

Defy The Alpha(s)

Chapter 18: Absolute Power

If Violet had thought Mary was a walking Encyclopedia, then Lila was the world wide web. She never stopped talking. And Violet made a secret note never to let her secret out to her because God knows who she might leak the information to.

Although Violet noticed that every word she let out was essential information required for her stay here and there was no backbiting — at least to someone that doesn't deserve it. But even at that, Violet was keeping her secrets to herself.

Just like her, every student in the West house was heading to the dining hall. And it seemed old habits don't die young because just like her first day at school, the student's creepy stares followed her as usual making her skin prickle with the awareness.

However, Violet was pretty much used to it and ignored them, listening avidly to the stories Lila had to offer, keeping the important ones and filtering out the rest.

"About Ivy...." Lila switched topics as they made it outside, now following the flock of students heading in the same direction. "Don't hate her too much, she's not like you think."

Violet frowned at her, "It's the fact you think I'm stuck up on such frivolous things that annoy me. I didn't come to this academy to -".

"Yeah yeah, blah blah, you don't have a heart and literally don't care about anybody, I understand." Lila cut her off before she could continue. It might have been a day but she already knew Violet's personality.

"Deny it all she wants but the truth remains Ivy sees you as a threat and possibly jealous of you."

"Exactly, why?" Violet asked, her tone raising as the ire grew inside of her again upon remembering yesterday's incident. "I already told her what to do if she's that jealous."

"Calm down, Violet. Let me fill you in," Lila began. "If you haven't noticed, Lunaris Academy only accepts the wealthy, the spectacular, and the privileged. The Sinclair family may be new money, but when Ivy first applied, she was rejected. Can you imagine the shame? Even as an elite, she didn't make the cut. Now there are rumors that the Sinclairs paid their way into the scholarship, just to get Ivy here. And then here you come, on your first day, making it into the top twenty—a feat no one else has

accomplished. A feat Ivy believes she would've achieved, and more, if only she'd had that one chance encounter with Griffin."

"Wow, I knew she was into being smacked down by Griffin. Tell her she won't miss the next opportunity if she sticks around me," Violet replied, voice dripping with sarcasm.

Though inwardly, Violet knew that with what she was still planning, being throttled by Griffin might end up the mildest punishment she'd face. Trouble had a way of finding her after all.

That is, if she stayed in this school. Violet planned to meet with Principal Jameson to have her scholarship revoked, if she could find a gap between her classes. The schedule here was relentless.

Lila sighed, realizing she wouldn't get an ounce of sympathy from Violet. But she wouldn't give up. Beneath Violet's hard exterior, Lila sensed there was softness; she just hid it well.

Getting to the dinning hall was another long trek on its own and it was much closer to the school building than the dormitories. Although the west house had a vending machine in its hallway that dispensed snacks, Violet made a mental note to eat to her content here.

Lila hurried ahead to hold the door open for Violet, sweeping her arm with mock grandeur. "Welcome to the Silvered Court, my lady."

Violet stopped, raising an eyebrow, "Silvered court?"

"That's what we Lunaris kids call the dining hall." Lila winked. "You'll understand when you get inside."

Violet didn't have time to dismiss Lila's words as mere exaggeration, there was already a line of students grumbling for them to move.

She stepped inside, with Lila holding the door open just a bit longer than necessary, letting it swing shut almost in the next student's face. The student cursed while Lila grinned, not even one bit remorseful for her action.

Violet shook her head at the scene, Lila can be quite childish. However, her steps faltered when she took in the dining hall in all its glory. And to be honest, Lila had not been lying by calling it the silvered court. It was almost as if loyalty was dining in these very halls.

The Lunaris Academy dining hall was nothing short of majestic, crafted with all the extravagance befitting the academy. It was vast, large enough to hold hundreds of students on the academy ground. But size wasn't its most striking feature.

Golden sunlight poured through enormous arched windows, illuminating the hall's classical design, dominated by cream and gold. The marble floor gleamed, reflecting the opulence of the entire space.

Massive chandeliers glittered overhead, casting a regal glow across the hall. However, that was where everything kind about it ended. Beneath this beauty lay the rigid social hierarchy that governed the academy.

