

Defy 201

Chapter 201: Power Like This

Ivy let out a distressed cry, "Goddess help me, my roommates have lost their minds!"

But Lila only grinned wolfishly, replying, "At least you still recognize us as your roommates."

Ivy shot her a glare, but it wasn't half as fierce as it should have been; her defenses were already crumbling.

Daisy said, "Defeating Elsie won't be easy, but it's not impossible."

"How?" Ivy demanded. "Have you forgotten who Elsie is? She's basically the mate for one of the cardinal alphas. She's got the Alpha King's backing. You? Us? We've all got none. She won't even need to lift a finger; she's got power, influence, and people to do her bidding."

Violet's eyes flashed with determination. "Then we'll cut off that backing. We'll dismantle those influences one by one. Without them, she's nothing."

Ivy scoffed. "And the Alpha King?"

"We'll figure that out as we go," Daisy said with forced optimism.

"Thought as much," Ivy shook her head, unimpressed.

But Daisy persisted, "We won't achieve this in a single day, but this is our plan for now, and we'll work toward it. For the moment, we've got bigger worries, like finding a place to actually live." She glanced up at the rotting ceiling just as a drip of nasty water landed on her cheek, making Ivy recoil with disgust.

Daisy wiped it off, grimacing.

Violet told them, gesturing to the broken window where the rain wreaked havoc outside. "It's still pouring out there. Even if we manage to hire workers, they can't do repairs in this weather. And it'd take days, maybe weeks, to fix this place enough so we can start actually living in it."

At that point, Lila piped up, "I can help with that."

"You can?" three startled voices echoed in unison, their gazes snapping toward her.

Lila cleared her throat. "My magic can help." she said.

At that, Ivy's eyes lit up. "So you can just... clean this place up?"

Lila's brow furrowed, clearly offended. "What do you mean clean up the place? I'm not some witch about to chant 'bibbidi-bobbidi-boo' while waving brooms and mops. I work with the elements, Ivy. Nature provides, and I merely guide its hand."

Before everyone's eyes, Lila lowered herself, resting her palm on the warped, rotting floorboards beneath them.

"Like this. The woods were once strong here. I'll call upon them to reinforce what was lost so that no one falls through."

A hush fell over the room as they watched Lila begin to work. The wood beneath her hand gave a soft, drawn-out creak, as though waking from a long, deep slumber.

Then, before their eyes, the decay began to reverse. The splintered planks smoothed out, their brittle, discolored surfaces darkening into a rich oak. It spread like creeping frost, the weak, termite-infested wood seemingly consumed by something new and whole, growing over it like armor.

When the effect reached their feet, the girls tensed, half-expecting to be swallowed up. But all they felt was a soft tingling, like the brush of a cool breeze against their skin. Nothing else.

The transformation simply moved on, securing the rest of the floor with a protective overlay.

"That's... incredible," Daisy breathed, eyeing the difference. There was no sign of the gaping cracks that once tried to snap under their weight.

But that was only the beginning because Lila wasn't done.

The musty air that had clung to the room like a second skin suddenly changed. The stale, heavy scent of mold and decay gave way to something fresher, as if the house itself was taking its first breath in years.

All around them, cobwebs thick as cotton twisted in on themselves, unraveling like thread being reeled back into an invisible spindle. Dust motes danced in the air as they lifted, swirling like tiny ghosts before vanishing into nothing.

The moss clinging stubbornly to the walls peeled away and withered before dissolving into fine powder. Thin lines of new growth traced over the rotted beams, merging with the decayed wood. As the layers fused, crumbling plaster filled in, cracks sealing until the house's skeleton looked less hazardous.

There was a gaping hole in the ceiling where rain had been trickling in steadily, forming a grimy puddle on the floor. With eyes narrowed, Lila pressed her palm against the nearest beam, and tendrils of fresh wood spiraled up to meet the ragged edges.

One moment, there was a hole letting in the rain; the next, there was an almost seamless seal where the roof had melded itself back together. The leftover water, tinted with brown sludge, drained away into cracks that instantly sealed behind it, leaving only damp footprints.

And even the rusted gutter that had been clinging precariously to the eave outside? They heard a screech of metal that made them jump.

Then, through the broken window, they saw the gutter's pieces shifting, shedding flakes of rust like an old skin. Though not fully repaired, it reattached more securely, no longer threatening to tumble down at the slightest breeze.

By the time Lila stepped back, wiping sweat from her brow, the difference was clear like night and day. Though the house wasn't as grand as their previous rooms, especially with much of the paint still chipped, and the dull lighting, the worst of the decay had been tamed.

"Good enough?" Lila asked, her tone almost challenging as she glanced at Ivy.

Ivy's gaze swept across the newly-stabilized floor, the receding cobwebs, and the sealed-up holes in the ceiling. "I—this is..." She swallowed, momentarily at a loss for words.

Daisy smiled, placing a hand on Lila's shoulder. "It's perfect for now. You're incredible, Lila." she gave her a thumbs up.

But unlike the others, a cold shiver ran down Violet's spine instead. Watching all this was like watching time rewind itself.

"I don't think I can get used to this." She muttered.

But Lila waved off her concern. "Oh, don't worry, you'll get used to it. You're the princess, after all, you're supposed to do more than this." She declared it as if it were a blessing, not a burden.

Violet, however, shuddered. The gods only knew what she might do with a power like this.

Chapter 202: Anything For The Princess

With Lila having steadied the floorboards and made the house less likely to murder any of them, they decided it was a good time to explore their new residence.

Lila led the way with Ivy trailing beside her. The walls were still peeling in places, their original color all but forgotten, and patches of dark mold clung stubbornly to the corners.

Whenever Lila passed her hand over a mold-infested spot, the fungus receded into itself and vanished, but she left the peeling paint alone. The act was intentional on her part, to keep people from growing suspicious of any dramatic transformations to the shack.

The girls figured that none of the elite had likely ventured inside the house; they probably feared it would collapse on them. Hence, they made the changes on the inside, keeping it minimal and realistic, so even if by chance, they did come snooping, the changes wouldn't raise too many eyebrows. They would probably assume they just do some minor "labor work" and tidying.

Meanwhile, Daisy and Violet, were bolder than the scaredy cat Ivy, and took it upon themselves to scout the rooms in the house.

By the time they returned, Violet was the first to announce, "I don't know if this is one weird coincidence, but there are four distinct bedrooms, and they're way more spacious than our old room at the pack house." She tried to sound optimistic.

Ivy rolled her eyes. She might've conceded to staying at last, but that didn't mean she was happy about it.

"And that's not all," Daisy chimed in, "the rooms are furnished. There are beds, wardrobes with old clothes in them, too. It makes me think we're not the first students to go rogue."

"Shouldn't be surprising." Violet muttered under her breath. With the school's fucked up tradition and rules, they must have been fed up with the bullshit.

Hearing about four rooms, Lila's face lit up with sudden excitement. "So that means we get to make our choice?!"

A single look passed between Lila, Daisy, and Violet as they understood what would happen next. Ivy, too used to more refined living, didn't catch on. Before she could blink, the other three burst into a run down the musty hallway.

"I'm calling dibs on the biggest room!" Daisy shouted, sprinting ahead.

"No way! I saw it first!" Violet retorted, hot on her heels.

"Excuse me, ladies," Lila's voice rang out as she blurred past them with speed only a Fae could possess.

Violet and Daisy skidded to a stop, watching in stunned disbelief as Lila reached the largest room before they could even blink.

Daisy and Violet groaned in unison.

"That was cheating."

