

Defy 231

Chapter 231: Hands Off My Mother

"Huh?"

Titan blinked, his mind struggling to understand what he meant by that, though a creeping sense of dread had already begun to settle in his gut.

There was something cold and terrifying about the boy in front of him notwithstanding how young he looked.

"Do I have to spell it out for you?" Asher sighed, as if he was exhausted from dealing with an idiot. "Fine, let me show you then."

He then pointed toward Titan's crotch and made a slow slicing motion through the air.

"Off it goes." Asher said casually, like he was discussing trimming weeds in a garden.

It dawned on Titan, the same moment, the air in the room shifted. The kid was dead serious. Titan's face drained of color, his pupils dilated in pure, unfiltered terror. He started shaking his head.

"No. No, no, no," he pleaded, panic setting in. This cannot be. The kid had to be kidding him. This was a prank. A trick. Somebody better tell him this was a joke.

"Yes. Yes, yes," Asher mocked in return, his voice a twisted mimicry of Titan's fearful own.

Even Nancy, who had initially felt some relief at seeing Titan being put in his place, felt a chill crawl down her spine.

For the first time that night, Nancy wanted to plead for Titan, not because she felt sympathy for him. He was a disgusting, vile man, and perhaps deserved this. But cutting off his dick was a bit much of a punishment. The boy would castrate him for life.

But the moment her lips parted to say something, Asher moved and came to kneel in front of her. The sudden movement startled her and Nancy forced herself not to jerk away.

The boy was unstable. Who knows? One wrong move, and he might decide she was next. So Nancy held her breath, waiting for what he'd do next. But the boy was calm. To her surprise, he took her hand and cradled it carefully.

"Don't feel sorry for him," he said with such a soft voice, with his thumb brushing over her knuckles, and almost soothing her nerves.

"It's him or Violet. And I choose Violet." His eyes darkened, the finality in those words ringing louder than any threat.

Nancy swallowed, fear and confusion warring in her mind. What had Violet, her daughter, entangled herself with?

No, more like, what had she led her daughter into?

She had pushed Violet to find a better future, even advising her to use those werewolves if necessary, but never in her lifetime had she imagined it could come to...this. It seems she'd cast Violet into a fate more brutal than the one she'd fled.

Asher released Nancy's hand and straightened, leveling an impassive stare at Titan. "Cut it off," he commanded, voice devoid of mercy

The wave of compulsion washed over Titan and for a moment, he fought back with a strangled groan, his body drenched in sweat from resisting. But despite his desperate struggle, there was no escaping Asher's hold.

Nancy averted her eyes just as the gruesome slicing sound filled the room. Titan released a blood-curdling, animalistic howl of agony, as he mutilated himself.

The stench of blood hit Nancy's nostrils, and she tasted bile in her throat, forcing herself to block out the sheer horror until it was finally over.

The knife slipped from Titan's trembling hand as he collapsed onto the floor, crying and wailing in pain, his blood pooling around him.

Nancy dared to glance back and immediately regretted it. Titan was now a ruined man, shaking violently, his face twisted in unbearable torment.

But Asher simply crouched in front of him, his expression one of mock sympathy.

"I know, I know," he murmured, his voice almost soothing, like a man comforting a grieving friend.

"Trust me, I feel your pain."

Titan let out another shuddering sob.

"You probably never imagined this would happen. But then again, I never imagined you'd want to sleep with both my mother-in-law and my Purple Queen. But now, it won't happen." He let that piece of information sink in.

Titan sobbed harder, his body twitching, pain filling him from his irreversible loss.

Asher's gaze flicked to the severed flaccid piece of flesh that once belonged to Titan, and he wrinkled his nose in disgust.

"On second thought, I can't give that to my Purple Queen." He kicked the bloody mass away with revulsion, saying, "I wouldn't want to pollute her sight. And you won't be polluting anyone else's sight with it, either."

Asher shot a final glance at Titan. "Lucky you, at least you get to keep your head."

Asher turned to Nancy. "What are you waiting for, Mother?"

She blinked. "Huh?"

"Get dressed. We're leaving."

For a moment, Nancy hesitated. Then Asher turned his back to her and it took her a second to realize he was giving her privacy to change. Even after the sheer brutality he had just displayed, he still showed her that courtesy. Nancy didn't know what to think about the boy.

Nonetheless, she hastily gathered her scattered clothes, ignoring Titan's heartbreakingly wails and dressed up.

"I'm ready," she finally whispered, her voice trembling with both fear and relief.

"Good," Asher responded, and together they exited. But the moment Nancy stepped outside, she was rendered speechless.

She expected there would be chaos with the guards rushing in, the whole place in uproar over what had just happened. But instead, the guards stood exactly where they had been. They hardly even blinked in their direction when they came out.

Had they not heard their boss's desperate scream? Even right now, Nancy could hear it. But not the guards. Apparently, they were deaf to it. Nancy's blood ran cold knowing they were under the boy's control.

Nancy realized right at that moment that she could never return to District One. The Red Dragon would come for her, all thanks to him. And that dark realization forced her to follow Asher without even a backward glance.

Chapter 232: Blood Of My Blood

Nancy stepped out of the cramped bathroom with a towel draped over her shoulders as she ran her fingers through her wet, tangled hair.

The hot water had done its job of washing away the filth, the blood, the stench of that nightmarish experience but it hadn't been enough. Nancy couldn't shake the unease in her chest, not when the young boy was waiting

The moment they drove away from Titan's residence, he had taken them straight to a small inn, one of the places in District One where no one asked questions.

To be honest, For a moment, Nancy had feared that Asher wanted her. That he would demand she paid him back after his eh... rescue. After all, men were men. They were all the same. But to her surprise he requested for separate rooms instead.

The place was far from luxurious and Nancy had stared, wide-eyed, as Asher handed an obscene amount of Cedes notes to the innkeeper, far more than the cost of the rooms itself.

Whether it was a bribe or a warning, or both, Nancy didn't question it. She already had bigger things to worry about like the Cardinal Alpha heir sitting in the next room, waiting for a conversation she wasn't ready to have.

But there was no delaying the inevitable.

And as if on cue, a firm knock rattled the door.

Nancy took a deep breath, steeling herself before she opened the door to find Asher, tall and brooding. He was young, yet there was nothing boyish about him, not with his imposing frame, and the way he carried himself with absolute confidence.

But above all, his piercing, calculating eyes caught her attention. Those eyes... they had seen too much, lived through too much.

Nancy had interacted with dangerous men, but something about this boy unsettled her even more than Titan ever had. Whoever raised this boy, they had done a terrible job at it. But then, who was she to judge. She had not given Violet the best either.

He stepped inside without waiting for an invitation, his sharp gaze sweeping the room like a wolf inspecting its den.

Then he said, "This is not the best I had hoped for, but I take it you find your stay comfortable, Mother?"