At ground level, rows of polished mahogany tables were reserved for ordinary students—humans and lower-ranked werewolves who hadn't carved a name for themselves.

Compared to her previous school, this was grand by ordinary standards, however their seating lacked the opulence reserved for the elite, and was adorned with simple silverware and functional, if plain, tableware.

This section was the loudest, bustling with conversation, offering little privacy as these students were constantly under the watchful eyes of staff and higher-ranked students.

Even here, a subtle division existed: humans and werewolves each had their own areas, though some mingled. But both groups remained equally subservient in the academy's pecking order.

Hence despite the fine table settings and polished floors, it was unmistakable that this was the lowest rung. And it was also from here that one could look up and see where the real privilege lay.

An ornate staircase, with wrought-iron railings accented in gold, curved upward to an elevated platform: the elite section, exclusively for the academy's top students.

These elite students enjoyed an entirely different atmosphere. Seated in plush, individual chairs around small, velvet-draped tables, they dined with the finest china and silver, symbols of both their status and refinement.

Here, they ate with an air of indifference or amusement, often casting glances down at the floor below, some smug, others disdainful. The noise below seemed irrelevant to them, secure as they were in their superiority.

At the very center of the elite floor, sat four, regal chairs set apart from the others and it "commanded" attention.

Unlike the other seats, these ones were larger and more ornate than the others, carved from dark ebony wood, with the Academy's crest emblazoned in gold upon the back. Even without Lila saying a word, Violet knew whom those seats belonged to. It was the throne of the Cardinal Alphas.

No one, not even the top twenty, dared sit in this chair, an unspoken law of Lunaris. To approach it was to risk the wrath of not only the Cardinal Alphas but the entire structure of power.

The chairs were a symbol of absolute dominance in the academy's ruthless hierarchy, and every glance in its direction was filled with a mixture of awe, fear, and reverence.

While Violet had been impressed at first, a frown now crossed her face. A place meant for nourishment had become a daily affirmation of hierarchy, with every upward or downward glance serving as a reminder of the power some held—and the power others could only aspire to.

This place was a death sentence.

While others thought she was lucky to have reached the top, seeing this now made Violet realize it was a curse. Absolute power corrupts, and Violet knew that if she continued down this path, it would only be a matter of time before she became just like every other member of Lunaris Academy.

Chapter 19: Marry A Cardinal Alpha

Violet and Lila stood in the breakfast line, with Lila chattering on about something, completely unaware that Violet's mind was somewhere else entirely.

From her place in the line, Violet could only get a partial view of the four thrones—as she called them—but she was hyper-aware of their presence and, to her immense relief, the fact that they were empty. After last night's encounter with Asher, she wasn't sure she could handle seeing any of the Cardinal Alphas, least of all Griffin.

Turns out, not only were the Cardinal Alphas psychopaths, but they were narcissists too. Who in their right mind kept thrones for themselves in a school cafeteria?

Well. Them.

Just to cement their authority, they had crowned themselves kings of Lunaris Academy. At least there wasn't a self-proclaimed Queen, or Violet would have been completely done at this point. She could spot the elite students on the upper floor, mostly composed of girls, eating like the nobles they claimed to be.

While the rest of the students on the lower floor served themselves, Violet noticed a few students actually serving the elites. Her thoughts flashed back to Lila's earlier claim about wanting to be her lackey. Was this what she meant? The gods help her, this school never failed to shock her.

"Earth to Violet," Lila snapped her fingers in her face, snapping her out of her daze. "The line is moving."

Violet noticed the space she had left between her and Lila from standing still, along with the grumbling impatience from those behind her. Out of the corner of her eye, she saw someone trying to overtake her, but she quickly closed the gap, shooting a glare at the opportunist.

She heard the student mutter a curse under his breath but ignored it. She didn't want any attention today. However, just then, Violet watched as a student brazenly cut past the entire line, casually stepping in front of those who had been waiting.

Without acknowledging anyone, the girl made her way to the front, grabbed a plate and utensils, and began piling her plate high from the lavish buffet.

Violet's irritation grew as she watched, expecting an uproar, maybe some angry words from the other students. To her surprise, no one even blinked; their expressions stayed neutral, as though this scene was entirely normal. As if they were pretty used to it.

