natalie placed her impossibly expensive designer bag beside her, crossing one toned leg over the other, elegantly. "I heard something interesting about you wanting to boycott the Oracle. Please tell me you were just joking?"

She finished with a smile that didn't touch her eyes, her voice sharp even though it feigned sweetness. The room was silent as

all eyes turned to Elsie, waiting to see how she would respond.

But Elsie's jaw only tightened, especially as she stared at Natalie, who lounged on the bench like she owned the place.

"Since you seem awfully concerned about what I do, let me ask you then, Natalie. Why would you care about that? The Oracle crossed a line and someone needs to remind her who's in charge." Elsie said, standing tall and crossing her arms.

Natalie chuckled softly, the sound dripping with condescension. "Ah, Elsie, always so quick to play the role of the dictator. But tell me," she leaned forward slightly, her hazel eyes meeting Elsie's blue ones, "what happens when the Oracle retaliates? She's not just some gossipmonger. She's untouchable for a reason."

Elsie's lips pressed into a thin line. She hated that Natalie had a point, but she wasn't about to back down.

"What do you mean by untouchable? She's just a human hiding behind a keyboard. Moreover, the Oracle was nothing. At the start, no one would read or comment on her useless gossip pages nor buy her magazines, not until I came into the picture!"

She continued, her voice getting louder, "I sponsored her! I gave her the wings to fly! I gave her the content! And it was all about Moi!" Elsie pointed to her chest, declaring, "I made her who is she? So trust me when I tell you she wouldn't dare go against me publicly."

"And yet you don't even know who she is... you are not even sure whether she is a he or she."

"I don't care!" Elsie said, "I made her and I would undo her. I'm Elsie Lancaster. "

Natalie could not take it anymore and stood up. She faced Elsie, saying with a cutting tone, "I thought you were smart but it seems to be you're a dumb bimbo. Or perhaps the fame has gotten to your head, you think you're untouchable?"

Elsie's eyes flared with anger, her voice rising immediately. "How dare you—!"

But Natalie didn't let her finish. "The Oracle has dirt on everyone in this school," she said, her words slicing through Elsie's outrage. "And I do mean everyone. What do you think happens when you push her? She'll push back. Hard."

Elsie's lips pressed into a thin line, but Natalie wasn't done. "The Oracle has always been an encyclopedia of secrets. Even if you hadn't helped her rise, it was only a matter of time before someone else realized her worth and did the same. And let's not forget, you benefited from her, too. Look at you, Lunaris' Queen Bee. All that attention, all that control. You wouldn't be where you are without her"

Natalie's tone wasn't mocking, but it wasn't sympathetic either. It was neutral, detached, and somehow, that made her words sting even more.

"You fed a lion," Natalie's lips curved into a faint, humorless smile. "And now it's grown big enough to see you as a meal. Trust me, you don't want to be a lion's meal. It's unpleasant... and messy."

Elsie's expression darkened further. The joke clearly wasn't meant for her enjoyment. Neither was Natalie fazed by the hostile energy radiating from her. She just didn't care.

Her tone became more serious. "Moreover, even if you wanted to boycott the Oracle, do you really think it's that simple? Asher, Alaric, Roman, and Griffin are all still subscribed to her. They rely on her as much as everyone else. Like it or not, the Oracle is integral to Lunaris' ecosystem. She keeps the students entertained, and happy students mean less chaos."

Natalie came closer to Elsie, placing a hand on her shoulder. The gesture was both disarming and dominating, a subtle power move that made the other girls in the room hold their breath.

"With her holding secrets over all of you, it's like she's maintaining order. Imagine what would happen if you wolves decided to play gods and tyrants without someone like her around to keep you in check. In this case, the Oracle isn't just untouchable, she's necessary. She can't go, don't you think?"

The insult was slight but obviously woven into Natalie's calm and calculated reasoning. But the girl's expression remained neutral, even pleasant, even though the message was clear as day : the Oracle was untouchable, and Elsie would be wise to remember that.

Elsie said nothing, seething inwardly instead. Even Grace stood awkwardly in with the phone still in hand, unsure whether to continue typing or retreat into the shadows

"But then I know what your problem is, " Natalie let her hand drop, "Violet Purple isn't it? " she said, watching as Elsie's eyes widened slightly, however she quickly masked her expression.

"You're threatened by her position, aren't you? "

"I am not —"

"My time is valuable, Elsie Lancaster and I did not answer your call to waste it further. You want me here because you have obviously noticed my recent interactions with Violet Purple and want to know where my loyalty is? If not demand something from me?"

Natalie lifted a brow while holding her gaze, "Am I wrong?"

#### Chapter 113: Be Like Lucille

For a moment, it seemed Elsie wouldn't reply. She nibbled on her lower lip, hesitating slightly. But then, with a loud intake of breath, she finally let it out.

"You invited Violet to your tea party. Are both of you friends now? Are you supporting her or me?" The way Elsie looked at Natalie was direct, as if daring her to lie to her face.

Natalie didn't respond immediately. Instead, she studied Elsie with that maddeningly arrogant air, her silence more unsettling than words. It was almost as if she was wondering if answering Elsie was worth the effort.

Then she finally spoke with an unapologetic tone. "I believe I don't need your approval to decide who my friends are."

"Violet Purple is my enemy," Elsie hissed.

"So, are you saying I'm your enemy?" Natalie rephrased, tilting her head slightly and her voice carrying an undercurrent of warning. "Do you even want to be my enemy?"

Elsie bristled, catching the subtle threat hidden in Natalie's words and tried to diffuse the situation, though her voice remained defensive. "We are the pillars of Lunaris Academy, Natalie. Violet is an outsider and cannot disrupt the order."

"That Violet is currently in the top three of the rankings..." Natalie pulled out her phone and held it up, showing Elsie the Luna rankings. "According to the rules, that means the current pillars of Lunaris Academy are you, me, and her. Perhaps instead of antagonizing her, you should pull her in. Make her one of us."

Elsie's face twisted in anger. "That girl is a nobody! She has no money, no connections, and she's the daughter of a prostitute. She's a leech with nothing to contribute—"

"Of course, you wouldn't agree to that," Natalie cut her off without hesitation. "You've always hated peace."

