

## Defy 261

Chapter 261: No Time For Remorse

"And that would be all for today," the teacher announced as the shrilling sound of the bell rang through the room.

The Anatomy and Physiology class was finally over and Violet was the first to pop out of her seat, slinging her satchel over one shoulder like a soldier gearing up for war.

Her strides were brisk as she headed straight for the front of the class as if being anywhere near the back was suffocating. Because it was.

And it was because he was there. Alaric Storm. The very storm that had ripped her apart twenty-four hours ago.

After yesterday's humiliation, where Alaric Storm had publicly degraded and shamed her, she'd expected a carryover of the same hostility today. Violet had expected him to sneer, and glare at her. That he would pretend like she didn't exist.

Yet when their gazes met briefly, all she'd seen in those glacial blue depths was not ice, but regret. It jolted her so hard that a small, humiliating squeak slipped past her lips before she could catch it.

Violet had turned away instantly, her cheeks hot, and her heart thudding wildly like a trapped thing. She hadn't looked back after that. Not once. Not even when she felt the intensity of his gaze on her nape like a ghost's touch. She sat ramrod straight for the rest of the class, overly conscious of his presence.

How dare he? How dare he look at her with remorse?

He didn't get to do that. Not after yesterday. Not after he tore her down in front of the entire school. Not after he'd stripped her dignity and handed it to Elsie like a prize for a game well played.

He didn't get to feel bad.

Violet wasn't naive; yes, she hurt him with her shenanigans with Roman, but his stunt yesterday went too far. If Alaric truly wanted to settle the score, he should've confronted her in private. Instead, he'd conspired with Elsie to crush her. He'd dragged out her darkest fear and presented it to a swarm of vultures.

So no. Violet didn't want his apology, nor his regret. She wanted revenge. And to achieve that, she needed to keep her head clear and her heart cold.

Violet shoved the image of those regretful blue eyes deep, deep down where it couldn't touch her, hardening her heart like steel around a fragile core. She had to hate him enough to see this through. There could be no softening, no second thoughts. They would all pay, every last one of them.

That was precisely why Violet didn't hesitate to flee the classroom the instant the lesson ended—before anyone else had even stood up. She refused to let Alaric or anyone else slow her down. Not when she had more pressing business like tracking down Natalie. Hence, there was no time to waste on distractions.

Violet had no idea how Asher did it, but stalking someone was not as easy as she had thought. She needed Natalie alone without eyes on her, but it was proving near impossible to corner the girl. Daisy and Natalie had the same class, and right now, her friend had just texted her that Natalie was heading toward the ladies' restroom. Good. Just the place she needed her.

Violet rushed over to the restroom, nearly running into Lila, who caught her with a grin. "There you are," she said, clearly pleased with herself. "I emptied out the whole place. Don't worry, it'll just be the both of you in there. I'll make sure no one else goes in while you're talking."

Violet looked at Lila with gratitude. "Thank you, Lila." She hugged her quickly and hurried into the restroom.

Just as Lila had promised, the stalls were cleared out, except for one. Violet waited, listening. The moment she heard the flush of the toilet, she ran to the sink and turned on the water, washing her hands as casually as she could manage.

Natalie stepped out a second later, not even pausing when she saw her. She simply moved to the sink beside her and began washing her own hands in silence. Both of them stood there, wordless, the sound

of running water the only noise between them. Natalie was the first to finish. She dried her hands, pulled out her compact, and started touching up her lips without sparing Violet a second glance.

Violet glanced at her from the corner of her eyes, nerves crawling under her skin. How was she supposed to begin? Doubts began creeping in, was this a terrible idea?

"You've been washing your hands for over five minutes now," Natalie said coolly. "What do you want from me, fallen queen?"

Violet didn't know what surprised her more, that Natalie knew she wanted something, or that she'd just called her fallen queen.

Violet snorted, brushing off the jab that, strangely, didn't even sting. "Fallen queen. Is that what they call me now?"