"Why aren't they doing anything?" Violet couldn't stop herself from asking.

"Shh, lower your voice," Lila scolded her, eyes wide.

"Exactly, why?" Violet asked through gritted teeth, her voice still loud enough. "I linger for a moment, and these assholes behind—" she gestured to the students behind her, "—try to push me out of the line. But she comes out of nowhere, helps herself, and no one says a word?"

"That's because it's Grace!" Lila hissed, exasperation lacing her tone.

"So who the hell is Grace?!"

"Moon help us, Violet, keep your voice down, or you're going to get us in trouble," Lila said seriously, looking around nervously as though someone might be listening.

The seriousness of her tone made Violet calm down, though her curiosity still burned. "Fine. Tell me then, what am I missing this time?" she asked, keeping her voice low.

Lila shot her a scowl. "You didn't bother researching the top twenty elite students, did you?"

"No, I didn't. Why would I? It's none of my business. Nor do I care who they are or what pathetic privileges they get from bullying everyone." Besides, she'd been too busy dealing with Asher in her dream—or whatever that encounter had been.

Lila face-palmed, muttering something that sounded like, "Goddess, help me with this one."

Violet almost felt bad for her, but Lila was the one obsessed with the hierarchy and school politics. If it had been anything worthwhile, she wouldn't have had a headache about her.

Just then, Grace walked past them, her tray held confidently as she strode toward the staircase leading to the elite floor. Violet's gaze narrowed as she noticed Grace's skirt, which was noticeably shorter than the required length, her creamy thighs on full display. Violet wondered if Principal Jameson noticed that, or if her immunity covered dress code violations as well.

"What rank is she?" Violet asked out of curiosity.

"She's not in the top twenty," Lila replied.

Violet raised an eyebrow. "Then who is she and what is she doing up there?"

"She's Elsie's hand."

"Elsie's hand?"

"Lackey. Servant. Aide. Follower. Whatever you want to call it."

"Who's Elsie?"

"Number one."

Violet's interest was piqued. "You mean she's the number one on the Lunaboard?"

Lila nodded, her eyes serious. "Yes, Violet. Elsie Lancaster is the number one elite student, and she's the only pureblooded she-wolf in this academy."

The words caught Violet off guard. Though she didn't care much for the academy's internal politics, this was different. This was a pureblooded she-wolf they were talking about.

Pureblooded she-wolves were celebrated, practically revered as near-goddesses. They were almost extinct, and alphas would fight each other to death for the chance to marry one. After all, marrying a pureblood meant the chance to have a true werewolf offspring, untainted by the watered-down lineage resulting from human-werewolf unions.

It wasn't hard to spot Elsie. Violet's gaze followed Grace until she set the tray down at a table where a silver-haired girl sat, her presence striking. The girl's silver hair seemed to glow under the dining hall's lighting, almost otherworldly, and Violet found herself unable to look away. Elsie's aura was intimidating, almost magnetic.

Before Violet could look away, Lila added in a whisper, "Not only that, but I heard Elsie is set to marry one of the Cardinal Alphas upon graduation."

It felt like a bomb went off in Violet's mind. Elsie was going to marry one of the Cardinal Alphas? Which of them? Violet could not even understand why she was curious about that. It was none of her business yet she wanted to know.

As if sensing their eyes on her, Elsie turned and locked eyes with Violet.

Chapter 20: Grave Offense

Elsie Lyka Lancaster was undeniably stunning. Her blue eyes were captivating, a shade so vivid and deep that they could make men fall at her feet. Her heart-shaped face, pointed nose, and full bottom lip gave her an appearance that was nothing short of alluring.

Yet, beneath all that charm, Violet sensed the aloofness that cloaked her like a veil. It felt like her beauty was just a facade, hiding the true nature beneath.

Elsie exuded an air of superiority that had nothing to do with her looks. It was in her posture, the way she held herself, the way she looked down on everyone else with cold indifference. To Elsie, Violet was nothing but dirt, meant to grovel at her feet, to worship her as though she were some goddess above everyone else.

It was further proven when Violet felt something akin to a challenge in the she-wolf's gaze, as if she were expecting Violet to look away first.