Nancy's throat went dry. That word "mother" that he kept calling her threw her off balance every single time. She opened her mouth to speak, only to close it again, her thoughts scrambling.

Finally, she settled on a simple, stiff response.

"It's...fine," she managed at last.

Asher nodded, satisfied.

"Good. Now we can talk."

He lowered himself into the only chair in the room, claiming it with ease, his long legs crossing lazily over the other. Nancy hesitated before perching on the edge of the bed, tensed. It was her room, yet Asher was the one in control.

The air was charged and it had nothing to do with the stifling size of the room.

And then Asher finally spoke up, "For starters, my name is Asher Nightshade, heir to the West Pack, and I'm interested in your daughter, Violet."

Nancy's breath hitched. What the fuck? Her mind reeled, her pulse spiking dangerously fast.

Violet got involved with a Cardinal Alpha? Was the girl out of her damn mind?!

Of course, Nancy had heard of Asher Nightshade before. But she never cared for the Cardinal heirs, nor put much thought into their names, their faces, and their politics. To her, they were nothing but spoiled werewolf brats, lucky enough to have been born into the right bloodline.

Nancy had wanted Violet to find an Alpha, but a lesser one. A heir to a smaller pack, whom she could settle down with and secure a comfortable life. Not one who could turn the world upside down with just his name.

But the girl did just the opposite. Not just that, but she was involved with the Nightshade clan. Those ruthless pack. Leave it to Violet to want to send her to an early grave.

Asher continued, completely unfazed by her reaction. "While I'm here to get your blessings, Mother, I'm also curious about my little Queen's background. And I'm sure you know that as well."

Nancy felt her stomach drop. Her pulse quickened and she looked away, avoiding his gaze.

That tiny motion was enough for Asher to press on. "Who are her parents? And don't lie. I can tell when you do. So don't make me make you tell the truth. Free will is always best." He warned her.

Slowly, Nancy lifted her gaze to meet his. And with all the truth she could muster, she said, "I honestly don't know."

Asher gaze narrowed slightly. For a moment, he studied her in unnerving silence. Then he murmured, "But you do know something, don't you? How did Violet come into your possession?"

Nancy's shoulders slumped. "Eighteen years ago, I worked at a...pleasure house and I found her outside the door. She was just a baby. No older than a few hours. Unfortunately, there was no room for a child in that place. No one wanted her. No one was willing to take responsibility."

Her voice tightened. "But there was money."

"And a note?" he guessed.

Nancy nodded.

"What did the note say?"

"It said to take care of her."

"And that was all?"

Nancy shook her head. "At the time... yes."

Asher's brows rose slightly, curiosity etched on his face.

Nancy pressed on, "I used the money to buy the trailer. Started a life. But... something strange happened."

Asher remained still, waiting.

Nancy's voice dropped to a whisper. "Every year, on Violet's birthday, I'd wake up to find money on my doorstep. That was how I learned her true birthdate, not just the day she showed up at my door."

The room felt colder. "And what did the note say this time?" Asher asked.

Nancy's mouth went dry. She met his eyes, unsettled by how intensely he watched her. "Happy birthday to you, blood of my blood."

Chapter 233: The Architects

A clearing stretched out in a remote patch of land, its dirt surface ringed by thick, towering trees. The afternoon sun was hot but the trees around made the heat bearable for the figures who stood waiting. This place had been chosen on purpose, isolated and perfect for things that needed to be kept secret.

Patrick stood in the center of it all, his hands clasped behind his back, his face an unreadable mask of control. High overhead, the thunderous roar of an approaching helicopter shattered the quiet.

The wind whipped violently, sending loose dirt and dried leaves into a swirling frenzy as the chopper descended. The trees shuddered under the force, with its branches bending as though bowing in submission.

Patrick's men held their ground, their long coats flaring from the downdraft as they signaled the pilot for a smooth landing. The sound was deafening, the rhythmic beating of the rotor blades drowning out everything else.

Then the doors swung open, and Umal stumbled out. His appearance was a mess; his clothes were disheveled, face slick with sweat, and his breath came in short, panicked bursts. He was terrified out of his mind as if he had escaped the devil's clutches. And perhaps, he did.

But even as he hurried toward Patrick, Umal knew his life was on the line. And so, before he even reached him, Umal dropped to his knees, his head bowing low. "I'm so sorry."

Patrick didn't move, nor blink. Instead, with a simple flick of his fingers, he gestured to one of his armed men.

The guard stepped forward, reaching down to pluck the briefcase from Umal's trembling hands and snapped the case open before Patrick.

An icy chill settled in the air as Patrick's face went from neutral to grim when he saw the remaining bottles nestled within.

Only five vials? In silence, Patrick breathed through his nose, controlling the rage that threatened to break free.

"Just five?" he asked with a calm voice, but there was no mistaking the rage buried beneath those words. This was supposed to be the precious first batch of an expensive, highly secretive and experimental drug. And he just wasted it.

"A-as I told you earlier... T-There was chaos—" Umal stammered, his voice pitched with desperation. "This was all I could escape with before Asher could use his powers on me!"

Patrick's eyes narrowed. "The few you could escape with? What happened to the rest?"

Umal's throat bobbed as he swallowed, knowing that his next words could very well seal his fate.

"One was used for the demonstration," he said carefully.

Patrick didn't react so Umal forced himself to continue.

"Two broke and.... "

Patrick lifted his chin slightly, waiting with dangerous silence for him to finish.

Umal's breath hitched as he uttered the last part. "Two... went missing."

At once, Patrick shut his eyes as if he'd just been dealt a final blow. His fingers curled slowly into a fist before relaxing again, regaining control. His mind was made up.

When he opened his eyes, Umal wished he hadn't because in them, he saw death.

"So you left my drugs in Asher's hands." It was a statement, not a question, nor an accusation. Just a fact. Plain as day.

Umal shook his head, his entire body trembling as fear took hold. "N-No! That's not it!" he rushed out, "There's a chance Asher wouldn't even see them! After all, I couldn't find them either!" He was grasping for straws, an attempt to save himself.

But it was too late, Patrick had already heard enough. A curt nod to one of his guards sealed Umal's fate.

"Get rid of the fool."

The words were spoken with such chilling indifference, as though he had just ordered the removal of garbage.

Umal's eyes widened in horror. Perhaps, he shouldn't have come here. But then, he couldn't run with the drugs either. Patrick would have hunted him till he ended his life.

So he lunged forward, his hands clasping together in a final, pathetic plea.

"No, Patrick, please! I can find another gang to agree to the deal! Just give me a second chance! I can—" His plea died under the thunder of gunshots

The first bullet struck his chest while the second and third drove through him, tearing through his flesh mercilessly.

His body jerked back and he collapsed, his blood pooling beneath him, sinking into the earth. Umal's glassy, unseeing eyes stared up at the sky, forever frozen in terror.