"They call you a lot of things," Natalie replied with a shrug, still reapplying her lipstick. "But that's the one that stands out for now. It's better than the rest."

Violet's jaw clenched, but she swallowed her rising temper. She wasn't here to trade insults. "You're right. I do need your help."

Natalie paused, slowly capping her lipstick and turning to face her. "What is it you want, Violet Purple?"

Violet swallowed, the weight of her request suddenly pressing on her chest. It was risky. But she had come this far.

"I need you to procure a recording device for me."

"Excuse me?" Natalie blinked, thrown off. "Why do you need a recording device? Who is it—?" Her eyes narrowed. "Oh."

"You intend to record Elsie. The rumors aren't wrong about you, you really are going for an eye for an eye."

"I got intel Elsie is hiding something," Violet said, voice low. "A secret. And it might be exactly what I need to take her down for good. So, are you going to help me or not?"

Natalie studied her for a moment. "Of course I'll help." She stepped closer, eyes gleaming with curiosity. "But what do I get in return?"

#### Chapter 262: Violet's Games

"No," Violet shook her head stubbornly, "No, you won't be getting anything from me." She stated bluntly.

Making deals was what had put her in this situation today. She wasn't about to let another one blow up in her face. Besides, from her recent digging, weren't the Fae bound by oaths? If she was truly a Fae, then this could turn out to be a dangerous transaction on her end.

Natalie regarded her with cool curiosity. "I might be an aristocrat who has everything she could ever ask for, but I was taught how to do business before I could even walk. You come here demanding something with nothing to offer. The way I see it, that's bad business, darling. So unfortunately, I can't help you."

Violet felt her world crashing down on her right at that moment. Their whole plan was dependent on getting that recording device and she had been confident on convincing Natalie, but that didn't seem to be the case anymore.

No, she could not let this end like this? But then, what could she say? She could not offer the deal no matter what.

Natalie in question admired herself in the mirror one last time, running her fingers through that immaculate hair, and said, "Good luck with your plan. I truly wish you the best." Then she turned on her heel with a certain flair, heading for the exit.

No, she can't let this end like this!

Natalie only took two steps when Violet blurted, "Even businessmen take up philanthropic activities. They help people whether out of kindness or to help their reputation."

Natalie paused while Violet stood taller now, her voice unwavering. "Deny it all you want, but I know you hate Elsie. You don't fool me. You just endure her because of your little aristocratic circle. But you don't have to do anything. I'm already the arrow, just help me get notched, and I'll strike the target."

For over a minute, Natalie didn't move or say a word. Neither could Violet guess what thoughts churned in that head of hers. At this point, all she could was pray for a miracle or all hope was lost.

Then Natalie whirled around and stalked right back to her. With the way she was striding, anyone else would have flinched, but Violet didn't. She braced herself until Natalie was standing right over her. Though Violet was taller, the wolfish grin on Natalie's face put her on edge.

To make matters worse, Natalie placed both hands on the sink, boxing Violet in. Violet was confused as hell now. What was the girl doing?

"You do realize I like you," Natalie announced.

Oh. Hell. No.

Violet felt heat rush to her cheeks. "Uh—sorry, but I already have too many love interests jockeying for my attention. It's more than I can handle. Not that a little estrogen wouldn't do some good diluting all the testosterone, but no, I'm straight."

For a second, Natalie simply stared at her, as if encountering some alien species. Then she burst out laughing.

"Oh, gods—" Natalie wheezed. "You're one strange girl." She laughed so hard tears rolled from her eyes.

Violet flushed slightly, suddenly feeling a little sheepish.

Natalie's laughter soon subsided, replaced by a thoughtful look. "You've got a knack for motivational speeches," she said. "You could probably talk a pack of rats into challenging a pride of lions. Congratulations, you've sold me."

A loud exhale escaped Violet's lips. Thank the gods. That was a win.