Lila, noticing the tension between the two, whispered urgently, "Look away, Violet. Don't engage her."

Unfortunately for Lila, Violet had never been one to follow orders, especially not from someone who expected her to cower. She wasn't scared of some Queen Bee who held power by intimidating others.

She was a pure blooded werewolf, so what? What was so special about her anyway if it wasn't her soon-to-be overused womb for pureblood werewolf offspring. It was no secret that pure blooded she-wolves tend to give birth a lot. A move to rebuild the declining pureblooded population.

Grace must have caught her attention because Elsie was the first to look away, and that small victory gave Violet a flicker of satisfaction.

In that moment, Violet decided she didn't like the she-wolf, and it wasn't because Elsie was set to marry one of the Cardinal Alphas. That was none of her concern. She actually hoped it was Asher. Maybe that way the psychopath would leave her alone.

Violet hated her because she knew girls like Elsie, the ones who pretended to be angelic and pure while hiding their true nature beneath. They were nothing but wolves in sheep's clothing.

"Let's go," Lila urged, pulling her away before their silent altercation could reignite. Lila swore that Violet was determined to give her a heart attack one of these days.

Thankfully, the line moved quickly, and before long, it was their turn. Her eyes scanned the array of dishes arranged before her on a long, polished table.

She had to admit, the luxury here was nothing like what she'd ever experienced. The sight alone made her mouth water as each dish steamed lightly, promising a hot, freshly prepared meal. If anything could convince her to stay at this school, it would be the food. She was in a food paradise, a luxury she'd never had back home.

There were so many dishes to choose from: golden scrambled eggs, crispy smoked bacon, honey-glazed sausages, fluffy pancakes and waffles served with fresh berries, an assortment of pastries like croissants, danishes, and muffins covered in linen cloths, and a fresh fruit platter with melons, grapes, pineapple, and berries. It was overwhelming.

Even if she took a little bit of everything, Violet knew she wouldn't be able to finish it all. So she served herself a spoonful of scrambled eggs, sprinkled lightly with herbs, a couple of bacon strips, and some hash browns. She finished by adding a warm croissant, splitting it open to let the steam escape.

Lila caught up to her, her plate piled high with a bit of everything. She shot Violet a judgmental look. "Is that all you're taking?"

Violet nodded.

Lila looked at her in disbelief, then glanced around, saying. "If you're worried about the guys judging what you eat, you don't need to. The Alphas actually like women who can eat. Look around." She tipped her head towards the other students.

Violet followed her gaze, taking in the plates around her, and her jaw dropped. The portions the students were taking made hers look like a child's serving. Especially the werewolves—they were the worst. Their plates were piled high, almost like mountain ranges that seemed one wrong move away from toppling over.

Of course, it made sense since they needed more food to replenish their energy and keep up with their fast metabolism, but it was still astonishing to see.

"I didn't choose this amount of food because of the alphas —"

"Yeah, yeah, I understand, but you still need to eat more, my lady," Lila said with a bored eye roll.

Before Violet could object, Lila had already added a serving of roasted potatoes to her plate. Violet let it slide, partly because the crispy edges of the potatoes looked too tempting.

She picked up her tray and started walking away before Lila had any other ideas like adding more food to her plate. But before she could find a table, Lila grabbed her arm. "Where are you going? Your place is upstairs." She pointed up at the elite floor.

"Yeah, about that..." Violet glanced up at the students eating above, surrounded by their air of privilege. "I think I'll eat my food here, unless I want to suffer indigestion."

"No, Violet, I don't think—" Lila began, but Violet had already made up her mind, heading over to a table on the lower floor. She pulled out a chair and sat down, ready to enjoy her meal.

However, as soon as she sat, she noticed the conversations around her had abruptly stopped. Violet looked up, unfazed, and said to the students staring at her, "Please, don't stop on my account. Go on with whatever you were saying."

But instead of resuming, the entire floor seemed to fall into silence, every single eye pinned on Violet, as if she had just committed a grave offense.

"Great," Violet muttered under her breath. She was definitely going to have indigestion after this meal.

Just what country did she destroy in her past life to deserve this fate?

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