Elsie's hands clenched into fists at her sides, her knuckles turning white, but Natalie wasn't finished.

"And that's why I'm here," Natalie continued, her voice aloof, "to suggest a permanent solution so I won't have to be summoned for these petty matters again."

Elsie's expression shifted slightly, her anger giving way to cautious curiosity. "You have a solution?" she asked, unable to hide her interest.

"You want Violet away from Asher, don't you?" Natalie asked, arching a perfectly shaped brow.

"Definitely," Elsie replied without hesitation.

"Based on my research, it's close to impossible to get Asher away from Violet. He's practically obsessed with her," Natalie said bluntly.

Unlike others who would soften their words to avoid offending Elsie, Natalie spoke with a brutal honesty that made Elsie's jaw tighten.

"However," Natalie continued, "if you can get Violet away from the West House, their interactions would be limited. Asher wouldn't have easy access to her. And what better opportunity than during the games tonight?" Her expression was smug, as though she were revealing a master plan.

"You want her to leave the West House..." Elsie stiffened, her voice wary. "And go where?"

The caution in Elsie's voice was obvious. She didn't want Violet anywhere near the cardinal alphas. If she had her way, Violet would already have dropped out or been expelled. But Asher had threatened to ruin her life if she so much as touched his "Purple queen."

Purple queen. Elsie scoffed internally. The very thought pissed her, knowing Asher already considered Violet his queen.

She was supposed to be his queen. All of their queen. Although the Alpha King's order was for her to choose one cardinal alpha as a mate, it didn't diminish Elsie's desire to keep the others under her influence. The thought of another girl, especially Violet, laying claim to any of them was enough to drive her crazy.

The cardinal alphas were special in their own way and though she liked some the least like Griffin and some the most like Asher, she still couldn't let them go.

Elsie wanted them all. She wanted them to worship the very ground she stepped on, to fight over her just the same way they'd done with Lucille. Except she wasn't

Lucille. And neither would Violet. She would not let that happen.

"And that is the interesting part, don't you think?" Natalie's voice pulled Elsie back to the present. The girl's eyes were glinting with calculated confidence.

"You're aligned with the North House, which is out of the question for Violet. We can't have a power tussle in one house. Griffin, the alpha you like the least, has a big heart. It won't take long for Violet's influence to grow under him, potentially rivaling yours. Hence, the best solution is the South House."

Elsie's jaw clenched at the suggestion, but Natalie didn't stop.

"Roman adores you. He would no doubt suppress Violet's influence for your sake. And let's be honest, Roman isn't susceptible to the 'Purple Storm.' With his endless supply of women, it's unlikely Violet could sway him. Unless, of course, Violet has a magic vagina," Natalie added without filter, making Elsie's face burn in mortified rage.

"All in all," Natalie concluded, "the South House is the best place for Violet to stay out of your way, allowing you to maintain your reign as queen bee. Contact Roman then, use your womanly charm, and get the job done. So, what's it going to be? Are you taking the plan, yes or no?"

"Fine, I'll take it," Elsie bit out through gritted teeth.

"Good," Natalie said briskly. "Then I believe this concludes our business. And next time, don't interrogate me about my relationship with Violet. I don't like people telling me what to do. Have a nice day, and good luck with the plan."

With that, Natalie grabbed her bag, turned on her heel and strolled out of the room, her confidence unshaken. She left Elsie to simmer in the frustration and unspoken rage left in her wake.

"Who does she think she is?" Elsie hissed, turning to Grace. "Don't just stand there. Delete everything."

Grace scrambled to obey, her fingers trembling as she erased the draft message. The three other girls on the bench exchanged uneasy glances. This was going to be a long day not just for Elsie, but them too.

#### Chapter 114: No Distractions

For the first time since she arrived at Lunaris Academy, Violet woke up with a genuine smile on her face. Stretching thoroughly on the bed with a contented groan, she let herself bask in the rare feeling of happiness. When her gaze landed on her three roommates, she stopped and waved cheerfully, "Morning, roomies."

The room fell silent. Not just Ivy, but Daisy and Lila stared at her like she had sprouted a second head. This was uncharacteristic of Violet. No, it was the first time Violet had ever called them "roomies."

Usually, she offered a curt and impersonal "Good morning" to cover all three of them, and that was only on the rare occasions she acknowledged them at all..

Ivy prided herself on being the resident snob, but Violet's icy demeanor made her seem warm in comparison

None of them dared say a word as they watched Violet saunter into the bathroom, humming softly under her breath.

"What is up with her?" Ivy whispered, turning to Lila for answers. Lila, after all, Lila was the self-proclaimed expert on all things Violet. If Violet were a subject at Lunaris, Lila would undoubtedly ace it with extra credit.

But even Lila was at a loss. She shrugged, looking genuinely baffled. "I have no idea."

"What is that?" Daisy asked, pointing to something sticking out from beneath Violet's bed.

Lila moved to Violet's bed, crouched down and pulled the object free, revealing Violet's crumpled and dirtied uniform. She sniffed it and examined it with an analytical air. "She was out last night... under the rain," Lila observed, her voice tinged with intrigue.

"So she had sex," Daisy declared with startling confidence.

"What?!" Lila and Ivy both turned to her, eyes wide with shock.

"When women have sex, their bodies release oxytocin," Daisy explained matter-of-factly. "It's the happy hormone. It reduces stress, promotes bonding, and improves mood."

"So, in one word, rain sex makes her happy?" Lila asked, her tone dripping with disbelief.

"If that's the case, she should have it every day to keep up this charming personality," Ivy said sarcastically, rolling her eyes.

At that exact moment, the bathroom door clicked, and the girls went into a panic. Lila, moving with lightning speed, shoved the uniform back under the bed and raced to her own. The room fell into a tense silence, each girl pretending to be deeply engrossed in something.

The uniform was not properly tucked in, but Violet didn't seem to notice. She emerged from the bathroom, her phone playing soft music as she swayed slightly to the beat. She crossed the room to her wardrobe, opened it, and pulled out her spare uniform. Good thing she'd bought it as a backup, even if it had drained the last of the money Nancy had given her.