"You'll get your package this evening, Violet Purple. And I can't wait to see what chaos you bring this time." Natalie smirked as she turned and exited the restroom.

Unknown to Violet, whatever confidence Natalie had vanished as soon as she came outside. She raised her hands to her chest, feeling it beat quite fast. Fuck, she had to be careful before she's found out.

Meanwhile, inside the bathroom, Violet stared at her reflection. Then she grinned.

With a tiny fist pump, she broke into a celebratory dance, twirling in place and busting out a little break-dance move.

She was halfway through a spin when the restroom door swung open.

She jerked to a halt, heart lunging. Ugh, has Natalie changed her mind or something? she began. "What—" Violet stopped short, spotting the newcomer's reflection in the mirror.

She froze.

It was not Natalie, but Roman Draven. And he was smirking like the fox he was, corners of his mouth curved in satisfaction.

Violet whirled around. "What are you doing here?! How did you even get in?"

Her eyes flicked toward the door. Lila was supposed to be guarding it. But that was until the meeting was over? Had she left already? Violet wondered.

Roman ignored her questions. He stepped further in, voice low and drawling. "So," he said, "there's been an interesting rumor circling around the school. Something about me spending the night in a certain rogue's bed...?" His eyes gleamed with a playful menace as he waited for her answer.

Violet lifted her chin, "What a funny question to ask me?"

"Not exactly a funny question considering only the two of us were privy to such information." Roman countered, his voice as smooth as sin.

He finally closed the space between them, and Violet's breath hitched. He wasn't touching her, but he was close enough for her to feel the heat rolling off his body, teasing her skin.

Violet knew Roman knew she was the one behind the spreading rumor. Of course he wasn't stupid. But there was something delicious in the game they were playing. And strangely enough, she didn't want it to stop.

So she met his gaze with hers, defiant and dark. "I guess there's an atom of truth to every rumor, then."

"Mmhmm," Roman hummed, clearly amused. He didn't believe her for a second, but gods—he loved that fire in her eyes.

Then, without warning, his hands gripped her waist, and in one smooth, fluid motion, he lifted her onto the sink. A startled squeak escaped her lips before she could stop it, her hands instinctively gripping the edge of the porcelain to ground herself.

But Roman wasn't done. He nudged her knees apart, his body now so close it was impossible to ignore. Violet's skin lit up in goosebumps. Her pulse skittered and her face burned with a deep flush she couldn't will away.

Roman leaned in, lowering his head until his mouth hovered just beside her ear. His voice was low and dangerous and smooth as silk-drenched sin.

"Tell me, Miss Purple," he purred, his lips brushing her skin, "what are you up to now?"

### Chapter 263: Truthful Rumors

Violet should have stopped, but a dark, naughty side of her rose up to the challenge. Roman thought himself to be the master of seduction, but she could hold her own too.

In a swift, daring motion, she wrapped her legs around his waist, drawing him close until she could feel the unmistakable hardness of that shameless wolf. He groaned, a tortured, delicious sound that sent shivers through her. Yet Violet kept her face neutral, determined not to blush like the naive virgin she was. "You were saying?" she lifted a daring brow.

Roman let out a strangled laugh, "You little—fine, what a perfect position to have this conversation."

Violet's cheeks burned, but she swallowed her embarrassment. If anyone walked in now, there'd be no mistaking what their position looked like. After yesterday's incident, her reputation was already in shreds; what more did she have to lose? Moreover, with her plans, solid evidence would only fuel the rumor mill.

"Let's begin this conversation then," he said, sliding his hand beneath her skirt, his touch warm as it glided along her milky, smooth thigh, sending tingles dancing across her skin.

"How was your night?" Roman suddenly asked, throwing her off course. She had been prepared to evade and tackle his probing question, only to be asked this instead. At the same time, she was painfully aware of his hand creeping higher and higher. Slowly. As if he was torturing her on purpose.

Yesterday's anger returned and Violet told him, "You have quite the nerve sneaking into my bed last night amid my warning."