Two more guards stepped forward, grabbing his lifeless body by the legs. Without a word, they dragged him away, his blood smearing the dirt behind them.

Patrick watched dispassionately. What a failure this was. Then he turned away.

His assistant, Cynthia, fell into step beside him. She was young, beautiful, sharp-minded, and ruthless when she needed to be. Just the way he liked.

And now, she was the only one brave enough to speak. "What do we do now?"

Patrick's stride didn't falter as he spoke.

"We go under. For now."

Cynthia's brow furrowed slightly. "You're certain?"

"I know how Asher's mind works and he's trouble. He won't rest until he gets to the bottom of this. We can't draw his attention now. Not when we've only just begun."

Patrick approached the dark-tinted car that waited for him. The driver stepped out, opening the door with a silent bow. Patrick slipped inside, Cynthia following right behind him.

The moment the door thudded shut, she straddled him, her hands reaching for his jawline before tilting his face up toward her. She pressed soft, and urgent kisses to his lips.

It was coaxing like a balm to a wounded ego and Patrick let her.

He leaned into her touch, his rigid shoulders easing slightly as her fingertips ghosted across his cheekbones, tracing the place where Asher Nightshade had nearly taken his eye.

The skin had long since healed but not perfectly. Her nails dragged lightly over it, her touch both reverent and possessive as she murmured, "Don't be discouraged, my love."

Her voice was a purr, the sound weaving into his senses, his mind, his very bones.

"You've made a groundbreaking discovery, not even your ancestor, Gerard, could have dreamed of such power."

Her smoky gaze devoured his every reaction. "This is not the end. We will come back stronger."

Her breath was warm against his skin, her words threading into his soul like a hypnotic spell.

"Those wolves won't know what hit them. Especially that pathetic excuse of an Alpha King."

Cynthia's voice changed, mimicking the proud lilt of a mother speaking to her favored son. "You've done well, Patrick. Mummy is so proud of you."

At those words, Patrick's breath hitched, something feral, volatile, and dark unfurling within him. His eyes brightened, electrified, the rage, the hunger, the triumph all converging at once.

He kissed her.

His lips were bruising, desperate, and consuming. This was no longer about comfort, but possession. His hands were everywhere, roaming her body with a frantic edge, tugging, gripping, demanding.

Cynthia gasped, but she welcomed it, arching her back just enough for her fingers to make quick work of the belt buckle of his trousers.

In mere seconds, both of them were joined together, panting softly in the backseat and losing themselves in that feverish union.

Neither of them spoke. They didn't need to. Because at that moment, they weren't just lovers, but co-conspirators, and architects of a truly monstrous plan.

Chapter 234: Tell Violet

Nancy never thought she would leave District One. The Slums had been her whole world, the streets she had walked since childhood, and the place that had shaped her into the woman she was today. It was a place of no escape, until now.

Thanks to her 'son-in-law', a title Asher had stubbornly reminded her of for days, the yoke was finally being broken. She was here in District Seven. Not just for a visit, not just for a job, but permanently.

The United Dorminia was divided into twelve human districts, numbered in order of status, wealth, and power. At the top was Aster City, the capital, where the Human President governed.

Outside of the human territories, beyond the districts, the four major werewolf packs, the North, South, East, and West, operated under the rule of the Alpha King.

For years, the Alpha King and the Human President maintained a tenuous peace, an agreement holding together the balance of power. Wolves had their lands and the humans had theirs. Although both sides cohabitated, everyone knew the structure wasn't built on trust, but necessity.

Thinking about it now, at the bottom of the hierarchy was District One, the Slums, the poorest, most dangerous place in Dorminia. The government had practically abandoned it, leaving crime, and gangs to govern instead.

Just above it was District Two, The Forgotten, and District Three, The Undercroft. Though slightly better than the Slums, they were still plagued by high unemployment, corrupt local officials, and struggling families who had little hope of ever rising beyond their station. Children here were often put to work early, schools were underfunded, and progress was slow, if it ever came at all.

District Four, The Strugglers, and District Five, The Reconstruction Zone, were still on the lower end of the spectrum, but life there was a bit more stable. Jobs existed, though they were hard to come by. Education was moderate, and crime was less rampant than in the lower districts. People fought for better lives even if the opportunity was scarce.

District Six The Reformers, and District Seven, The Mercantile, where Asher was taking her, were the true middle-class territories. Infrastructure was decent, schools were better, and businesses flourished. District Seven was the trading hub, filled with markets, ports, and small enterprises. It was the district for the ambitious ones hoping to climb their way into the elite.

And then, there were the privileged districts. District Eight, The Gatekeepers, and District Nine, The Bluebloods, were upper-middle class, home to successful merchants, scholars, and those with valuable government connections. Technology and education thrived there. People from these districts often had direct ties to Aster City, making them more likely to secure powerful positions.

At the highest end were District Ten, The Aristocrats, and District Eleven, Aster's Pride. These were the homes of old-money families, the kind whose wealth had survived the war. Influential politicians, corporate moguls, and high-ranking officials lived here, behind high-security walls separating them from the rest of the population.

And at the very top was District Twelve, The Chosen Royals. This was where the elite of the elite lived, the wealthiest and most powerful families in Dorminia. They groomed their children for leadership in Aster City, preparing them for high-level roles in government, business, and diplomacy. The cost of living was astronomical, the standard of luxury unreachable for anyone beneath them.

The higher the district, the harder it was to enter, and the harder it was to leave. There were strict border controls — at least on the upper class districts — regulations ensuring that people from the lower districts couldn't just walk into the lives of the privileged. The wealthy weren't interested in dealing with crime, poverty, or the desperate masses.

And so, moving up the ladder required either power or influence. Nancy had neither. But Asher did. That was how he had gotten her passage into District Seven, the easiest and secure place he could set her up quickly. It wasn't at the top, but it was far from the underground she had lived in her whole life.

Although Nancy wasn't sure if she should feel relieved or terrified of the change, one thing was certain, her life would never be the same again.

Right now, they were in some restaurant in District Seven, the scent of grilled meats, freshly baked bread, and expensive spices in the air. Nancy leaned back in her seat, feeling the satisfaction of a full stomach for the first time in what felt like forever.

This was nothing like the scraps she had fought for back in District One. The food here was rich, decadent, and seasoned just right, leaving an unfamiliar sense of contentment in her belly. She could almost close her eyes and drift away in the comfort of it.

Almost. But her nerves wouldn't let her.

Nancy's fingers tapped lightly against the table as she stole glances at the entrance, her anxiety mounting. When was Ezra, the supposed wolf who Asher claimed would watch over her and keep her safe, arrive?

Nancy wasn't used to relying on others. Especially not men. Men were trouble. Men wanted things.

But Asher had insisted that Ezra was one of his own, someone he trusted to keep her safe in District Seven. That she didn't have to worry.

Nancy exhaled slowly. She wasn't worried. She just wasn't sure what to expect.