Grabbing the fresh uniform, Violet danced her way back to the bathroom. As soon as the door clicked shut, the three girls exhaled simultaneously, releasing the breath they hadn't realized they were holding. For a moment, they had all been convinced Violet would catch them snooping and glare at them with her infamous icy stare.

"Sex is scary," Daisy muttered, shivering slightly.

"More like wonderful," Lila said with a dreamy look. Then her expression turned serious. "Although... I wonder who she did it with." Her eyes suddenly widened as a thought struck her. "You think it's Asher?"

Ivy scoffed, jealousy dripping from her tone. "It might not even be with a cardinal alpha."

Daisy and Lila turned scathing looks on Ivy before shaking their heads in unison. It was no secret that Ivy had always been jealous of Violet.

"I mean," Ivy said defensively, "the cardinal alphas aren't the only guys she hangs out with."

"Really?" Lila said, raising an eyebrow. "Name one guy Violet hangs out with."

"W-well..." Ivy stammered, floundering for an answer. Then she brightened. "That guy with the curly hair!"

"Dion?" Lila frowned, unimpressed.

"That's the one!" Ivy said, nodding vigorously.

"Even a four-year-old could come up with something better than that, Ivy," Daisy tsked, shaking her head in pity.

Lila fixed Ivy with a deep frown. "If you want to tarnish Violet's reputation, at least do it without sounding pathetic. Dion already has a girlfriend, and my Violet has taste. Period," she said with pride.

"Whatever," Ivy muttered, brushing off the jab and turning away. But the tension still lingered in the room, the mystery of Violet's sudden cheerfulness left unresolved.

Meanwhile, in the bathroom.....

Violet belted the song playing on her phone at the top of her lungs. Her voice, though not perfect, carried a carefree energy that would seem strange to anyone who knew her usual reserved demeanor. The bathroom was filled with steam from the hot water as Violet sang and danced.

When Violet finally stepped out, a towel snugly draped around her, she caught sight of her reflection in the mirror. She paused, tilting her head slightly, and reached up to touch her lips.

They still tingled faintly at the memory, and before she could stop herself, Violet found herself smiling. The way Alaric had kissed her last night under the rain was something she wouldn't be forgetting anytime soon.

Her fingers lingered on her lips as she relived the moment, but suddenly, Violet snapped back to reality. What the hell was she thinking?

Her brows furrowed, and she shook her head as if physically shaking off the memory. It was just a kiss. A fleeting, emotional moment. Moreover, she was sure Alaric had already forgotten about it, and so should she.

"I will not lose my mind over a kiss. I'm Violet Purple. Nothing bothers me," Violet said firmly, trying to convince herself.

With her mind made up, Violet grabbed her spare uniform and began dressing quickly. She couldn't afford to dwell on "distractions". Also, she was hungry, and the highly coveted dining hall of Lunaris Academy waited for no one.

Violet straightened her shoulders, and stepped out of the bathroom, ready to face the day with the cool confidence she was known for.

#### Chapter 115: Girls And A Little Confession

The day's surprises never seemed to end because, for the first time since arriving at Lunaris Academy, Violet found herself sitting with her roommates for breakfast.

Although Daisy and Ivy were polar opposites with the first being the classic nerd and the latter, the social butterfly with a sharp tongue, they stuck together, just as Lila and Violet shared an unexpected

camaraderie. Hence it was always both of eating together, just as Lila and Violet preferred their time together.

But as Violet and Lila walked in, it was Ivy who shockingly waved them over to their table for the first time. After all, Ivy had made it obvious her displeasure on Violet always going head-on with the elites, especially Elsie. In her language, she could never associate herself with such a person.

At the same time, Violet surprisingly, didn't dismiss the offer as she was used to doing to other students whenever they displayed any unusual inclusivity.

Violet wasn't interested in joining any clique who probably intended to gain something from her as a result of her newfound fame — which she barely exercised. In one word, Violet willingly choose to be a social pariah.

Since Ivy was not an elite, it meant their

table was on the lower floor with the common students, a setting which Violet preferred. Not to mention, the attention wasn't solely on her, unlike other times when students would cast curious and often creepy glances her way. And it was because of the party tonight.

The buzz of conversation filled the hall to the point it was nearly a nuisance but no one dared to interfere. Everywhere, students chattered excitedly about the party, their voices laced with anticipation and gossip.

Seated with her roommates, Violet listened as Lila turned to Ivy with a question.

"What are you wearing to the party?" Lila, ever the fashion enthusiast, couldn't help but ask, having known Ivy's taste for all things glamorous.

Ivy smirked, leaning back with an air of arrogance. "Oh, just a little something from Bellamy Noir's new collection." She dropped the name casually, but it landed like a bomb.

Lila's jaw dropped. "Bellamy Noir?" she gasped. "You mean the Bellamy Noir? That's my favorite brand as well!" She giggled, excitedly high fiving Ivy as if they were kindred spirits who just found each other.

Although Daisy was left out, her smile was genuine, as she already imagined the dazzling, likely scandalous outfit Ivy would pull off tonight.

Ivy grinned, basking in the admiration. "What can I say? A girl's gotta look the part."

Then, Ivy turned her sharp gaze to Violet. "And what about you, Violet? What are you wearing?"

The question seemed innocent enough, and all eyes turned to Violet, waiting expectantly for an answer.

Without hesitation, Violet shrugged and replied, "My normal clothes."

"What?" Lila and Ivy were horrified.

The table fell silent as an awkward silence descended upon them. Ivy especially found it hard to believe that Violet with her new found fame could not dress up for her first time party tonight?

Even Daisy, who came from the poorest district had managed to put together a decent outfit for the party. Hence, the idea that Violet, who carried herself with such confidence, had no plans to dress up was simply unbelievable.

Ivy scoffed, "Please tell me you're joking."

But Violet's expression remained the same.

Ivy arched an eyebrow, clearly unimpressed as she said, "Are you trying to be a party pooper on purpose?"

But Violet was unaffected by the judgment.

"I didn't come to this school to party," she stated matter-of-factly. "But since I've been forced to sacrifice my time for something so frivolous, I'll wear whatever comfortable thing I can find in my wardrobe."