Lila shrugged, "Finder's keeper."

She bent and brushed her fingers against the worn bed frame and just like that, set to work. They could only stare in bafflement as the bed, which looked on the verge of collapse, was quickly restored, the sagging mattress rebounding under the ministry of her magic.

The torn, filthy sheets seemed to knit themselves whole and clean once more, dust and cobwebs shrinking away until the place looked... livable. And all of that happened in the span of ten minutes, leaving Daisy and Violet gaping in the hallway.

Ivy finally caught up, panting slightly. "Must be nice to have magic," she grumbled, eyeing Lila's handiwork with a sulky expression.

Lila turned around, pride gleaming in her eyes. She stepped toward them, specifically addressing Violet, "Your room is ready, my princess.."

Violet blinked in confusion. "Huh?"

Lila gestured grandly to the newly restored room.

Violet gaped. "But—you—the room—you claimed it—" she stammered, struggling to process what was happening.

"The princess's needs come first," Lila said simply, as if it were the most obvious thing in the world.

"What?!" Ivy and Daisy's jaw nearly fell to the ground.

For a moment, Violet just stood there, stunned. Then, her face split into a triumphant grin.

"Ha!" she declared, turning smugly toward Daisy and Ivy. "That's right, peasants. The princess gets first pick."

"Must be nice to be a princess," Ivy muttered again under her breath, unable to hide the twinge of envy.

"Don't overplay your role, princess." Daisy sassied playfully.

Violet, however, was too busy flopping onto the freshly restored bed, testing out its bounce, letting out a satisfied hum.

"There are still three more rooms," Lila reminded them, glancing pointedly down the hall.

That was all Daisy and Ivy needed to hear before they raced down the hallway, shoving at each other in their scramble to claim the best one. In the end, Daisy ended up in the room opposite Violet's, while Lila and Ivy claimed the two across from each other.

However, it wasn't long before Ivy and Daisy wandered into Violet's room, sulking and pouting.

Daisy flopped dramatically onto the bed beside her and wailed, "Must be so nice to be a princess. You don't have to clean up your room in this horrendous weather."

Ivy, her partner in crime, chimed in, "Not to mention this storm makes it impossible to see anything. All the bulbs in this dump are shot, so we're practically blind."

Violet arched her brow. Oh, she knew exactly what this was, good ol' reverse psychology. And they weren't even being subtle about it. Still, Violet let herself fall for it anyway. Mostly because, they weren't wrong. The sockets were broken, and Alaric's never-ending rainstorm outside only made things worse.

She said to them, "If Lila still has the energy to help you, no problem. Otherwise, we'll all just pitch in and clean up together."

Before Daisy or Ivy could even look for her, Lila's voice piped up from across the hall, eyes alight with boundless energy. "This Fae is far from tired! Anything for the princess!" she declared with enthusiasm.

And with that, she dashed off in a blur to assist the two grumblers.

Violet blinked, scratching the back of her head. Then frowned.

Lila's behavior was... a little disturbing.

Like, what if she asked her to kill someone? Would she actually do it? Would she just smile and say, 'Anything for the princess', before committing murder in her name?

Even the idea of being a princess still felt surreal. Violet made a mental note to talk to Lila. If it wasn't time to meet her mother yet, she needed to at least learn more about the woman who gave birth to her.

Chapter 203: No Grand Entrance

The girls spent the entire morning sorting and tidying up their things, reclaiming some sense of normalcy after Elsie and her entourage had practically ripped them from their old dorm.

By the time they finished, the rooms looked nothing like the disaster they had walked into and they felt a little pride at finally having things under control. For now, this was enough.

Daisy plopped down on the newly repaired wooden chair, all thanks to Lila, who had pieced together the broken scraps they'd discovered in the living room. Ivy, meanwhile, had already put in an order for a proper sofa set to be delivered as soon as the rain cleared.

"I'm hungry," Ivy complained, rubbing her stomach.

"Me too," Lila added.

Daisy eyed her curiously. "You actually eat human food?"

Lila said casually. "Of course. Though it's nowhere near as incredible as Fae cuisine. Just one taste of our dishes and you'd never go back to anything else. But human food isn't that bad, you know. You guys come up with some wild combinations."

Daisy's brow quirked up. "So you get hungry the same way we do?"

"Yes and no," Lila explained. "Unlike the average human, I can go weeks without physical meals, surviving on magical energy. But I've been in your realm long enough that I've kind of... adapted. Let's just say I've been conditioned to crave food like a human does."

Ivy couldn't help but ask. "You've been in the human realm for how long, exactly?"

At that, Daisy and Violet both looked up with curiosity.

"I've been here since the day the queen sent me to find the princess," Lila said simply, leaving them to fill in the blanks.

Violet paused with suspicion, tilting her head. "How old are you, exactly?"

Lila shrugged, answering in the most casual tone, "Oh, I'm not that old, just a hundred and sixteen."

And that was the final straw.

Ivy fell off her seat with a yelp, while Daisy and Violet's jaws dropped.

What does she mean by not that old? The words stunned Daisy especially.

Her grandmother hadn't even lived half that long. They were friends with someone they should be calling their ancestor.

After a moment of stunned silence, Violet cleared her throat to break the tension. "So... you guys said you're hungry, right? Let's go get some food." She checked her phone. "It's lunchtime."

Ivy and Daisy turned disbelieving stares on her, like she'd suggested leaping off a cliff. Finally, Daisy found her voice. "Where exactly do you think we're going to eat? Please tell me it's not the dining hall."

They all remembered the morning's humiliation clearly enough. The glares, sneers, and the unfriendly vibe was enough to tell them it wouldn't bode well for them, being Rogues now.

Violet, ever stubborn, refused to bend. "Where else if not the dining hall?"

"You'll draw attention," Daisy warned. "Let's wait until lunch is over so we can go in."

But Violet shook her head firmly. "Sorry, but I won't settle for leftover crumbs."

Lila tilted her chin up. "Exactly. I like my croissants hot, and nobody's going to stop me from enjoying them."

Daisy shot a pleading look at Ivy—who was finally back on her chair—but Ivy merely gave a half-hearted shrug. "If we're serious about toppling Elsie, we can't do it hiding in this shack. She probably thinks we're cowering by now. Let's prove we're not so easy to break."

"Until they break us," Daisy said dryly, then sighed in surrender. "Fine. It's not like I can talk you two out of it anyway."

A wry grin spread across Violet's face. She stood, jerking her chin at the door. "Come on, then. Let's get the hell out of here."

But the moment they cracked open the door, the pouring rain made them pause. It was a downpour, the kind that soaked you to the bone within seconds. Daisy groaned dramatically, "God, I hate Alaric."

Everyone knew this was no ordinary storm, and Ivy only shrugged.

"What did you expect? Violet broke his heart," Ivy pointed out, earning a sharp look from Lila. She hated people speaking ill of her princess.

Violet shook her head. "There's no point arguing. Let's focus on how we're going to get to the Silver Court in this weather."

Daisy frowned, calculating the distance. "We won't make it there looking like anything other than drowned rats. That's not exactly the grand entrance we wanted."

She continued, "I think we should take a rain check. At least until Alaric decides to have mercy on us."

Ivy's stomach growled loudly. "But I'm starving!" she whined, clearly unaccustomed to such discomfort.

Violet steeled herself. "I'll go," she declared abruptly.

Lila straightened at once. "No, I'll go. Let me handle it."

Violet shook her head. "I caused all this. I need to do something about it. I'll go to the Silver Court and bring back lunch for us."