After all, she had dealt with werewolves before in her trade. She had serviced them, talked to them, seen the power they carried like a second skin. But this was different. She wasn't meeting Ezra for her kind of business. This was something else entirely. Her new life.

And that made her stomach churn.

Just then, Asher straightened in his seat, his sharp gaze moving to the entrance.

"He's here," he said simply.

Nancy turned her head, following his gaze and froze.

Oh. Fuck.

The man walking toward them was sinfully gorgeous. Tall. Broad. Unfairly handsome. Dark, tousled hair, sharp-cut features that looked like they belonged to a damn god, and a presence so commanding it sucked the air out of the room.

Nancy licked her lips, her body reacting on instinct. Just her type.

No. No. No. This was a new start. Nancy had sworn off men. She was going to start fresh. Open a business here and build a life free from her past.

Hence, she was about to look away—force herself to stop staring—but then Ezra's eyes met hers and everything stopped.

Ezras steps halted mid-stride. His nostrils flared, pupils dilating, chest rising in a sharp inhale as if he had just caught the most intoxicating scent in the world.

Then, his lips parted, and in a deep, guttural growl, he rumbled the word. "Mate."

Nancy blinked. Before she could even begin to process what he had just said, Ezra moved. One second, he was across the restaurant and the next, he was in front of her, pulling her up from her seat.

Nancy squeaked in surprise as her chair scraped back, her body colliding against a wall of pure muscle. Then, before she could utter a single word, his mouth crashed against hers.

Nancy's entire body went rigid as Ezra's lips molded over hers, his kiss searing, and possessive. The world tilted as his hand gripped her waist, pulling her impossibly close, his body burning hot against hers. Nancy didn't move. Couldn't move. Her brain already short-circuited, the moment too overwhelming, and too sudden for her.

Across the table, Asher stood rooted to the spot, equally stunned.

"... Oh, fuck," he muttered, rubbing a hand down his face.

What the hell was he going to tell Violet?

Chapter 235: Destroy Violet

Rain Clouds and Heartache

First, can someone please explain the nonstop downpour? One minute we have clear skies, then—bam—torrential showers. And then it hit me—of course! Our Lightning Prince is suffering.

Alaric Storm, cold and untouchable, has finally been struck. And by what, you ask? Not lightning, my loves. Heartbreak. Yes! It is.

I mean we all saw it coming. Though neither Alaric nor Violet have made any official announcement about their status, we know the rules (yes, folks, that's practically carved in stone), an Alpha and a Rogue cannot date. It is forbidden. Impossible. Cannot be. And yet, we cannot ignore our cold prince's pain.

The rainstorm he's been raging over us is proof that Violet's fall from grace has hit him the hardest. And I do mean hardest, because while we may not be inside that brooding head of his, his powers are making sure we all take part in his suffering.

Alaric, darling, we get it—you're in agony. But must our wardrobes suffer too? Some of us have new designer heels that don't respond well to constant soggy grounds.

Think about it, my poor couture gowns, my exquisite heels, my perfectly styled hair, all ruined by your emotional turmoil. So, this is a direct plea to Elsie Lancaster: Queen Bee, do your job.

Comfort the Lightning Prince. Soothe his broken heart. Or, if you can't do that, find a way for him to patch things up with his Purple Storm, so the sun can peek through the clouds for once more.

Seriously, I need to stunt in my latest collection, and I cannot do that in this depressing weather. So spare us from these umbrella-unfriendly days, one less Alpha in your collection can't hurt.

Rise of the Rogue Queen

Now, onto the real jaw-dropper of the week, let's talk about the newest title circulating on Moon Feed.

Yes, you heard that right. The title of "Rogue Queen" has been floating through the halls like the latest fragrance, and it has settled itself firmly on Violet Purple's rebellious little head.

Because if you thought she was going to slink into the shadows after rejecting all four houses, think again. Violet isn't just surviving, she's making history again. And history, my loves, is messy.

For the first time ever, the West House and the South House are at blows. One that saw the silvered court rent in two just the other day.

Why, you ask? Simple.

Alpha Asher Nightshade has drawn the line, and he is team Violet all the way. Which means our favorite conniving snake, Roman Draven, is paying the price. Asher and Roman have always been as close as blood brothers, but not anymore. Not after the fox's little shenanigans at the bonfire last Friday.

And Violet? Oh, she is not in a forgiving mood. Because what does our defiant little Rogue Queen do in response? She gives Roman Draven's car a personal makeover.

Brown is the new black, darlings, because she took a page out of the classic rebel handbook and gave that expensive ride a once-over in mud.

Honestly? Even I have to admit the audacity on this girl. She might not have actual balls, but she sure acts like she does.

Somebody probably needs to tell our queen bee to brace herself. The Purple Storm is out of the ranking system, but that means no rules. Elsie Lancaster better watch her back, because a rogue with nothing to lose can be the most dangerous opponent of all.

Where's Our Puppet Master?

Meanwhile, the big question: Where, pray tell, is Asher Nightshade?

Our unpredictable West Alpha has vanished from the scene. Is he mourning the loss of his Purple Queen? Or is he off plotting something even bigger?

For the sake of our already fragile sanity, let's hope he's brooding in some dark, faraway place. Because the last thing we need is Asher's wrath on top of Alaric's heartbreak.

A Cry For Mercy

And finally, to our dear Lightning Prince, a little bit of sunshine is all we ask. We sympathize, we understand, we mourn your heartbreak, dear Alaric, but must we do so drenched to the bone?

So, stay tuned, my darlings, and let's see how this plays out. 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.

"You have got to be kidding me!" Elsie raged as she finish reading the latest Moon Feed article for that day.

The Oracle was really pushing it.

Not only had the gossip-loving menace dared to order her around like she was some lap dog, but now the entire school had joined in the chorus, summoning her like some weather-controlling deity to fix their miserable lives.

How. Dare. They.

She was the one who decided who rose and who fell, and no one—especially not some faceless gossip columnist—was going to dictate what she should do next.

Elsie gritted her teeth as she scrolled through the comment section, the post increasing her anger.

"Please, Elsie! We beg you, fix this rain. It's ruining my hair!"

"We get it, Alaric is in pain, but do we all have to suffer for it?"

"She's the Queen Bee, right? Then let her do something."

Just look at this. Those ungrateful bitches summoning her without respect?!

Even if Elsie wanted to end this miserable downpour, it should have been her decision. She would have basked in their praise, their gratitude, and their adoration. Not like this. Not them demanding it as if she was obligated to fix their problems.

And then there was Violet.

Elsie's lip was a cruel sneer. Rogue Queen. As if.

That filthy, disgraceful excuse of a whore had defied everything Lunaris stood for and was somehow being celebrated for it? Her blood boiled at the thought of it.

Fine. If they wanted action, she'd give them action.