Asher had forced this party on her and if he expected she'd be a doll, then he was in for a huge disappointment.

However, her roommates did not know her reasons and Lila, seated next to her, cleared her throat uncomfortably. She knew all too well what Violet's definition of "comfortable" entailed.

Violet's wardrobe was a sea of dark, emo, and sporty pieces. There was hardly anything resembling party attire. There wasn't a single cute, glamorous, or sexy outfit in sight, and the thought of Violet showing up in her usual style made Lila inwardly cringe.

Lila leaned in, suggesting an alternative lightly, "Maybe I can lend you something? You're taller and, uh, bustier, but I bet I can find something that—"

"Don't bother," Violet interrupted, her voice cold.

The air became heavy with the rejection and it was not hard to see the hurt on Lila's face. Even Ivy and Daisy shared a look. Lila's well-meaning offer had been dismissed so coldly that even Ivy, who often reveled in sarcastic banter, seemed taken aback. Although they had their opinions about Violet's attitude, they quietly returned to their meals, the tension still lingering.

However, Violet was not as emotionless as they had assumed and right now, she was feeling guilty. She hadn't meant to wound them, but as she glanced around the table and saw their subdued expressions, she realized she had.

For the first time, her roommates offered to help her fit in, and she'd effectively swatted it away. It became clear to Violet that her walls, while protective, sometimes isolated her more than she intended.

"I'm... sorry," Violet said so softly they almost didn't hear her.

"What?" Ivy said.

Violet took a deep breath and confessed, "I know I come off as bold and aggressive sometimes, but... I'm not really a party person. And honestly, I'm just comfortable in my own clothes."

Lila, who had been quietly fiddling with her fork, looked up and smiled warmly. "Fine," she said, nudging her, as though offering an olive branch.

Ivy and Daisy both shrugged. Whatever.

"I guess we'll have to respect you looking like whatever you want to look like," Ivy said with a touch of exasperation, but there was no malice in her tone.

"Yeah," Daisy added. "It's your decision. We have to respect it nonetheless."

They began to relax, the tension dissipating slightly, but Violet wasn't done.

"Although," She said, her voice shifting slightly, "there's something else I would need your help with."

And one should have seen the way Lila's eyes lit up.

#### Chapter 116: Storm Freeze

"What is it? Anything! Just name it," Lila announced, her eyes shining with so much enthusiasm she might as well have offered up her kidney if Violet needed it. Her eagerness was almost infectious.

Ivy raised a skeptical eyebrow, while Daisy tilted her head, intrigued by what Violet could possibly want. It was not everyday that one saw the untouchable ice queen let her guard down, even just a little.

"I'm broke," Violet declared flatly.

The table fell silent. Lila's jaw practically hit the floor as she had clearly been expecting something far grander she could take on for her sake. Ivy, on the other hand, burst into laughter, clutching her stomach.

She was not laughing at Violet for being poor but rather at Lila for expecting it was some life-or-death situation

Lila hissed, glaring at Ivy, who was laughing so hard tears gathered in her eyes.

"I am serious here," Violet said, her displeasure slicing through Ivy's laughter like a blade.

Sobering up, Ivy smirked. "Fine, fine. You're broke. So what? Call your parents then."

"Unlike you, not everyone has rich parents," Daisy snapped, her glare sharp enough to make Ivy swallow her retort. For once, the usually clueless and insensitive Ivy seemed to grasp how her words might affect someone.

"Thank you for that," Violet said, dramatically bowing her head to Daisy, who let out a long, exaggerated sigh at her theatrics.

Violet continued, "Seriously, though. I'm broke. If there's one thing I thought being an elite at Lunaris would provide, it's money. But so far, there's none of that."

"That's only because you haven't been utilizing it," Lila interjected with a firm and certain tone.

"What do you mean by that?" Violet asked, frowning.

"Even without rich parents, the elites at Lunaris make their money through their fame," Lila explained, leaning forward. She hesitated for a moment before asking, "You do have Moontagram, right?"

"I won't even be surprised if she doesn't," Ivy quipped, rolling her eyes. But her smirk froze when she caught Violet's serious expression. "Oh god," Ivy groaned, covering her face. "She really doesn't have it."

Lila gasped as if Violet had committed murder. "Okay, no judgement. First step: download the app. Now."

Violet sighed but pulled out her phone, allowing Lila to guide her through it. As the app installed, Lila launched into her explanation. "Moontagram isn't just a social media app. It's a goldmine for everyone out here. Do you know why people dream of being at the top of the hierarchy at this school? It's not just about status, it sets you up for life."

"How?" Violet asked, genuinely curious now.

"Through followers, sponsorships, and endorsements," Lila began. "Take Elsie, for example. She's the most-followed person in Lunaris with over ten million followers. She earns a fortune through sponsored posts, affiliate marketing, and even selling her own beauty line. Every time she posts about a product, she gets paid. Big time."

"Natalie," Lila continued, "isn't far behind with seven million followers. But what makes her unique is the number of brands she represents. She's the queen of brand ambassadorships. Tech companies, fashion houses, even lifestyle products, her endorsements are everywhere. She's basically a walking advertisement."

"Amanda, Griffin's former girlfriend, has two million followers," Lila added. "She's more focused on selling her own services and a model, but she runs exclusive makeup tutorials and paid subscription content for her followers."

Lila said with a knowing smile. "Sponsored posts can pay thousands, even tens of thousands, depending on your following. Brand ambassadors get paid monthly, plus bonuses. And if you have a product or service? Even better."

By the time Lila finished, Violet's mind was racing. She leaned back in her chair, a glint of determination in her eyes. "I want in," she said decisively. "If it's about money, I would do it."

Lila clapped her hands, practically bouncing in her seat. "Yes! And I'll be your account manager. We'll have you up and running in no time."

"I'll help too," Daisy chimed in. "I can write your captions and content."

Ivy smirked, folding her arms. "And I'll make sure you don't turn into a fashion disaster."

Violet looked at each of them, feeling emotional for the first time. "Thank you," She said sincerity knowing she didn't deserve this kindness.