Lila folded her arms. "Then I'm going with you. I'm your protector, don't even start telling me to stay put, Princess."

Violet hesitated, but ultimately relented. "...Fine. Let's go."

Better two than one, anyway.

They made to leave, only for Ivy to shout after them, "Don't worry, I'll order umbrellas for us this time!"

Violet gave her a quick wave in acknowledgment before she and Lila dashed into the rain.

The downpour hit Violet like a barrage of icy needles, making her shiver from head to toe. Yet they moved on, and feeling Lila's hand wrap around her own, kind of encouraged her.

They splashed through growing puddles, droplets stinging their cheeks and soaking their clothes until it felt like they weighed a thousand pounds. It was at that moment Violet realized how much trouble they were truly in.

Back at the old dorm, it had only been a five-minute or less jaunt to the Silver Court when they walked. But now, it was more than fifteen. Worse still, there were no campus transport shuttles for them to hail, no stops for them to duck under. They had been cut off, not just socially, but from every little convenience.

Chapter 204: To Be A Rogue

"Lila!" Violet shouted, her voice nearly lost in the unrelenting downpour. Rain blurred her vision, and though she'd been holding onto Lila's hand moments ago, a sudden rush of debris carried by the wind had wrenched them apart.

"I'm here, Princess!" Lila called back, and in an instant, she was by Violet's side. "Just don't let go, no matter what."

And yeah, Lila didn't need to say it twice.

Violet silently vowed never to let go of her hand again.

The rain pelted them mercilessly, and in that moment she made a mental note: If she ever dated again, she'd make damn sure the guy didn't have lightning powers to control the weather, because this was pure torture.

When the doors of the dining hall finally came into view, Violet nearly collapsed onto her knees in relief. Right then and there, she could have knelt down and praised the lord for deliverance from Alaric's angry rainstorm.

But instead of heading straight inside like any sane person would, to her surprise, Lila suddenly tugged her toward the side of the building, away from view.

Confused, Violet asked. "What are you doing?" She glanced around, but unsurprisingly, there wasn't a single person lingering outside in this miserable storm.

But Lila merely grinned. "You can't make an entrance looking like a drowned rat, can you?"

Before Violet could get a word out, Lila reached out and touched the sodden fabric of her clothing. A strange sensation washed over her, like a deep warmth sinking into her skin. Then, before her wide eyes, Violet watched as every drop of water rose from her clothes, suspended in midair like vapor. Then it fell at their feet in a wet splash.

Violet gasped. "That was... cool."

"You flatter me, Princess," Lila responded, dipping her head politely.

A question hit Violet and she hesitated before asking, "If I'm Fae like you, when are you going to teach me to do the things you do? You even said I could do greater."

Lila had been draining the last of the moisture from Violet's hair, but at her words, she stilled, just for a fraction of a second. It was subtle, but Violet didn't miss how her expression briefly tensed, as though something weighed on her mind.

Yet Lila smoothed it over in a second, adding, "Soon, Princess. Soon enough."

"Fine... if you say so," Violet replied, forcing a smile that didn't quite reach her eyes.

Lily was hiding something. Violet was sure of it. But this wasn't the place or time to press for answers.

"All done." Lila stepped back, gesturing for Violet to check herself.

Indeed, Violet was as dry as if she'd never stepped into the rain at all. She watched as Lila performed the same trick on herself, drying every last drop from her own clothes and hair.

"Won't it look suspicious that we're not soaked through?" Violet asked, remembering the pourdown just beyond the wall.

Lila shrugged. "You're about to stir up a whole commotion just by walking in there. Trust me, they'll be more interested in how the Rogue Queen is received than in why you're not dripping wet."

When Violet thought about it, it actually made sense.

"Besides," Lila went on, "the second we step out into the rain again, the water will fall on us. But we'll be inside so fast, we won't look like miserable, drenched rats."

Violet couldn't help but be impressed. No matter the situation, Lila always had a way to ensure her comfort and safety. Must be nice to have someone like that on your side.

Then Lila's expression turned thoughtful. "If anything, what I am worried about is how we're going to get back with the food. Not all of it can be sealed, and even with packages, the rain will find a way to ruin it."

"Don't worry," Violet assured her, "we'll surely figure something out."

"If you say so." Lila flashed a sudden, eager grin. "Alright, princess, let's go. On the count of three."

Violet tensed, muscles coiling in preparation.

"One... Two... Three!"

Lila grabbed her hand, and they dashed through the rain, sprinting toward the entrance. Just as Lila predicted, the distance was short enough that by the time they reached the doors, they weren't completely drenched.

But just as Violet reached for the handle, something caught her eye. A familiar green car was packed just across the road and it undoubtedly belonged to Roman Draven.

Of course he was here. The asshole who'd nudged her into this ill-advised path. A hot wave of anger flowed through her veins, a fury so sudden and consuming Violet was almost tempted to storm into that hall and give him a piece of her mind.

But she forced it back by sheer grace. That was exactly the kind of reaction the students—and probably Roman—expected from her, and she wouldn't give them the satisfaction. They wanted them to be angry, desperate, and probably regret rejecting the pack houses, but that would not happen. At least, not on her watch.

Violet and Lila pushed open the doors to the dining hall, and contrary to their hopes of a near-empty hall, they found it packed to the brim. It seemed everyone had the same idea that hot food and company was the perfect refuge from this cold, rain-soaked day.

The air was buzzing with chatter and conversation, at least until the first student spotted Violet Purple. He then quickly nudge his neighbor, who looked at her and froze in surprise. The next person noticed, the whole interaction spreading like wildfire

To be precise, it happened like a Domino effect: one by one, the student's heads turned, their words dying mid-sentence, and the entire place falling silent at the sight of her.

For a few seconds, Violet just stood there, returning their collective gaze. Then she glanced upwards to the elite seating area, scanning for any sign of the cardinal Alphas.

There was no sign of Asher, Griffin, not even Alaric — the one she wished to see the most. Instead, there was only Roman seated cozily with Elsie. The two looked like they were on a date, ignoring the fact that this was still a school cafeteria.

Elsie's striking blue eyes locked with Violet's golden ones, and hostility crackled in the space between them. The thought that Roman and Elsie had likely been sharing a laugh at her expense made her temper spike.

The mother fucking snake!

This time around, Violet shot Roman a pointed glare, her two heated orbs promising retribution if she ever were to get her hands on him.

Violet did not wait for his response, she tore her gaze away and continued forward, determined to get what she came for. Whispers quickly replaced the hush in the hall, dozens of eyes trailing her every move — with some staring daggers at her.

But Violet was not intimidated. With her chin held high, she walked straight to where the line formed. Except, to her surprise, the students already waiting in line backed off the moment she and Lila approached. As if Violet carried a plague they wanted to avoid.

Violet and Lila exchanged a look, their mouth twitching as they fought hard to hold back their laughter. What the fuck was wrong with these people?!

Did they seriously think leaving them to stand alone was some form of punishment. God! They couldn't have been more wrong.

To Violet, this was a blessing in disguise after all, it simply meant no wait time and a quicker trip back to the shack. Their lovely shack.

And it turned out, that was only the beginning.

Violet grabbed a couple of disposable takeout containers from the stack on the tray stand and stepped toward the serving counter. At once, she noticed how the staff members began to leave one by one, letting the spoons slip from their fingers.

One of them even glanced up at Elsie's table, as if asking permission, or, rather confirmation. Of course, the bitch had a firm hand in enforcing this treatment.

So this was what being a rogue looked like. There was no official service, no need to wait in line, and apparently no one to stop her from serving herself. For the first time, Violet felt going rogue was the best decision.