She grabbed her phone, her nails tapping aggressively against the screen as she dialed Grace.

The girl answered immediately. "Elsie?"

"Send a message to Alaric," Elsie ordered, her tone sharp as a dagger.

"Tell him if he doesn't stop this rain right now, his darling Violet is going to get it from me."

Grace hesitated. "Are you sure about that? Roman did say—"

"Do it!" She snapped, shutting Grace up immediately.

"Yes, Elsie." Grace swallowed and ended the call to go do as she was told.

Elsie exhaled slowly, composing herself.

Then, she picked her phone again and sent a single message.

To: Nicole

[Do it.]

The moment the message was sent, she smiled with satisfaction.

Fuck Roman and his call for a truce.

She was going to destroy Violet Purple.

Chapter 236: Being Different

"Thank the lord the rain has stopped." Ivy remarked, gazing out the window.

Violet turned her head toward the window, gnawing the inside of her cheek as she stared at the gloomy aftermath.

The sky was still an angry gray, thick clouds rolling sluggishly, but at least the relentless downpour had ceased. Puddles lined the roads, with mist curling at the edges of the trees, and the scent of wet earth clung to the air like a ghost.

Throughout the weekend, Violet had tried reaching Alaric so that she could explain herself over her recent actions but his phone remained off, unreachable.

It left her with nothing but an anxious restlessness to the point she had even considered throwing caution to the wind and going to his house or lab, bracing for whatever punishment might follow. But then, she remembered the deal with Roman.

The deal was clear as day. No unnecessary attention. He expected her to keep a low profile. Unfortunately, showing up without special invitation at the North House would undoubtedly make a scene and violate the agreement.

So Violet had swallowed the urge, just like she had swallowed Daisy's frustration over making a deal without consulting them.

But even the hot-tempered Daisy, had relented after considering the facts. Revenge against Elsie was sweet, except none of them had the kind of protection she did. All thanks to a certain Alpha.

If Elsie couldn't retaliate against her, she would go after them. And despite Violet's bravado, she wasn't sure she could protect them all.

So far, the truce had held. Elsie had kept up her end, though "mostly" was the best way to put it since she and her friends had done most of the work.

They had avoided the cafeteria since Sunday, sticking to fruit that Lila had secretly grown with her magic in their backyard. Lila had summoned an entire apple tree from the ground, only to wither it once they had gathered their fill.

They couldn't leave the apple and many other trees she had grown to survive and draw attention. Lila had made it clear that her identity was to be kept secret by all means. A warning she also ingrained into Daisy and Ivy's head till it was almost a mantra.

Unfortunately, fruit could only get them so far and Violet was beginning to crave a proper meal. Yet, for the sake of keeping the peace—and to avoid the inevitable confrontations—she and her roommates stuck to fruit this morning, then during lunch later today, gather as much food that would last them through the night.

Deep down inside of her, Violet knew this so-called truce would not last. She knew girls like Elsie. When they marked you, they didn't just want you to fall. They wanted you destroyed. They wanted you beneath their feet forever, crushed and humiliated until you had no will to rise again.

But if this war was going to restart, it wouldn't be from her. Violet wanted to at least say she'd tried for peace, so that if she ever retaliated, she would do so without an ounce of mercy.

Violet turned to the girls. "We're leaving together, right?" Since dragging them into this rogue mess, it was safe to say she had taken responsibility for them.

"Yes, I have Werewolf Anthropology and Culture," Ivy chirped.

Daisy rolled her eyes. "Ivy, everyone here has Werewolf Anthropology and Culture," she pointed out dryly.

Not missing a beat, Ivy shrugged. "All the more reason to hurry."

Gathering their belongings, the girls set off from their shack on foot, the boots they had gone for squishing against the damp ground. Though the rain had finally ended, the air remained clammy, and the earth was slick and moldy.

With time on their side, they walked slowly, engaging in funny conversation that lightened their trek and intentionally avoiding talking about whatever awaited them at school today.

The further they went, the busier the roads became with students heading toward the school ground, some in small groups, some alone, and the elites ones in their cars, but all stealing glances at them.

They whispered as usual, and Violet could feel their gazes sliding over her and her girls, assessing, questioning, and dissecting. But that was all they did. No one stepped forward to start trouble, which probably meant Elsie was keeping her part of the bargain. But the question was: how long would that last?

Werewolf Anthropology and Culture was

one of the mandatory classes for all students at Lunaris. And of course, it was taught by Mr. Radcliff, the racist prick, as they not-so-secretly labeled him.

Violet and her girls entered, only for the air to feel instantly heavier and it took one glance to understand why.

The classroom had been rearranged. No longer were the packs scattered amongst each other, sitting where they pleased. No, the students were now rigidly separated by pack affiliation. The West House and South House especially sat far away from each other.

Even the North and East House who has no beef with each other were forced to separate as well. Hence the sitting arrangement was South, East, West and North.

Principal Jameson clearly wasn't taking chances after Saturday's disaster. Keeping the packs divided was a preemptive strike to prevent another conflict.

However, it was not just the houses, the rogues were affected too and Violet could see four untouched and isolated seats at the very back of the classroom.

Violet snorted, if they thought the seating arrangements was going to offend her, then they were delusional. Whether this was Elsie's or Jameson's doing, she didn't care. At least in this spot, Violet could see everything happening in the class — and perhaps sleep in peace if the lecture gets boring.

Under their watchful eyes, Violet strode toward her seat, shoulders squared, and her chin lifted high.

Lila followed her. Daisy followed Lila. And Ivy after Daisy. One at a time, the Four rogue girls, moved through a sea of wolves, and humans with an indifferent swag.

Violet smirked. Being different was sexy.

Chapter 237: Mate Bond -1

Alaric Storm didn't show up for class, but Griffin did—thank God—and, unfortunately, so did Roman. Ugh. Asher was still nowhere to be seen, and thanks to the Oracle's latest article, even Violet found herself speculating about his sudden disappearance.

However, one thing was certain: Asher Nightshade was not sulking over a heartbreak. The very thought of it was laughable. Asher, of all people? It was simply impossible.

Asher wasn't the type to be stopped by obstacles—he would destroy it. If anything, Violet feared what his absence truly meant. Only the gods knew what he was setting into motion in secret because she wanted no part in it.

Thankfully, Roman's queen, Elsie Lancaster, was absent, sparing Violet from having to endure her presence. But that didn't mean her little prince, Roman wasn't watching. Griffin too. Both of them stared at her to the point Violet had to force herself to pretend not to notice.

Thankfully, Mr. Radcliff arrived, sparing her further annoyance as class officially began.

"Welcome, everyone," Mr. Radcliff greeted, switching on his electronic board as the class pulled out their learning materials as well.

"Today, we will be discussing one of the most fundamental aspects of werewolf culture: The Mate Bond."