While Violet was still relishing the unexpected warmth from her friends, there was a sudden commotion in the dining hall. She watched as heads turned, and whispers filled the air as one of the cardinal alphas made an appearance.

It was not just any Alpha but Alaric Storm himself.

Violet's heart skipped a beat. She felt her stomach twist with a mix of nerves and excitement as the memory of last night's kiss flashed vividly in her head.

The gods help her! She thought she was prepared to face him but that didn't seem to be the case with the butterflies fluttering in her stomach.

But before Violet could collect herself, she noticed something unusual.

Alaric wasn't heading to the upper-floor where the other alphas typically sat even though the rest hadn't arrived yet. He was walking toward her.

Huh?

Violet's breath hitched as her pulse quickened, the dining hall growing eerily quiet around her when they realized what was going on.

As Alaric drew closer, her mind scrambled for what to say. Still seated, she opened her mouth to greet him.

"Hi, Alaric—"

But she didn't get the chance to finish because in one fluid motion, Alaric leaned down and kissed her.

The world seemed to freeze.

Violet's body went rigid, her eyes wide with shock as her brain struggled to comprehend what was happening. She could feel his warmth, the faint scent of rain and thunder that clung to him, and the confidence in the way he kissed her, as if it were the most natural thing in the world.

The dining hall erupted in chaos, a cacophony of gasps, whispers, and the sound of someone dropping their tray of food. But above all that, she heard a familiar shrill voice pierce the silence.

"O. M. G..." Lila squeaked, followed by an ear-splitting squeal that drew even more attention to their table.

Chapter 117: A Place Alone

Holy creator of the universe.

Violet's head spun as she finally grasped the reality of the situation. Alaric Storm was kissing her. Not just anywhere, but in front of everyone. Even the elites seated above them.

Fuck.

Reacting instinctively, Violet pulled back abruptly, her eyes locking onto Alaric's. Her heart was pounding wildly as she stared into his gaze, trying to make sense of his actions.

Violet was not going to lie, she had somehow hoped that the time they had spent together hadn't been meaningless to him. That it had meant something. Even if a bit. But this? This was far beyond anything she had dared to imagine. Hence, she needed answers.

So her eyes searched his, looking for any sign this might be some sort of game or that he had ulterior motives. But to her surprise, Alaric's gaze was pure. There was no hidden agenda, no trace of doubt. If anything, his eyes seemed to sparkle with something genuine. They were filled with admiration, perhaps even affection.

Fuck her life. He wasn't ashamed of her.

Something inside her snapped. Without hesitation, Violet stood up abruptly, grabbed Alaric's face, and crashed her lips against his in a hard kiss. Alaric groaned, his hands gripping her waist as his tongue feverishly sought hers.

The dining hall erupted into chaos as the noise reached a deafening crescendo with students screaming, cheering, and pulling out their phones to capture it. Cameras clicked and flashes illuminated the scene as photos and videos of the two spread like wildfire. But Violet and Alaric didn't care. They were completely engrossed in each other, oblivious to the spectacle they had become. Let the world watch for all they cared; it didn't matter.

Yet, the crowd's reaction was a blend of disbelief and exhilaration. Despite the fact that many students didn't like Violet, they couldn't resist the drama. It was straight out of a fairy tale, after all. The brooding, untouchable Violet and the charming Alaric Storm, the Lightning Prince? The audacity of the romance was intoxicating.

As usual, Lila, ever the enthusiastic supporter, let out a shrill whistle and clapped loudly.

"Go, Violet!" she yelled, grinning from ear to ear despite the public display of affection happening right in front of her.

Ivy, on the other hand, looked as though someone had slapped her. Her jaw dropped so low it was a miracle a fly hadn't flown in, although hygiene standards in the Silvered Court would never allow it. After all, she was the least person to believe that Violet would be able to land herself a catch such as the lightning prince.

Daisy blushed furiously at the sight, trying hard not to stare at the couples too much.

However, not everyone shared the enthusiasm. From the elites' table upstairs, Elsie's eyes narrowed, her expression darkening with fury.

She gripped her spoon so tightly it bent under the pressure of her werewolf strength. Grace who was seated beside her swallowed nervously, her eyes darting between Elsie and the warped utensil.

The two other elite girls in Elsie's table witnessed it as well and shifted uncomfortably in their seat. Elsie would be furious through out the whole day and undoubtedly take it out on them.

Meanwhile, Natalie, seated alone at her table, glanced down at the scene with mild amusement.

"Always full of surprises, aren't you?" she murmured with a small, knowing smile before returning to her meal, unfazed by the chaos around her.

Back at the center of the commotion, Violet and Alaric finally broke the kiss, their breathing heavy as they stared at each other. Alaric's lips glistened with her saliva and slightly swollen from the intensity of their kiss.

Violet felt a rush of possessive pride she hadn't known she was capable of. He was hers. The thought sent a thrill through her, and she smiled at him. Alaric smiled back.

Breaking the moment, Alaric turned to Violet's roommates, who were still staring at them with wide eyes.

"Do you mind if I steal her away?" he asked politely, his voice warm and charming.

Before anyone could respond, Lila practically bounced in her seat. "Yes! Please do!" she said enthusiastically, winking at Violet.

Violet shot Lila a cringing look, but Lila just grinned, her expression gleeful as if she already knew what they planned to do.

Alaric without wasting time, took Violet's hand and began leading her out of the dining hall. The noise became even louder as the students captured every second of Violet and Alaric fleeing the scene with their hands intertwined, and leaving behind a trail of chaos and excitement.

Alaric walked briskly, his hand firmly clasped around Violet's, practically dragging her along as though every second mattered and he couldn't waste it.

His urgency wasn't lost on Violet either, it was electric, like the storm he was named after. Violet's heart pounded, not from fear but from sheer exhilaration. She didn't know what was coming next, but the mystery only added to the thrill.

Ahead of them, parked a car in midnight blue. Alaric didn't hesitate, opening the passenger door for Violet with a look that was both confident, commanding and sexy as hell.

"Where are you taking me?" Violet asked with a firm voice amid the butterflies raging in her stomach.

"To a place where we won't be disturbed," Alaric replied huskily.