With bit of satisfaction brewing in her chest and lips curved into a smug smile, Violet started piling her container with all kinds of food: steaming chicken stew, thick tomato soup, crusty bread rolls, sautéed vegetables, and more.

Meanwhile, Lila—who had been daydreaming of croissants—practically pounced on a basket full of them, snatching the warm pastries like a starved wolf. She tore into one, letting out a moan of delight as the buttery flakes melted on her tongue. Yes, there was nothing lady like about them at that moment.

Violet and Lila acted like total gluttons, stuffing enough food to last them the day...or possibly the weekend. Their pockets bulged with wrapped pastries, and each set of containers held more than an ordinary meal. Violet, especially, had no intention of coming back here tonight or at dawn, who knew what petty tricks Elsie's lackeys might pull next. If they had to stock up, so be it.

They were almost done gathering their stash when a sharp, venomous voice cut through the low murmur of the crowd.

"Who the fuck let Rogues in here?"

Yep, the moment they had been waiting for was here.

Chapter 205: Pack War

When Violet turned around, she had fully expected to see Elsie Lancaster standing there in her full, haughty splendor, ready to rain hell upon her. Instead, her brows furrowed when she was met with a much less threatening sight. Sharon.

The same Sharon whose face she had lovingly introduced to a plate of ruined food on their very first meeting.

Violet blinked. Some people really did love pain

As though she hadn't heard a thing, Violet turned to Lila with a mocking light in her eyes. "Did you catch that? Mother Hen isn't here to handle business, so her little chick thinks it can flap its wings and fly?"

Lila caught the vibe and ran with it immediately.

"A flying chick? That's new. Have you ever seen a chick fly?"

Violet feigned deep thought. "No, I haven't. Does that even exist? Perhaps it's an entirely new species."

"What new specie? That's delusion of the highest grandeur!" Lila howled with laughter.

Her laughter was the obnoxious, and exaggerated one, the kind that set confusion and drew incredulous stares.

It was so infectious that Violet joined right in, the both of them cackling like a pair of madwomen in the middle of the cafeteria. They didn't even act as if they had just been stripped of all their status and branded as social outcasts.

The students didn't know how to react to them. Some were dumbfounded while others exchanged confused glances. All except Sharon.

Sharon looked like she was about to explode. Her face had turned so red she could have passed for a ripe tomato.

Now they had been branded rogues, she had expected Violet and Lila to cower at her feet and shrink in humiliation, but instead, they were mocking her.

The audacity!

She glanced upstairs, hoping for some kind of reaction or signal from Elsie, but the Queen Bee was calmly eating her meal with cold disinterest, not even bothering to look down.

That was all Sharon needed to know she was failing at impressing Elsie. If Elsie had been watching, it meant she was executing her orders properly. But that didn't seem to be the case here.

Sharon hardened her jaw, determined to show Elsie deserved a place under her banner.

Her gaze flicked to Violet and Lila, who had resumed packing an absurd amount of food into their containers. What were they even doing with all that food? But then, that was none of her business.

Her business was putting Violet in her place, here and now.

With confidence, she stepped forward and reached for Violet.

"Hey! I'm talking to—" Except Sharon never finished her sentence.

Because at that exact moment, Lila—who had been blissfully munching on her croissant—suddenly spat the half-chewed bite directly onto her face.

"Oops," Lila said, pressing her hand to her chest in feigned shock. "You startled me."

A hush fell over the cafeteria.

For a full three seconds, Sharon didn't move, her brain failing to process what had just happened. Her entire face was coated with a mix of crumbs and buttery flakes.

Then, it dawned on her.

"AHHH!!"

Sharon shrieked as she lifted her hands, frantically wiping at her face as though she had been splattered with acid.

"No! Not the food again!" she wailed, horror-stricken.

Around them, the students—who weren't supposed to be on Violet's side—couldn't help themselves. They roared with laughter, some yanking out their phones to start recording. Sharon was losing her shit in front of everyone and it was too good to miss.

"Tsk, ts." Violet shook her head like a disappointed parent. "You really should learn some manners when you approach people mid-meal."

Sharon's face burned hotter than the cafeteria ovens when she heard that. She didn't care anymore. Her eyes flashed with pure murder. Violet was a rogue now. That meant she could be taught a lesson without repercussions.

"You stupid bitch!"

With a snarl, Sharon lunged at Violet, her long polished nails poised like claws, ready to rip her apart.

But before her hand could land a single scratch, a voice pierced the commotion.

"What's going on here?!"

All eyes turned toward Roman Draven, who had finally deigned to address the chaos.

In that heartbeat of distraction, Violet whipped around and sprinted toward Roman, throwing her arms around him in an extravagant hug.

"My Alpha!" she cried, leaning her head against his chest in a show of dramatic reverence.

A collective gasp rippled through the cafeteria. Rogues weren't even supposed to speak to an Alpha, let alone touch one. Surely this would earn her some kind of punishment.

Roman stiffened, completely blindsided. He stared down at Violet, brow furrowed, trying to figure out what the hell she was doing.

This was hardly the Violet he knew. What game was she playing?

"Don't you dare touch the Alpha!" Sharon screeched, before she ripped Violet away from Roman, shoving her backward.

Violet could have stayed on her feet.

But where was the fun in that?

Instead, she dramatically fell to the ground with a pitiful yelp.

"Awwww!" she whined, clutching her shoulder as if she had just been mortally wounded.

That single exclamation set off a chain reaction.

Jeremiah, Asher's Beta, came hurtling toward Sharon with a savage growl. "Don't you touch her!" he thundered.

Startled, Sharon lost her balance and hit the ground. Roman moved in to restrain Jeremiah, but Jeremiah's fist lashed out, catching Roman clean on the jaw.

And that was all it took for chaos to reign like a king.

Instantly, the members of Roman's pack charged forward to defend their Alpha, while Asher's pack closed ranks around Jeremiah.

Wolves shifted on both sides, snapping and growling, sending the human students scurrying out of harm's way.

Shrieks of fear and the clatter of upturned chairs, tables and plates filled the air as fur and fists collided.

Whatever brotherhood Asher and Roman once shared was out the window. It was full-on pack war now.

"Princess!" Lila shouted, panic rising in her voice as she searched the mess of warring wolves for any sign of Violet. If something happened to her here, she would never forgive herself.

But Violet tapped her from behind, wearing a mischievous grin. But that smile quickly faded when she noticed Lila standing there empty-handed.

"Where's the food?" she demanded.

Lila's cheeks colored. "I had to drop it to go find you!"

"You what?"

Lila shifted guiltily. "Your safety comes first, Princess."

"Well, I'm here now," she said, lifting a set of keys with a wicked grin.

Roman Draven's car keys.

Lila blinked. Then a fleeting spark of humor lit her face. "You are so wicked, princess."

"Thank you. " Violet accepted the compliment shamelessly.

She clapped Lila on the shoulder. "So. Let's grab as much food as we can carry, because we're getting the hell out of here."

Chapter 206: Trouble Purple

While the pack was literally ripping each other apart, Violet and Lila quickly gathered all the containers, pastries, whatever they could manage, ignoring the bedlam erupting around them.

They stuffed the takeout boxes into their arms, balancing them precariously, and when it became clear they couldn't grab more without toppling everything, they agreed it was time to go.

But there was one small tiny problem.

The fight had expanded, spilling into every corner of the cafeteria. The entrance was completely blocked with the pack members clashing in an all-out brawl, snarling and lunging at each other. If they tried to push through, they'd no doubt get dragged right into the brawl — and lose their food.