Chatterings rose in the class, and Violet observed the atmosphere with an arched brow. It reminded her of how students at her old school used to get all excited over certain topics in biology. The reproductive system, for instance, always had them eager to learn. Apparently, talking about mates was just as much of a hot topic.

Interesting.

Radcliff continued, breaking the topic down as he gestured toward the display on the board:

"Today, our objective is to understand the customs surrounding werewolf mates and bonding rituals."

With a flick of his electronic pen, he underlined the topics listed:

Mating Bond & Mating Fever

Rituals Related to Mate Bonding (Marking Ceremony)

Fated Mates vs. Chosen Mates

Courtship Customs and Expectations

Lowering the pen, Radcliff stepped to the front of the class, saying with an air of importance. "Some of you, especially the older students, may already know about this, but I will still demand your undivided attention. This is a subject that can quite literally change your life."

The shift in the classroom was noticed immediately. Even the more carefree students straightened in their seats, some of them leaning forward, eager to learn.

Not that Violet wasn't interested, but it was hard to take lessons on fate and romance seriously when her own life was currently a spectacular disaster. Nonetheless, she kept quiet and listened. Observing was always better.

"The mate bond," Mr. Radcliff began, his tone reverent, "is the greatest blessing given to us by the Moon Goddess herself. It is a match made in heaven. The divine moment when two souls, destined for one another, finally recognize their other half. It is the purest form of connection."

His gaze swept across the room, ensuring he had everyone's attention before he went on.

"Now, how do mates find each other?" He lifted a single finger. "For some, it happens instantly and usually triggered by scent. When a mate's unique scent reaches the other, there is no denying the pull, it is immediate and absolute."

He lifted a second finger. "For others, it develops slowly. steady. A gradual realization as fate draws them together over time. This is especially common in an 'enemies to lovers' dynamic."

A few students chuckled, but Violet couldn't share in the their joy, shifting uncomfortably instead in her seat. And it was because someone was staring at her. Hard.

Unable to resist the weight of the gaze any longer, she turned toward Roman, only to meet an intensity that made her stomach clench.

What the hell?

There was something knowing in his expression. A glint in his green eyes that made Violet frown. Was he seriously thinking—?

No.

No. No. No.

He was not actually considering that they had a mate bond, right?

Violet nearly scoffed. Had he finally lost his mind?

With a defiant glare, Violet snapped her gaze away, forcing herself to concentrate on the lesson.

Whatever Roman's delusions were, she refused to be fooled by his ridiculous claims about some so-called animal bond. He could go fuck himself.

Radcliff's lecture continued.

"We do not question the ways of the Goddess," he stated. "Some mates crash into each other like a wrecking ball, while others are drawn together by an invisible thread, slowly pulling them in until there is no escaping it. But one fact remains clear—"His voice had an edge to it now,

"Once the bond snaps into place, it does not ask for permission. And when that connection is realized... then comes the mating fever."

At that, the class went silent. So silent that if a pin dropped, everyone would have heard it.

"The mating fever is the most intense, primal experience a werewolf can endure. And it is reserved solely for soulmates." Radcliff said in a way that drew the class in. "It is the overwhelming urge to mate and seal the bond. Picture two souls finding each other after an eternity of longing, the only thing that matters at that moment is to be together."

The tension in the air thickened as he continued. "The fever is not gentle. It demands. It consumes. It is like molten lava in your veins, a fire that cannot be extinguished until the bond is fulfilled."

He paused, giving the class a grave look. "Which is why, for those who do not wish to be bonded to their mate, whether due to personal reasons, pack politics, or simple incompatibility, they must reject the bond immediately. Otherwise, the fever will force your hand..." Radcliff coughed, cheeks flushing slightly. "and drive you to take action."

The class erupted in laughter, but it was not funny to Violet. She didn't like the idea of some goddess in the sky making her lust over someone she might not even like. That sounded like absolute bullshit.

Lucky her, she was Fae, not a werewolf.

Surely, this didn't apply to her, right?

Damn. She would have to ask Lila after class.

"Some mates mark each other during the mating fever," Radcliff continued, regaining his composure, "while others resist it to a point. It all depends on your level of self-control, considering that during the fever, you will be in a... Frenzy."

"Frenzy", the way he said it made a few students stifling their giggles.

"It is recommended, actually," Radcliff added, adjusting his collar, "because the shared intensity—well, um, it... heightens the experience." His face turned slightly red.

Nearly all the students snickered, others grinning not-so-subtly.

Radcliff straightened at once, attempting to salvage his dignity.

"The key point is once you mark your mate, your souls become one. There is no turning back. You are bound for life."

Chapter 238: Mate Bond - 2

"Now, I know that some of you are curious about the marking ceremony," Radcliff said, his voice carrying the same reverence as before. "It is a significant rite in werewolf culture, the process by which a male wolf shifter bites his mate to embed his scent into her flesh, and the female reciprocates."

"While this might sound primitive, strange, childish or even animalistic to outsiders," he continued, "it is, in fact, a deeply sacred ritual, honored by the Moon Goddess herself. It is through this act that the binding rune appears on the skin of both mates, a proof of their eternal bond."

Violet, suddenly perked up, her mind catching onto that last part.

So, the Moon Goddess gives them a permanent tattoo for fucking and biting each other?

Cool.

Radcliff gestured toward the electronic board, tapping the display where sketches of runes appeared. "The binding rune," he explained, "varies from couple to couple. It is as unique as the bond itself. No two couple marks are the same."

"It can appear anywhere on the body," he said, scrolling through the images. "Though, over time, we have documented the most common spots which are the neck, the arms, the shoulder, the chest, the thighs, the stomach —"

"Or on the butt." Abel, Roman's beta interrupted him with a cocky grin. "Now that's a spot I'd love to check out on my mate."

The class exploded into laughter at once. Violet rolled her eyes as she caught Roman slapping Abel a high five, the two of them looking way too pleased with themselves. Of course. Fools.

Mr. Radcliff exhaled deeply, pinching the bridge of his nose. "Ha ha, so funny," he said dryly, trying to rein it in. "No more jokes. We're discussing something of importance."

At least the man was trying to act like a responsible teacher today instead of his usual petty self of being partial towards the wolves. It was almost impressive.

Clearing his throat, Mr. Radcliff moved on. "The mate bond is sacred to our people. It is a divine gift, meant to be cherished, which is why interfering with another's mate is considered a grave offense."

The laughter died down as his tone turned serious. "Even rejecting a mate bond is frowned upon, but at the end of the day, everyone has free will. Some choose to embrace the bond. Others... walk away."

"However," Radcliff went on, "what makes the mate bond even rarer now is the loss of pureblooded she-wolves during the Great War. Their numbers were decimated, and with them, many future bonds that may have formed."

A quiet tension passed through the room at the mention of the war, but no one dwelt on it. It was quite obvious that conversation was still a sore one for both species.