His gaze locked on hers, communicating his intention. But Violet simply slid into the luxurious seat, the faint scent of charged ozone and leather enveloping her.

With a smile, Alaric rounded the car and slipped into the driver's seat. With a roar, the engine came to life, and they sped away. It wasn't until moments later, Violet realized where they were headed.

They packed and trekked down the narrow clear path to his workshop.

Now it was morning, aside from the chipping of insects and singing of birds, it was quiet and secluded. The perfect place to hide from the world — and for murder.

So not going there.

Alaric opened the door for her, and Violet stepped in, her eyes scanning the room. The instant the door clicked shut behind her, she turned but Alaric's lips crashed against her.

#### Chapter 118: No Guilty Pleasure

The kiss between them was fiery and unrestrained now that they were alone. Alaric's lips devoured Violet's with the intensity of a storm, leaving her breathless. Violet responded with equal fervor, her hands gripping his strong shoulders as her body pressed into his.

Alaric walked her backward until her back met the cold wall, trapping her against it as his lips claimed hers again with the force of his raging emotions.

As if the kiss wasn't enough, Alaric broke it briefly, his breathing heavy. He took off the gloves that he had been wearing all this while to protect the truth that Violet was immune to his lightning. Not in front of the whole school.

But now they were alone, he wanted to be free. To kiss her without any hindrance knowing he could never hurt her. He wanted her to feel every brim of her power, for her to soak it up, to know how much his lightning raged for her.

When his bare hands touched her, the energy rushed into her like a current. Violet gasped, her head tipping back as the power surged through her veins, igniting every nerve ending.

Alaric had let his lightning flow freely, and now it sang inside her, amplifying her arousal until it was a raging storm. She looked into his eyes, now electrified and glowing with his power, and understood why he loved his gift. It was intoxicating. Addicting.

He kissed her again, harder this time, and Violet couldn't stop the loud moan that escaped her lips. The raw power coursing through her body only heightened her need, making her molten core flood with desire. Her pants felt damp, clinging to her skin, and she was sure they'd dissolve entirely if this continued.

But Violet hadn't come here for just this. Gathering all her willpower, she pushed against Alaric's chest, breaking the kiss. His hooded, intense gaze burned into her as he groaned, clearly frustrated. He tried to lean in again, but Violet sidestepped him.

"We need to talk about us." She said to him.

Alaric sighed, the sound heavy with reluctance. "Fine," he said, his tone low and rough. "Let's talk. What do you want to know?"

Violet held her ground as she asked, "Are we together, like... together? Or is this just casual?"

Alaric didn't answer immediately. Instead, he stepped closer, forcing Violet to step back until her hips hit the edge of his work table that was cluttered with electronic components and laptops. With effortless strength, Alaric swept everything to the side and lifted Violet onto the table. Then he positioned himself between her thighs, spreading her legs to pull her closer.

"Does this look like something casual to you?" he asked, his voice intentionally slow, as he ground his restrained erection against her, leaving no room for doubt.

Violet swallowed hard, the tension between them thick enough to cut with a knife. Her body ached for him, but she needed clarity.

"I'm addicted to you," Alaric said, his voice low and gravelly. "And I'm afraid there's no going back now." He leaned in, his lips trailing down her neck as he nipped and kissed her skin, leaving her gasping and sighing.

Violet was tempted to give in, but she still had questions. "I know about Elsie and the deal with the Alpha King."

Alaric froze against her, his guilt visible in the tension of his shoulders. Pulling back, he met her gaze.

"I don't have feelings for Elsie," he said honestly. "But I won't lie. I might end up with her. It's... complicated."

"I understand," Violet said, surprising him. "I don't mind your situation, as long as you don't cheat on me with her while we're together. When we graduate, if you choose her, so be it. But while we're together, you're mine."

Alaric's lips curved into a smile. "It's you and me, Violet. No one else."

With that, he kissed her again, this time slower and sweeter, a promise wrapped in tenderness. Violet melted into him, her resolve faltering until she remembered her boundaries.

"Also," she said between kisses, "no sex. Not now. Not today. I'm not ready yet."

Alaric chuckled, pressing his forehead against hers. "Fine," he agreed. "Let me take you somewhere more comfortable, then."

Before Violet could question him, he scooped her up and tossed her over his shoulder like a sack of flour.

"Be gentle!" she yelped, laughing despite the situation.

In response, Alaric smacked her bottom playfully, making her gasp. Violet, not one to back down, reached down from her upside-down position and smacked his butt in return. His laughter echoed through the space as he carried her to a hidden door she hadn't noticed before.

Pushing it open, Alaric stepped into a small, cozy bedroom tucked away behind his workshop. It was simple but inviting, with a bed, a couch, and a desk.

He set her down gently, and Violet looked around, surprised. "How did I not notice this before?"

"It's my retreat," Alaric explained, smiling. "A place to crash after late nights working."

He walked over to the couch and sat down, tapping his leg to indicate where she should sit. Violet was unable to resist the gesture. She smirked, swaying her hips as she approached. Then she straddled him, sitting directly on his erection, and drawing a groan from his lips.

"You're a little minx, aren't you?" Alaric teased, his hands slipping under her skirt to cup her bare bottom, pressing her closer.

Violet leaned forward, capturing his lips in a deep, lascivious kiss. Her hips began to move, grinding against him as he guided her rhythm with his hands. Their moans filled the room, the heat between them intensifying until—

A loud, insistent ringing shattered the moment. Violet tried to ignore it, but the sound persisted.

"Fuck. Answer it," Alaric muttered, his frustration clear as he muttered a curse under his breath. Why does the universe hate him?

Reluctantly, Violet pulled away, her breath uneven as she climbed off Alaric's lap. His flushed face and the way his chest rose and fell told her he was still struggling to catch his own breath. He groaned softly, running a hand through his disheveled hair, the tension in his body palpable.

"This is killing me," Alaric muttered, his voice low and filled with a mix of frustration and amusement as he adjusted his position on the couch, his need for her obvious.

Violet smirked slightly but didn't respond, turning on her heel to retrieve her phone from the main workshop. When she returned to the small room, her brow furrowed and Alaric immediately noticed.