"We can't go through the entrance," Lila said, reading her mind.

"There should be an emergency exit."

"That'll be crowded too with the students trying to get away from this madness," Lila pointed out. "We can't carry all this and fight for space." It was impossible.

Violet was frantically scanning for another route when her gaze landed on one of the cafeteria staff slipping through a side door—the kitchen.

She beckoned to Lila. "Follow me!"

Lila didn't hesitate. The two of them hurried through the door, slipping into the kitchen, where the lingering scent of freshly baked bread and spices clung to the air. The staff members were huddled together, apparently debating how to handle the warzone happening just outside.

They barely had time to register the intruders before Violet and Lila were darting past them.

"Hey! Come back here!" one of them shouted, but their protests were met with only laughter as the girls bolted through the kitchen, weaving past countertops and industrial-sized pots.

And at last, they saw the back exit leading out into the open. Violet shoved the door open, and the two of them burst outside, landing in the cool, rain-slicked air.

They had exited near the back of the Silvered Court, but their destination was the front, where Roman's car was waiting.

By some stroke of mercy—or perhaps Alaric had changed his mind—the downpour had tapered off, so they weren't instantly drenched again.

It was not hard to find Roman's car, not when it was so flashy even a blind man could find it. Violet pressed the car key fob, and immediately, the overhead lights blinked to life.

They threw open the doors and dumped their precious cargo—boxes of food, pastries, soups—onto the seats.

Then it hit Violet.

"Do you know how to drive?" she asked, suddenly realizing a major flaw in their escape plan.

Lila's head popped out from where she was shoving her favorite croissants into a bag. Her response was ominous.

"I can't."

Violet blinked. "Excuse me?"

Lila, unfazed, added, "But I've seen enough humans do it."

Violet swallowed. May the gods save their lives today.

But their problems didn't just end there.

With the fight consuming the inside of the dinning hall, it meant students had spilled outside, and they noticed them.

"Isn't that Alpha Roman's car?"

All heads turned in their direction.

"That's definitely his car."

"Wait—what the hell are the Rogues doing with it?"

And just when Violet thought the universe couldn't hate her more, a disheveled, and enraged Sharon appeared out of nowhere. Her hair was a tangled mess, her face still smeared with remnants of food.

"Stop them at once! Don't let them get away with that car!" she shrieked with venom in her eyes.

Before anyone could react, Violet tossed the keys to Lila who snatched them out of the air with infuriatingly cool accuracy.

With zero hesitation, they both jumped into the car with Violet sitting in the passenger seat, and Lila, the driver's side.

For someone who claimed not to know how to drive, Lila turned the ignition like a pro and the car let out a thunderous roar, purring like a beast ready for carnage. Clearly, Roman knew his stuff.

The students in front of the car scrambled to form a makeshift barricade, but Lila narrowed her eyes with determination and hit the gas, accelerating straight for them.

"Lila..." Violet warned under her breath, pulse pounding.

Lila, however, didn't flinch. Only at the last split second did the students realize she wasn't slowing, and they leaped aside with panicked yells.

"You morons! Good for nothing!" Sharon yelled at the students who had chosen their life over dying for a useless cause.

But the real moment of satisfaction came when they saw Roman standing at the stairs of the Silvered Court. He looked like he had just walked out of a battlefield with bloodied cuts marking his face and arms, bruises already forming. And yet, despite all of the wounds, he was standing tall, his expression unreadable.

Violet rolled down the window. Then, with all the grace and pettiness of a queen, she stuck out her hand and flipped him off.

Roman said nothing. Did nothing. Instead, he stood there, watching them go, something indescribable flickering behind his eyes. And no one pursued them.

Lila drove on without pause, ignoring the stares of any bystanders, until they left the school's smooth, graveled roads for the muddy path leading back to the shack.

Finally, they braked outside the house, and Lila slammed on the horn, announcing their glorious return.

Daisy and Ivy peered nervously out from the doorway, half-expecting some new kind of trouble to land at their feet. After all, they didn't own a car, so the roar of an engine outside could mean nothing good. But the moment they recognized Violet and Lila stepping out, both let out a sigh.

"What took you two so long?" Ivy demanded, relief coloring her tone. "We were this close to thinking they'd persecuted you or something. We were already planning a rescue."

"Aww, that's so sweet of you." Lila's eyes crinkled with amusement. "They tried, but the Princess is unstoppable, and we brought you the food as promised." She handed Ivy a bag stuffed with buttery pastries. Ivy wasted no time biting into one, entirely forgetting to mind her manners. God, she was so hungry.

Meanwhile, Daisy, the more observant one, shifted her gaze from Violet to the "mysterious" car idling in front of their shack.

A dawning realization spread across her face. "That's Roman Draven's car, isn't it?"

Violet nodded without hesitation.

Daisy's throat bobbed as she swallowed. "What have you done this time, Violet Purple?"

Chapter 207: Committing A Crime

Daisy paced back and forth, practically vibrating with anger, and all that was missing was literal smoke curling from her ears.

Violet eyed her warily. "Daisy, I think you should calm down—"

"No! Don't tell me to calm down!" Daisy snapped, rounding on her immediately.

She thrust her face close to Violet's, rage crackling in her eyes. "We are outcasts, Violet! Rogues. They branded us like we're diseased!" Her voice cracked with frustration. "We're already this close to falling apart from all the bullshit they're putting us through, and you—you—made it worse by bringing Roman Draven's car here?!"

For once, Ivy decided to intervene. "Daisy, I think you should really take a deep breath and try to —"

"Don't you dare tell me what and what not to do with my fucking breath!" Daisy whirled on her too, totally losing it.

"Look at where we're living!" she shouted, her voice raw. "Take a good fucking look at our current living situation!"

She gestured wildly at the rotting porch, the faded, peeling paint, the way the storm-beaten house still looked like it might collapse at any second. The decrepit shack is definitely looked better on the inside than the outside.

"We lost everything! And while we're trying to salvage what's left, you bring trouble straight to our doorstep? Is this your big, master plan for revenge? Is this how we take down Elsie? How we fight the whole system?"

"No, it's not." Violet's voice rose to match Daisy's intensity, her temper finally snapping. "This is my personal revenge against Roman Draven, the asshole who lied to me, deceived me, and put us through this bullshit!"

She sucked in a breath, her chest heaving.

"It's petty. But it's a start."

Daisy seemed torn, her shoulders slumping as if she didn't want to be swayed by the idea. "He'll take his revenge," she said warily.

"No, he won't." Violet's voice brimmed with certainty. "He could've chased us the moment he saw us driving away, but he didn't. He knows he messed up. Maybe in his twisted logic, he thinks letting me run off with his car is punishment enough."

Daisy stared at her, like she was trying to figure her out, dissect the way her mind worked. Then, after a long pause, she admitted, "I don't understand you. You should be scared. These guys—" she gestured vaguely, "—they might look human, but they're not. They're dangerous. They smile, but they do it with teeth, with blood still dripping from their last kill. And yet, you're not afraid."

"You tangle with them like a human playing with lions." Daisy shook her head, disbelief in her eyes. "What gives you that kind of confidence, Violet Purple?"

For the first time, Violet didn't answer right away.

Her gaze became distant as her mind drifted somewhere else, somewhere far darker.

Then, quietly, she said:

"Because I'm not afraid of death."

Daisy stilled.

Violet continued, "Because there are worse things than having your throat ripped out by one of them. Worse things than dying."

She took a slow breath.