"But fear not," Radcliff said, lightening his once grim tone, "the Moon Goddess is merciful. Over the years, she has extended this grace to humans, which is why we now see wolves and humans being bonded together. It remains uncommon, but it is possible."

"In fact," Radcliff added, "Lunaris Academy even had a fated couple about three years ago. But since then, no new student has been bonded. So yes, it's rare, but it does happen."

There was a long beat of silence as the class absorbed everything. Then Radcliff turned from the board, sweeping his gaze across the room.

"Any questions before we move on?"

Before anyone else could even move, Daisy's hand shot into the air immediately, but Mr. Radcliff pointedly looked past her.

Instead, he turned to Dion, whose hand hovered just before Daisy's.

"Yes, Mr. Dion?"

Violet cursed under her breath. Just when she thought the man had changed, he proved that assholes never really do. She saw his move for exactly what it was, and in that moment, their rogue status had never felt louder. Mr. Radcliff was throwing it right in their faces.

Dion stood up straight and asked. "Why can't humans recognize their human mates?" Although he sounded genuinely curious, Dion was known for his jokes and right now, his expression said it all.

Mr. Radcliff's lips thinned with irritation. "Because you're obviously human," he replied coldly. "Don't ask me such a foolish question again."

A ripple of laughter ran through the class while Daisy's mouth tightened in disbelief. To think the man would ignore her the smart one, only to give that jester a chance.

Mr. Radcliff scanned the room. "Next?" he said, ignoring Daisy yet again.

This time, Amanda lifted a hand, turning a flirtatious glance toward Griffin.

"In the case of a human mated to a werewolf, would she feel the mate bond?" Amanda asked, batting her eyelashes in Griffin's direction.

Oh God. Violet wanted to puke. Some people sure are dumb.

"Yes and no," Mr. Radcliff replied. "Initially, it might be weaker. Humans lack the wolf, so they don't feel that push as strongly. They take time to adjust. But that's precisely where the mating fever comes in."

Even if the human isn't inflamed by it the way the werewolf is, resistance is practically impossible once there's skin contact. Let's just say things tend to be...concluded from there." He finished with a suggestive edge in his tone, prompting scattered giggles in the classroom.

"Any other questions?" Mr. Radcliff glanced around pointedly, still ignoring Daisy's raised hand.

Violet leaned over and whispered to Daisy, "Don't bother," but the girl refused to lower her arm, stubborn as a bull.

From across the room, Roman casually lifted his hand. Mr. Radcliff's expression brightened instantly. "Yes, Mr. Draven?" he said, sounding almost eager.

Roman dipped his head in Daisy's direction. "She's been trying to ask a question for a while, sir. Was starting to wonder if you needed your eyes checked."

Violet raised an eyebrow, perplexed by Roman's sudden helpfulness, however, she quickly forced her face back to neutral.

Mr. Radcliff cleared his throat, an embarrassed flush creeping up his neck. "Right, of course. Mrs. Fairchild, your question?" he said, finally acknowledging Daisy with a forced smile.

Although Daisy was pissed at his attitude, she got her chance after all. So she straightened her uniform and asked firmly. "Is it possible to have more than one mate?"

Chapter 239: Mate Bond - 3

Daisy's question sent a ripple through the room, stirring up hushed murmurs as students leaned toward one another, each of them sharing their own speculations.

"Alright, silence." Mr. Radcliff called out, though he didn't wait for the noise to completely settle before answering.

"It is rare. But yes, it is possible."

That single sentence was like tossing a lit match into a pile of dry leaves. The class was stirred again, their conversation growing louder as students eagerly debated the idea of multiple mates.

But Radcliff's patience had already reached its limit. "Silence!" He boomed, his voice crashing over them like thunder.

This time, the classroom fell still. Only when Radcliff was sure he had their full attention did he fold his arms behind his back, eyes dark with thought.

"Aside from the moon goddess' machination, there are a few instances where a wolf may find themselves bonded to more than one mate," he admitted, "One of the most well-documented cases is when a werewolf is born with an unusually strong soul. These wolves tend to radiate dominant energy, an aura powerful enough to pull multiple mates toward them."

The buzz returned, though less uproarious this time. Roman, lazily stretching in his seat, commented, "Sounds like an East thing," tossing a mocking glance at Griffin's corner.

Griffin in return, let out a low growl, so deep it reverberated across the desks.

Before Violet even had time to think, she turned sharply to Roman and snapped, "Behave, asshole."

The moment the words left her lips, the entire classroom collectively gasped, dramatic and scandalized.

Every head snapped in her direction, eyes wide with disbelief and it took one tense second for Violet to realize what she'd just done.

Oh Shit.

A rogue like her had just publicly insulted an Alpha which was like an enormous taboo in their law book.

Violet's entire body went still, but she didn't back down. Instead she lifted her chin, locking eyes with Roman and daring him to make an issue of it.

For a moment, there was silence, thick with unspoken tension. Then Roman's lips curved into a slow, aggravating smirk.

"Sure thing, Mommy."

Abel was the first to snort, his amusement quickly infecting the rest of the pack, followed by the rest of the students who burst into an awkward and exaggerated laughter.

Even Violet, despite her stiff spine, was forced to give a fake chuckle, turning back toward the front as her ears burned. That was awkward.

Damn it. She hated this ceasefire with Elsie—Violet missed speaking her mind to certain people, but apparently that was off-limits now.

Daisy, not fully satisfied, pressed further. "So what happens when a wolf is bound to multiple mates? How do they choose?"

Radcliff scratched the back of his head, his unease visible, as though this was the last question he wanted to answer. But then, he had no choice.

"They don't."

The students fell into stunned silence.

Radcliff continued, "The bond does not allow for half-measures. The Moon Goddess makes no mistakes, which means the wolf cannot simply 'choose' between their mates. The connection is absolute. It is meant to be complete, or the soul will be unstable."

Dion, who had been listening with rapt interest, suddenly grinned. "If that's the case, then I think having more than one mate sounds hot." His expression turned dreamy, like he was already fantasizing about it.

A few students murmured in agreement, nodding along, whispering about how having two mates would be exciting.

But Mr. Radcliff scoffed loudly, "So you think," he replied, his voice edged with skepticism. "While the idea of multiple mates might seem appealing, even exotic, let me remind you that this is not some fairytale fantasy. You're dealing with multiple mates, that means balancing multiple, very real connections. And love isn't always enough to hold everything together."

He paused, letting the class absorb his words before he went on to reveal next.

"In fact, history has already shown us how disastrous multiple bond can be. About three hundred years ago, before the Great Wars, there was a she-wolf named Moira who discovered she had two mates: Caden and Aden, both linked to her by the Moon Goddess.

"Both men were bound to her soul but there was one problem—Moira favored Caden. Aden, consumed by jealousy, could not bear it. And rather than fight for her love or accept the bond as it was, he did the unthinkable by killing Caden. Realizing what he had done, Aden was unable to live with his action, so he turned the blade on himself."