"What's wrong?" he asked, sitting up straighter with concern, his piercing blue eyes searching her face.

Violet let out a sigh, holding up her phone. "It's a message," she said. "Apparently, I missed my earlier counseling session with Mr. Richmond, and now, it's been rescheduled for today."

"You have a meeting with Richmond?" Alaric asked with disbelief, as though the idea was entirely ridiculous.

"Yes, Richmond," Violet confirmed. And yes, it was the same Richmond, who was free to have relations with his students. Violet clearly remembered Mary's words.

Alaric raised a skeptical eyebrow. "Like... right now?"

Violet glanced at her phone to double-check the message. "Yes, like right now."

"What a crazy coincidence, don't you think?" Alaric said, his voice carrying a suspicious undertone.

Violet's forehead wrinkled, her thoughts immediately turning over his words. Was Alaric suggesting the meeting had been scheduled intentionally? But why? And more importantly, who would go to the trouble of arranging..... ? Her stomach sank as the answer hit her.

Oh no.

It couldn't be him... could it? Violet didn't want to believe that Asher would take the time to comb through her schedule and notice the class she missed just to reschedule it. Surely, he wouldn't go that far... right?

Except, the churning feeling in her gut told her otherwise. If anyone had the time, resources, and obsessive tendencies to pull it off, it was Asher. After all, he had done everything possible to get her into this school. Setting up a meeting for her would be child's play.

Her eyes met Alaric's, and she could tell from his expression that he was thinking the exact same thing. They hadn't yet addressed how Asher's influence and obsession with her might affect their fragile new relationship. Asher was a touchy subject they couldn't unpack right now.

Alaric clearly thought so, too, because instead of voicing his suspicions, he chose to sweep it under the carpet as he rose to his feet instead and walked towards Violet.

He placed his hands on her shoulders, a wolfish grin on his face.

"Good thing Richmond has a reputation for being late to his appointments. That gives me enough time to send you off with a little goodbye gift."

From the dark promise in his eyes and the husky tone of his voice, Violet didn't need to guess what he meant. Her heart skipped a beat, pounding in anticipation of what he had in store. Still, Violet wasn't one to let anyone have the last word.

"Let's hope it's up to my taste, then."

Alaric's smirk deepened into a slow, dangerous smile, the kind that made her stomach flip. In his eyes, Violet could see the glimpse of his wolf rising to meet her challenge. It was like he'd been waiting for her to say those exact words.

Before Violet could react, Alaric moved with inhuman speed, scooping her off the ground in one fluid motion causing her to yelp in surprise.

He carried her to his bed, the mattress dipping beneath her weight as she propped herself up on her elbows, her heart pounding. Alaric didn't hesitate as he followed after her, his body caging her and his eyes locked onto hers with a smoldering intensity.

The air was taut with tension, the kind that made Violet's breath hitch and her pulse to race. Unable to stand it anymore, she lifted her face to kiss him but Alaric looked away.

Instead, Alaric shifted onto his side, his hand resting lightly on her exposed thigh. His touch sent a shiver down her spine, and when he leaned in, his voice was low and husky. "We've kissed enough. For now, I want to feel your slickness."

And while he spoke, his hand was already moving, trailing up the soft skin of her thigh, his calloused fingers leaving a trail of fire in their wake. Her breath came out in a rush as his hand moved higher, closer to her core.

His voice thickened, rich with hunger. "I want to watch you come undone on my fingers."

It seemed as if the air in the room had been sucked out and Alaric kept his eyes fixed on her even as his finger tugged her panties to the side and a low groan escaped his lips at what he had found.

"You're wet, just for me." Alaric murmured with satisfaction, a single finger sweeping through her folds and opening them further.

Violet moaned loudly, her eyes fluttering close as she felt the pleasure down to her toes.

But Alaric was quick to correct her. "Shh, don't close your eyes. I want to see those beautiful eyes of yours and the expression on your face when you explode for me, sweetheart."

"Fuck...." Violet cursed, writhing on the bed as he continued to flick her clit, without changing the pace and rhythm in a way that felt like pure torment

But Violet wanted more.

So she tried to close her thighs around his hand, seeking more friction to push herself over the edge, but Alaric wasn't having it.

"Not so fast, little minx," Alaric said, chuckling. With ease, he spread her legs wide, holding them firmly apart. "Follow my lead, and you'll be rewarded in time."

Thankfully, he began to stroke and circle her wetness and Violet thought she might lose her mind. She cried out, her voice raw and throaty. "Oh, yes, yes... please, Alaric..."

Alaric in question, groaned, "God, Violet, the sounds you make, it's downright sinful." He said without breaking his concentration.

Violet could not even say a word, drowning in the feel of his fingers. If his hands could make her feel this good, she dared to imagine how his length would make her lose her mind. And for a moment there, she

was tempted to go back on her words and let him take her right there and then. Thankfully, the voice of reasoning still remained a tiny bit in her lust induced mind.

Then, as his pace quickened, his fingers circling faster and faster, Violet felt the momentum build like a tidal wave inside her.

"Oh God..." she moaned, clutching at the bedcovers, her body twisting and writhing beneath him.  
"Alaric! I think I'm going to come—!"

And just as Voilet reached the edge, the universe seemed to explode. Alaric released the faintest charge of electricity straight to her clit, the sensation like nothing she had ever felt before.

Violet's climax hit her like a lightning strike, her body arching off the bed in a seizure-like bout as the charge coursed through every nerve and vein, amplifying her orgasm to an almost unbearable intensity.

She let out a mighty roar, the release overtaking her completely, and Alaric echoed with his own growl.

Wetness gushed from her, sliding down her thighs in a way that left no doubt of the power of her climax. Neither did Alaric's fingers stop moving, coaxing her through every shudder and tremor until the last wave finally ebbed, leaving her breathless and boneless.

When Violet finally came back to herself, her chest heaving and her body spent, she looked up at Alaric with wide, awe-filled eyes. What just happened? He was incredible.

And it was at that moment that Violet finally understood.

If the other Alphas were as good as Alaric, it was no wonder the girls would die to date them.