"Because there are worse things like waking up and wondering when your next meal is going to be. Like staring at the future and seeing nothing but darkness. Like knowing that no matter what you do, you might end up just like all the others who came before you."

Her eyes darkened. "So worrying if a spoiled Alpha brat comes after me? That's hardly terrifying."

A heavy silence fell, Violet's words sinking in. Then, without warning, she stepped forward, cupping Daisy's face in her hands. Daisy tensed under the sudden closeness but didn't pull away.

"You followed me because you believed in me," Violet said earnestly. " And I swear— I swear by whatever law binds my people—"

"I don't think it needs to go that far," Daisy cut in uneasily, flashing on all the Fae legends she'd skimmed.

Fae were bound to their promises. What if Violet doesn't fulfill it, what repercussions would come to her? She wouldn't want her to be in such a situation.

But Violet stayed firm. "No. This is my promise to you. We will rise again, and I'll make sure you never regret following me."

"O-okay..." Daisy said at last, clearly unsure what else she could say.

A slow, mischievous curve formed on Violet's lips. "Besides, I can practically see your thoughts spinning in your head right now, and I think I know exactly how you feel."

Daisy narrowed her eyes suspiciously.

"Oh, really?"

Violet's smirk widened.

"Really."

She then began to spin the car keys in her hand, her wicked smile growing by the second. "Alright, Lila, take the food out of the car."

Lila, already having an inkling that whatever the princess was up to would be entertaining, hurriedly cleared the food from the backseat. The amount they had grabbed was ridiculous, so she had to work fast, stuffing bags into her arms while Violet and Ivy took their share. Daisy, ever the grumbler, reluctantly helped.

They worked at lightning speed, all of them moving in sync, as if they had done a heist before. In mere minutes, the seat was emptied, leaving only the luxurious, Roman Draven-owned car sitting in front of them, drenched in rain and waiting to be returned.

Violet grinned devilishly. "Now, the right thing to do is return the car," she said with mock sincerity.

The girls nodded slowly, watching her suspiciously.

"But," she continued, bending down and scooping up a handful of wet, muddy earth, "the right thing doesn't necessarily mean bringing it back in one piece."

And with zero hesitation, she smeared the mud across the hood of the car and the effect was instantaneous.

Lila, Daisy, and Ivy gasped collectively, shock, horror, and exhilaration flashing across their faces.

"Oh my gods!" Ivy clutched her chest. "Did you just defiled a cardinal alpha's car."

"Violet!" Daisy's eyes were wide with disbelief. "This is Roman Draven's car! Do you have a death wish?"

But Violet was already gathering another handful of mud.

"Daisy," she called with a knowing smirk. "Come on. Try it. It's refreshing."

Daisy hesitated, torn between common sense and the intoxicating pull of revenge.

"Come on, Dais," Lila grinned, nudging her. "You know you want to."

Daisy bit her lip. The idea was so tempting. Then, as if something inside her finally snapped, she grabbed a thick handful of rain-soaked earth and hurled it straight at the windshield. The instant splat was satisfying.

For a split second, there was silence only

for the girls to erupt into cheers.

Daisy herself let out a victorious roar, feeling a rush of exhilaration so pure that she wanted to bottle it up and keep it forever.

"Ivy, your turn!"

The words had barely left Violet's lips before Ivy bounced forward with giddy excitement. She scooped up a chunk of mud, then with a theatrical twirl and a girlish flick of her wrist, splattered it across the driver's side door.

The girls whooped and cheered.

"Ohhh, look at that form!" Lila applauded dramatically. "Such elegance! Such grace! Roman's car has never looked so perfect!"

Ivy giggled, twirling like a ballerina. "Thank you, thank you, I do my best."

"Lila, you're up!" Violet called, motioning for her.

Lila happily skipped forward, excitement dancing in her eyes. She gathered as much mud as she could, then hurled it at the windshield precisely. The splatter was glorious, thick brown streaks running down like melting chocolate.

The girls screamed with excitement. This was so fun!

"Okay, we have to record this," Violet suddenly announced, pulling out her phone.

Lila's eyes lit up. "Good idea!"

Daisy groaned, exasperated. "Don't encourage her, Lila."

But Ivy supported her. "No, no, this is genius. Let's make sure we never forget the time we committed war crimes against Roman Draven's car. And to prove to the assholes we can't be beaten!"

And just like that, Daisy ended up recording the whole thing.

The camera captured everything. From the way Violet, Ivy, and Lila gleefully defiled the once-glistening green car, slathering layer upon layer of thick, wet mud across its sleek body.

They didn't hold back at all. The girls covered every inch, every crevice, until the once-luxurious car was unrecognizable, looking instead like a grotesque, mud-covered beast.

"It needs more," Ivy mused, staring at their masterpiece like a painter contemplating the final stroke of their work.

"The inside."

The girls snapped their heads toward her.

Ivy smirked. "We should put some inside. You know, to really make it a nightmare to clean."

The suggestion was so diabolical** that the girls momentarily forgot how to breathe. Then—

"GENIUS!" Lila cheered, clapping.

Violet cackled, a proud look in her eyes. "Ivy, I take back everything I said about you being a wimp. YOU ARE MAD!" In a good way, she meant.

They immediately went to work.

Lila yanked the door open, and without hesitation, they began smearing mud all over the leather seats, the dashboard, even the steering wheel.

Ivy, giggling like a lunatic, went for the gear shift.

By the time they were done, Roman Draven's car looked like it had been resurrected from the depths of hell itself.

Lila took one last picture for documentation and beamed. "Ladies, we have committed the perfect crime."

Violet nodded in approval. "And no regrets."

"None," Ivy agreed, giggling.

Daisy sighed. "Okay, maybe a little." She added, "But it feels good."

Violet grinned, tossing the keys into the driver's seat.

"Now, let's return it."

Chapter 208: Want A Queen

"Guess whose car we're giving a new makeover!"

Elsie's nails dug into her palm as she watched the video playing on her phone.

Although her features remained carefully blank, the cold fury rolling off her was enough to freeze a room.

On-screen, the camera focused on Violet's

smirking expression, her golden eyes gleaming with mischief.

Then, as if unveiling a great spectacle, the camera angle shifted, revealing the absolute disaster that was Roman Draven's once metallic green, once-expensive car.

Elsie's jaw tightened.

Violet, in all her petty, reckless glory, grinned as she confirmed the obvious.

"It's Roman Draven's car, of course!" she sang, breaking into a laugh filled with nothing but bold, unapologetic amusement.

One of her friends, the edgy blonde with the short-cropped hair snickered beside her, capturing the horrific state of the vehicle from different angles. Thick layers of mud coated the once-luxurious paint job, turning it into an unrecognizable mess of brown and filth.

Violet sighed dramatically. "We just think the green is too... gaudy for the guy." She tapped her chin in mock thought. "I mean, come on, he's got green hair, green eyes, and now he drives a green car, too? What is he trying to do—move to Greenland?"

Lila lost it. The camera shook as she cackled like a lunatic.

"Tell us if you like the new color in the comments, guys!" Violet cooed, blowing a playful kiss at the phone's camera.

Behind her, her other two roommates burst into laughter, cheering as they continued their masterpiece of destruction.

The video showed Violet stepping forward, gathering another handful of wet, sludgy mud, and slowly smearing it across the windshield in broad, messy strokes.

The girls whooped and cheered.

"Give it to him, Rogue Queen!" Lila encouraged, capturing every single brazen move.

As if putting on a show for the camera, the pretty, long-haired one suddenly piped up with an audacious smirk.

"I wish I had a dick, I'd take a piss on it."