Damn, Violet breathed, that was dark even for her. She was stunned like the rest of the class.

"Moira lost both of her mates in a single day and the agony of it broke her. The pain of losing a mate is said to be unbearable. If you want to understand it, then picture your heart being ripped out of your chest while still alive. Unfortunately, losing two?" Radcliff shook his head. "That was a torment beyond words. In the end, Moira took her own life, unable to withstand the loss."

"Since then," Radcliff says, "no one prays to the Moon Goddess for multiple mates.

Having more than one mate demands an extraordinary amount of care and wisdom. You'd have to manage a 'harem' dynamic, in a sense, and that's a tightrope most of us hope never to walk."

The class was still reeling from the revelation when Violet spoke up in a challenging tone, "But some people have walked that tightrope, haven't they?"

"Excuse me?" Mr. Radcliff looked startled by her sudden question.

"You've only mentioned one woman whose multi-mate bond failed," Violet continued. "Negative stories grab the most attention, but there must be others whose multiple bonds did work, right?"

Radcliff scowled at her, clearly itching to respond harshly, but that was until he met Roman's smug but warning stare. Clearing his throat, he replied instead, "Yes, there are cases where multiple-mate bonds have been successful."

"Good," Violet said with satisfaction.

Amanda scoffed from the other side of the room. "Why do you ask, Rogue Queen? You think the Moon Goddess has time to bestow a mate bond on someone like you?"

Violet smiled sweetly. "First, thanks for acknowledging my title as a 'Queen'. Second," she leaned forward, her voice like silk laced with venom, "if I wanted a mate, I'd get one of my own choosing rather than wait around for some goddess to make me lust after a random guy."

She gave Amanda a once-over, slow and unimpressed. "But with that birdbrain of yours, I guess you're perfectly content doing exactly that."

Chapter 240: Picture Your Mate

"Burn." Dion muttered under his breath, and the class erupted into laughter.

Amanda's face turned beet red, her nails digging into the desk in frustration before she whipped her head toward Griffin, her voice high-pitched and aggrieved.

"Do something!" She demanded, her pathetic plea dripping with entitlement as if Griffin was supposed to step in and defend her honor.

But Griffin's expression was the perfect picture of unimpressed as he gave her a look that clearly said, Are you stupid?

The whole thing was too much for Roman, and he crumpled forward in laughter, his shoulders shaking from the force of it. Apparently, this was shaping up to be one of the most entertaining classes he'd attended in a while.

Unfortunately, Mr. Radcliff was not amused. "Violet Purple," he called out, "you seem to have a problem with the sacred mate bond." The way he said it made it seem as if she had insulted it somehow.

Violet recognized the not-so-subtle accusation immediately and responded innocently, "Of course not, Mr. Radcliff. It's just that the concept of the mate bond makes me question freedom of choice if the Moon Goddess is the one deciding."

Her voice was carefully measured, neutral enough to sound like it was an intellectual question, rather than a challenge. Violet wasn't stupid enough to outright provoke the wolves, especially not now that she was at her most vulnerable.

"That's a nice question that deserves an answer, don't you think, Mr. Radcliff?" Griffin interjected, his voice calm and pointed, as if he too detected the teacher's irritability.

Radcliff's jaw tightened, but in the end, he forced a stiff response. "Yes, of course, it's a good question," he said, walking to the front of the board.

Violet breathed a sigh of relief, grateful to have dodged that bullet. She then turned to silently thank Griffin but he had already turned away and Violet knew deep down that the move was a dismissal. It seems just like Alaric, someone else was mad at her. It was not surprising though. She fucked up.

Her thoughts were interrupted when Mr. Radcliff began the answer to her question.

"While the mate bond serves as a force that draws two souls together, it does not create feelings from nothing. It merely enhances what is already there. For example, in cases where mates start as enemies to lovers, the attraction often exists long before the bond is fully recognized.

"Perhaps they've been drawn to each other for weeks, months, maybe even years, feeling a pull they don't understand or refuse to acknowledge. They may mistake it for irritation, rivalry, or even hatred. But the truth is, their souls have already begun to recognize each other, even if their minds haven't caught up yet.

"Even for those whose bonds snap into place instantly, they have to put in effort to maintain the relationship. So no, the bond does not force love. But it does make it impossible to ignore. I hope that answers your doubt, miss. Purple." He said pointedly.

Violet raised a brow. She had to admit, even though the man was an asshole pretty much most of the times, he was a good teacher.

"Clear, sir." Violet admitted.

"Good," Radcliff said, brimming with such smugness that she half-expected him to fan out peacock feathers right there.

"We're pressed for time, so that concludes today's questions. Let us move on with the lesson."

Radcliff forged ahead on the electronic board, underlining the next point. "Now, let's briefly discuss the distinction between 'fated mates' and 'chosen mates.'"

He turned back toward the class, gaze sweeping over them as he continued.

"As we already know, fated mates are the pairs chosen by the Moon Goddess herself, bound by an unbreakable spiritual connection. On the other hand, we also have chosen mates, wolves who form bonds outside the goddess-ordained connection. While these bonds may not have the same mystical pull, they are still highly respected in our culture. Not every wolf finds their fated mate, and in those cases, they have the freedom to choose their own partners whether human or wolf. These relationships can be just as strong, but the fated bond runs deeper."

The class was still digesting his words, when the bell rang and there was a sigh of relief. Lessons was over!

Chairs scraped against the floor with students stretching as they rose from their seats, the room filling with the rustle of backpacks and low chatter.

"Wait." Radcliff suddenly said, making everyone freeze mid-step. "Now before you go, your assignment..."

The class groaned in unison. No!

But Radcliff's expression remained impassive as he continued mercilessly.

"You will each write an essay imagining one of your classmates as your potential mate. I expect thorough reasoning on why you believe they would be a good match."

Violet practically groaned. What the hell kind of assignment was that?

Of all the awkward, pointless things to write about, why this? How was she supposed to pretend someone in this class was her freaking soulmate? That was not her thing.

Still grumbling internally, Violet rose to her feet only for Roman Draven to materialize right in front of her without warning.

"Hello, little rogue queen," he drawled

Violet pursed her lips at him. "I thought alphas weren't supposed to talk to rogues," she said coolly, slinging her bag over her shoulder and tried to go in the other direction only to collide with a solid wall of muscle.

Griffin Hale.

Violet blinked up at him, taking in his grim expression. Someone was moody.

"We need to talk." Griffin said tersely.

Violet nodded, much to Roman's horror.

"What? No—what the hell, Purple? You can't just—" His protest was cut short by the sudden buzz of his phone.

But it wasn't just his, all around them, phones were buzzing with notification at once.

A ripple of tension passed through the students as they instinctively reached for their devices, eyes eagerly scanning their screens.

Violet picked up her phone as well only for her expression to darken the next seconds.