#### Chapter 120: Beast, Not Men

"Are you sure you don't want me to escort you to Richmond's office?" Alaric asked, stealing another kiss from Violet's lips.

Violet returned the kiss briefly and replied, "Sorry, but I can go on my own."

Besides, she was certain the news of her and Alaric was already spreading like wildfire. She didn't want to draw even more attention to herself.

"Fine," Alaric groaned, but not before seeking her lips once more. Her lips tasted like honey and he was addicted to it. And this time, the kiss was deeper, more intense, leaving her breathless when he pulled away. "I miss you."

Violet blinked in surprise. "But I'm still here."

"That's the point," Alaric said, wrapping his arms around her possessively, pulling her close as if she were his personal doll. "I'm already missing you. I wish we could stay like this all day." His grin turned mischievous. "And maybe do something naughty."

Violet couldn't help but burst into laughter, lightly smacking his arm. "You're acting like a baby."

"Only when I'm with you," he admitted shamelessly, his grin growing wider.

Violet scoffed, shaking her head in disbelief. Who would've thought the cold, aloof Alaric Storm could be this childish? But before she could say more, Alaric suddenly sat up, his expression changing.

"No, this won't do," he declared.

"What won't do?" Violet asked, sitting up as well, but Alaric gently pushed her back down onto the bed.

"I need a souvenir," he said, his tone leaving no room for debate.

Before Violet could process what he meant by that, Alaric's hands had already slipped under her skirt, firmly gripping her hips.

"No, Alaric, there's no time!" she protested with a mix of panic and disbelief. "I'm running—"

But Alaric didn't stop. He easily slid her panties down her legs, pulling them free with a triumphant look.

"What the...?" Violet stammered, even though she had lifted her hips to help him. What in the world was wrong with her?

"Yes, this will do," Alaric said, lifting the delicate fabric to his nose and inhaling deeply. The sight made Violet's cheeks burn red. It should have disgusted her, but instead, she found the act oddly hot, leaving her both mortified and flustered.

But that was until reality hit her.

"Wait. No, Alaric, I can't walk around without panties!" she said, horrified.

"Yes, you can," Alaric replied smugly, slipping the panties into his pocket. "And you will. It's a good reminder for Richmond to know where he can't put his hands."

He then playfully slapped her thigh. "Now go."

Violet stood up, glaring at him with a pout. Fine, she thought. She'd stop by her dorm to grab a fresh pair.

But as if reading her mind, Alaric added, "And don't even think about putting on another pair. I'll know, Violet. You should let your lady bits breathe today, trust me, they'll thank me later." He smirked, lounging back on his bed as if he owned the world. "Now go, my little minx of a girlfriend."

Muttering under her breath about domineering alphas and their annoying antics, Violet left the room. To think she had assumed Alaric was the normal one among the cardinal alphas and that she had made the right choice.

As Violet stepped out of the woods and onto the paved path leading back to the academy, she realized just how far she'd have to walk.

Perhaps she should've let Alaric take her. But then again, what next? Would he command her to go braless, too? The thought made her shake her head. So Violet decided to walk. She needed the fresh air to think anyway. Right now, she had made so many choices that would affect the rest of her schooling here for good or better.

Violet hadn't been walking long when she heard the sound of a car horn from behind. Her heart leapt with hope as she thought perhaps Alaric had changed his mind. But when she turned, her face fell. It wasn't her new boyfriend as she wanted but a certain Alpha she promised to strangle the next time they met.

Roman.

He drove a flashy green car with its roof down, exuding luxury and arrogance in equal measure. The car's engine purred arrogantly just like its driver.

Roman didn't give up. He pulled up beside her, slowing to a crawl. "Care for a ride to school?" he asked with his haughty demeanor.

Violet ignored him, her expression turning icy. She hadn't forgotten the humiliating scenting ceremony or how Roman had fooled her from the get go. Although their last encounter had been kind of... misleading? It didn't mistake the fact she had not forgiven him and would not. Not until her revenge.

"Fine, suit yourself," Roman said, shrugging as if he didn't care. Then, in a deliberately teasing tone, he added, "I'm sure you're not running late for whatever important class you have right now."

Damn him for being right!

Violet had wasted too much time with Alaric already. And no matter how much her sexy boyfriend had claimed Richmond was habitually late, it probably was never this late for an hour-long session.

Hence Violet cursed under her breath, weighing her options as Roman's smug grin widened, daring her to accept.

"Fine," Violet said through gritted teeth.

Roman fought to keep his grin in check, but the smug satisfaction in his eyes was evidence he knew he had won.

Violet pulled open the passenger door and slid into the car, her movements jerky with irritation. With a huff, she slammed the door shut, the force of it causing a gust of air to lift her skirt slightly before it fluttered back down.

And that was when it happened.

Roman suddenly gasped sharply, catching her scent. His head turned toward her with alarming precision, his green eyes locking onto hers.

Violet froze.

Roman's pupils had dilated impossibly wide, swallowing the green in an almost hypnotic black. And through those piercing eyes, she saw it. His wolf staring back at her, raw and unfiltered.

For a moment, the air inside the car thickened, charged with an intensity that made her chest tighten. Violet swallowed hard, the dry click in her throat loud in her own ears.

She felt like prey under his gaze, as if Roman were seeing her not as a person but as something to be consumed, devoured, making the hairs on the back of her neck rise.

Violet's muscles coiled instinctively, every fiber of her being screaming for her to stay as still as possible, not daring to make a careless move that might provoke the predator beside her.

Time stretched unbearably long, the moment suffocating.

Then, almost as quickly as it began, it was over. Roman blinked, his pupils shrinking back to their normal size, and the wolf retreated to the depths of his gaze.

A disarming, almost casual smile spread across Roman's lips, replacing the earlier edge that had left her unsettled.

"You and Alaric have been a naughty pair," Roman said lightly, as if they were discussing the weather.

Before Violet could respond, Roman turned away, starting the car with a rumble of the engine.

Though Roman didn't seem like he would harm her, Violet's hands gripped her lap tightly until her knuckles turned white, the memory of his wolf's gaze burned into her mind.

It reminded Violet that though these people wore the skin of men, they were still beasts capable of devouring her without leaving a single bone behind.