The two other girls whooped with crude delight at her announcement. Violet, still dragging her mud-caked fingers across the vehicle, laughed with them, but then her eyes sparked with an even better idea.

"I think I have something better."

Elsie's fingers tightened around her phone as Violet knelt in front of the car, pressing her mud-drenched hands against the hood like an artist preparing her canvas. Then, as bold as ever, she began to write letter by letter. Stroke by stroke.

As the camera zoomed in, Elsie watched in utter disbelief as the words came to life across Roman Draven's ruined, mud-coated car.

"SUCK MY P*SSY"

The girls screamed with laughter, some of them doubling over from the sheer audacity of it.

"That would make a nice little design for his car, don't you think?" Violet quipped, stepping back to admire her handiwork

More howls of laughter echoed from behind the camera. The one with the short blonde hair practically gasped for air, while the longer haired blonde had to hold onto the brunette's shoulder to keep from falling over.

Behind her screen, Elsie's vision turned red. This was a new level of disrespect from Violet. An open mockery of Roman, a cardinal alpha, made by a rogue, for all to see. The audacity of them all.

Unable to stomach any more, Elsie force-closed the video, her entire body trembling with unbridled fury. Then, before she could stop herself...

"FUCK!!"

Her furious scream shattered the silence of her room, at the same time she hurled her phone onto the sofa where Roman had been sitting quietly all this while.

The nerve of that girl was beyond anything she'd imagined! Violet Purple had gone too far and she had to bury her this time!

"FUCK! FUCK! FUCK!" Elsie cursed again, storming back and forth across the room like a furious animal. Her fingers curled into claws, a sign that she was losing control over her wolf form.

"I am going to crush that little bitch!" she seethed, her voice venomous. "She thinks being a Rogue is fun? She thinks she can make a joke out of this? How dare she try to downplay her situation! And to think—" she spun around with a wild glare, "—she had the nerve to steal your car and—"

Elsie stopped mid-rant and her fury took a backseat to sheer disgust because Roman Draven wasn't even listening to her. Instead, the green-haired bastard was seated on the couch, licking his own hand and rubbing it over his face like an actual fucking cat.

Her nose wrinkled in disgust.

Roman's long fingers were curled in a way no human's should, and he dragged it down his face, his posture lazily feline. And the reason wasn't hard to figure out.

His eyes were slitted like a cat's as a result of the lingering side effects of his recent shift. Roman had turned into his cat form before coming here, and now he was stuck in the after-effects like some deranged house pet.

"Are you fucking kidding me?!" Elsie shrieked, her rage renewed in full force.

She stomped over and towered over Roman with her eyes blazing as she thundered.

"How many times have I told you to stop doing that disgusting shit?"

"I'm sorry," Roman mumbled, dropping his arm. "But I already told you—I can't control it when it's like this—meow." The last word slipped out involuntarily.

A fucking meow!

Elsie's lip curled, and she spat at his feet, her contempt radiating. "Then maybe you shouldn't have shifted before coming to see me."

Roman let out a low sigh. "I already said I'm sorry."

Elsie shook her head, disappointment clear in her eyes. Then she leaned in, her stare drilling into him as she clasped his face. "You want me to be your queen, don't you?"

"Of course." Roman replied, "I don't want ours to be a forced union, Elsie. I want you to choose me. To want me."

For a fleeting second, Elsie's expression softened, almost like she was touched by the sentiment. Then, without warning, the warmth vanished like it was never there.

Her eyes turned cold and her nails dug into his chin, sharp enough to sting, as she hissed,

"Then stop disgracing me."

Chapter 209: Only Roman Was Left

For a moment, raw hurt flashed in Roman's eyes as he asked her, "Are you that ashamed of me?"

Elsie stiffened. The question caught her off guard, as if she hadn't realized the full extent of her words until now. Perhaps she had pushed too far. And that was warning enough for her to be careful.

Roman was the only one left. Out of all the Cardinal Alphas, he was the one who had never truly turned against her. The one who still followed her lead, respected her, and defended her. If she lost him too, she'd have nothing.

So, with perfectly measured grace, she softened.

"Of course not, Roman," Elsie said, her voice dipping into something gentler. "I'm only concerned about you making a fool of yourself in front of my parents. My people."

She touched his face, her fingers light, coaxing him. But the doubt in Roman's eyes didn't fade.

So she tried again.

"You've known me for years." Her voice dropped into something more intimate, weaving through the space between them. "I was the one who took care of you during your..." She hesitated, choosing her words carefully, "unexpected shifts."

Her grip on his face tightened slightly as she pushed on. "All those times your father would—"

But she didn't get to finish because Roman's sharp glare cut her off immediately, his eyes flashing a silent but absolute warning.

Elsie swallowed hard. Fine. She wouldn't mention it.

Instead, she exhaled slowly, lowering her gaze as she murmured, "I'm sorry. I shouldn't have said those things."

Then, she leaned closer, her forehead pressing lightly against his, her breath warm against his skin.

"You're the only one I have left." Her voice wavered, tinged with something raw and desperate. "Don't leave me like the others."

Roman closed his eyes for a brief second. The vulnerability in her words wrapped around him like a chain, pulling him in despite himself. She needed him. And just like that, he made up his mind.

"Don't worry," he promised, his voice filled with quiet devotion. "I'm not like the others. I'm not leaving your side."

No matter how tempting Violet Purple might be. Roman didn't say the last part out loud, but he knew it. Violet was nothing but trouble and distraction, he wouldn't fall into her trap.

Then, as he stared into Elsie's piercing blue eyes, and something in him shifted.

Roman couldn't help himself. Slowly, he leaned in. His fingers moved up, brushing against her jaw with an almost reverent touch, his breath mingling with hers. He was close, so close to kissing her only for Elsie to turn away at the last minute. Roman's lips landed on her cheek.

His jaw locked.

"Remember the rules," she reminded him smoothly, her voice cool and detached, as if he hadn't just been a breath away from kissing her.

Roman pulled back slowly, his face twisting into something bitter.

"Yes. The fucking rules."

Alpha King Elijah had made his decree clear. The Cardinal Alphas could fight for Elsie. They could court her, compete for her, claim her. But there would be no kissing. No sex. No physical intimacy of any kind until one of them won the Alpha King title and made her his mate.

She was to remain untouched. A temptation, a prize. A queen waiting for her king.

And she had been.

Until Violet Purple showed up.

Violet, the one with no rank, no standing, no rightful place among them, had stolen what should have belonged to Elsie. She had captured the attention of the alphas. Attention that wasn't hers to take.

At once, Elsie drew back, the vulnerability in her eyes vanishing as though it had never existed. Her expression hardened, and she turned the conversation back to Violet.

"We need to find a way to break Violet once and for all," she declared, voice cool with determination. "The girl is too stubborn for her own good, and we can't have her stirring up a revolt. Imagine how it'd look if the humans decided they no longer want to ally with us wolves. There'd be no one to keep them in line."

"You're right," Roman agreed. "She's too stubborn for her own good." He said it with a layered tone, one that Elsie didn't pick up on.

"Violet and her roommates are rogues," Elsie continued, "condemned, ours to do with as we please."

"She's human, though," Roman pointed out softly, only for Elsie to glare at him so fiercely he lifted his hands in surrender.

"I'm only saying, let's not take it too far. They're human, after all, and if something unfortunate happened, it'd be terrible publicity for Lunar Academy, especially if people found out the details."

Elsie's lips twisted in discontent. "Then we'll go easy on them," she said, though her voice hinted at a very different plan.

"Hmmm, I guess," Roman echoed, lacking any real enthusiasm.

Elsie ignored his disinterest and pressed on. "We still can't break Violet as long as Asher keeps getting in the way. He's always done whatever he pleases, and maybe you could've talked sense into him if the two of you weren't at each other's throats." She said it as though the fallout between Asher and Roman wasn't entirely to her advantage.

The light in Roman's eyes died. He and Asher had once been inseparable, but then Violet came along and it goes down the drain. Despite the pang in his chest, he shoved the feelings down.

Elsie continued, "I went to find Asher, to talk some sense into him. He can't just throw away years of tradition for that whore. And guess what?"

"What is it?"

"He's not on campus."

"What?" Roman's head snapped up. "Where did he go?"

"Jeremiah wouldn't tell me." Elsie's eyes narrowed in annoyance. "Actually, he almost bit my head off, claiming I was responsible for what happened at the dining hall. Said I'd better control my girls, and if

anything else happens to Violet, I'll answer for it." She gave Roman an exasperated look. "So what's the point of branding them rogues if we can't treat them like rogues?"

But Roman's mind was elsewhere, turning over Asher's sudden absence. Back in the day, Asher would've confided in him. Now, he'd vanished without a word. Roman could only guess it had something to do with Violet; maybe Asher knew something about her the rest of them didn't. Roman was all too familiar with how Asher's head worked.

"Are you even listening to me?" Elsie demanded, snapping him back to the present.

"Of course, Elsie," he said, rising to his feet. "You're the queen of this academy, and no matter what cheap moves Violet tries to pull, she can't dethrone you." He paused. "Now, if you'll excuse me."

He left before Elsie could say another word.

Chapter 210: Game Of Thrones

Roman was slipping right through her fingers. Elsie had known it the moment he walked out of her room without looking back.

The Roman of the past wouldn't have left her like that. No, he would have stayed behind, wrapped himself around her, and comforted her until she felt better.

But look at him now.

Perhaps she was reading too much into it. But her womanly instincts — that has never failed her — was tingling, especially with Violet Purple around. That filthy rogue still loomed in the picture like an unsightly stain she couldn't scrub off.

It had been thrilling at first, knowing that Asher, the untamable one, the most ruthless of them all, had no choice but to attempt to court her. Until Violet swooped in, robbing her of that last shred of satisfaction

Elsie clenched her jaw. She had to act quickly. Asher be damned. Violet was a rogue, and rogues would be treated the way rogues should be.

Just then, Elsie's phone rang from where it lay on the sofa, cutting through her brooding silence. She would have ignored it if not for the fact that this particular ringtone was assigned to only one person.

Her mother.

All at once, Elsie straightened, raking her fingers through her hair, ensuring she looked flawless. Her mother hated imperfections.

She walked over to her desk, adjusted the angle of her laptop, and within moments, the screen lit up with a familiar face staring back at her.

The woman in the video call looked so much like Elsie, they could have been sisters rather than mother and daughter.

Same golden-blond hair. Same piercing blue eyes. But while Elsie's beauty was softer, almost innocent, Caroline's was effortless and sharper. There was an ageless quality about her that made her seem untouched by time, her expression poised in a way that only years of practice could perfect.

"Mother," Elsie greeted, her voice measured.

Caroline's lips curved into a warm, fully mastered smile. "How's my little Alpha queen doing today?"

Elsie barely refrained from rolling her eyes. Instead, she gave her mother a rueful look.

"You know I'm no Alpha queen. That word is treasonous, especially while Luna Beatrice still in power."

"Semantics," Caroline dismissed with a wave of her manicured hand. "You will be, soon enough. Not just to one, but to four Alphas."

Elsie's stomach twisted.

"You will unite the realm," Caroline continued, her voice filled with conviction, "and usher us into a new reign."

Elsie groaned, rubbing her temples. "You still believe that prophecy?"

But Caroline's expression didn't waver.

"Alice is a renowned seer. When I asked about your fate, she told me that the one chosen by the Alpha King would unite the packs. And glory be to the gods, you are the one he chose."

She smiled knowingly. "Why do you think I've been so insistent on you keeping a hold on the boys?"

"Mom, the Alpha King said one heir. How can there be four heirs?" Elsie asked, even though she already knew what her mother's answer would be.

"Which is exactly why you would be their Queen. One ruler, four consorts!" her mother declared.

Elsie's eyes flickered with apprehension. "You intend to put me on the throne. That is treason, Mother."

Elijah doesn't tolerate scheming behind his back. If he even got a whiff of her mother's plans, he'd have her head on a spike.

But Caroline remained unfazed, saying.

"Which is why such intentions would have to come from the heirs themselves. If the boys agree not to fight for the throne and instead share you equally, the unification happens naturally. Thus, the prophecy is fulfilled."

"That sounds poetic, but unfortunately, sharing is not the way of the North. Alpha Caspian and Luna Zara would never stand for it." Elsie reminded her.

In fact, Caspian and Zara were the very reason why the Alpha King decreed her as the mate to the eligible Cardinal Alphas in the first place.

When Elijah first proposed the idea of a pure-blooded werewolf female as a prize for his successor, the North had vehemently opposed it. Caspian refused outright, insisting that the Storm bloodline remained pure, bred close to home.

But the East, West, and South had, predictably, revolted. "We don't want your incestuous matches," they had spat, refusing to have their future ruler bound to someone from the North's notoriously close-knit gene pool.

In the end, a compromise had to be made. Caspian and Zara had scoured for someone that wasn't too closely related but still carried even a trace of Storm lineage.

That someone had been Elsie. Long ago, Alaric's great-grandaunt had married into Elsie's family. Though the blood was diluted, it was still there.

And for Caspian and Zara, it was a win-win. If Alaric won the throne, good, he still married into the North, ensuring the Storm blood remained connected to the ruling line.

If he lost? Well, then he'd have to marry someone from the pack anyway. That, for them, was good enough.

Caroline's voice pulled Elsie from her thoughts, waving dismissively. "We'll cross that bridge when we get to it. For now, how's everything going? Please tell me you've got the Alphas worshipping at your feet." She sounded eager, nearly giddy with the possibility.

Elsie swallowed. She had no idea how to answer. Much as she yearned to be queen, she could barely stand Griffin, for starters. Was there any way to exclude him from the "harem" her mother envisioned?

Instead, she forced a confident smile. "It's a work in progress, but I have everything under control."

Which was a blatant lie because nothing was under control. If anything, everything was falling apart. And it was all thanks to Violet Purple.

But Elsie couldn't tell her mother that. Caroline's disappointment was something she wasn't ready to face.

"Good." Her mother's tone held finality. "Graduation is around the corner, and you have limited time to wrap those boys around your fingers. Once you're out, we set our plans into motion."

Her voice dropped, a steel edge to it. "Make me proud, Elsie."

Elsie nodded stiffly. "Yes, Mom," And the call ended with a click.

Elsie stared at her laptop screen for several long moments, her mind full of thoughts. She had to find a way to subdue Violet Purple once and for all. But how?

She needed not just to hurt or humiliate Violet, but to destroy her so thoroughly she'd never raise her head again.

As if on cue, her phone buzzed with a message. Elsie glanced at it and recognized the sender: Nicole, that self-styled journalist from the bonfire party. She would've ignored it, except the text read, I think you'll want to see this.

Curious, Elsie tapped the accompanying video file. As it played, her eyes widened with shock for a moment, then curved into a slow, triumphant smile. Perhaps the gods did answer prayers after all.

Quickly, she typed a reply: Let's meet up.