"You don't seem to mind sharing the news now," he circled back to the earlier question with ease.

Fuck. Roman was pretty good at interrogation and dangerous. Daisy was right, she had to be extra careful dealing with this guy.

She purred, "Perhaps, I wanted to tell the truth to the whole world. To dispel the rumors that you're some god in bed."

"Is that so?" Roman played along, "You're disappointed there was no real action yesterday. You should have told me—I would have given you something and not lies to feed the poor, hungry masses."

He was now drawing slow, deliberate circles on her skin, sending a cascade of goosebumps racing over her body.

She challenged him, "They'd still be disappointed at the result."

Roman chuckled; however, his expression turned serious the next second. "Playtime's over, honey, so tell me, what are you up to?" He pressed for details. "You never wanted me in your bed, and the next minute you're insinuating stuff between us? That's pretty suspicious to me, little purple."

Realizing Roman would not leave until he got something, Violet fed him just a morsel of the truth.

"I'm trying to make Elsie furious. The Oracle claims we have equal kings; what if I want more? What if I want to show her I'm not done fighting? What if I want to steal her king?"

Roman's smirk widened. "Is that so? Good thing I'm actually good at this stuff."

"What?"

"There are a bunch of students waiting impatiently outside to be let in. What if the wolves especially were to come in and scent something... interesting."

Violet didn't need to guess what he meant by that. It was clear as day, further proven when his hand slipped into her panties and tugged them aside. But Roman paused, as if granting her a fleeting moment to object to this.

"Don't fool me, fox, not when you found me with this intention. You're only taking advantage of the situation," Violet accused him, even as she pushed her hips forward, encouraging him to go on.

His finger finally found its way through her wetness, and Violet gasped, instinctively burying a trembling finger into his hair to anchor herself.

Roman said in a husky tone, "How well you know me, purple. At least this time, the rumors would be valid."

Violet moaned wantonly as Roman continued touching her with his expert fingers. Although she accused him of intentionally planning this, the truth was she craved him too. Perhaps she was no different from Nancy, else she wouldn't be in this compromising position with a guy who hurt her—an annoyingly handsome asshole she couldn't get over.

With a few swift flicks of his fingers, Roman delivered exactly what she craved until her body shuddered in climax. Then, without missing a beat, he withdrew his finger and brought it to his mouth, licking her essence clean as if sealing a secret pact between them.

"God, you taste so good," Roman groaned, eyes flashing bright with the wolf just beneath the surface. Violet felt her cheeks burn but hopped down from the sink, attempting to smooth out her skirt, until Roman stopped her.

"Don't," he murmured. Then with deft fingers, he opened a few of her shirt buttons. "You want it to look like we did something hot and sinful, right? Not that what just happened wasn't exactly that..." He trailed off with a wicked grin. "But I don't want you ruining my sinful reputation."

Violet let out a low, breathy laugh. The nerve of this guy. Then Roman ruffled her hair, giving it that tousled, messy 'just ravaged' look, and stepped back to admire his handiwork.

Before Violet could form a witty retort, he leaned in—swift, abruptly—and pressed a firm, heated kiss to her lips. It was deep, though fleeting, leaving her breathless and off-balance in the aftermath. And truth be told, she didn't protest, considering she pretty much signed up for this. Maybe, she just liked the thrill.

Once he pulled away, Violet lifted a hand in a silent command for him to wait. If they were going for an illusion, then it needed to look mutual. With a playful tug, she reached out and undid a couple of his shirt buttons as well. The sight of his muscled chest made her mouth go dry for half a second, but she covered it with a cool expression.

Finally, she ruffled his hair, giving it the perfect dose of disheveled. "I think that's enough to convince anyone we actually had sex," she said, eyes gleaming with mischievous satisfaction.

Roman smirked right back. "Miss Purple, you're getting scarily good at this game."

#### Chapter 264: A Stolen King

A crowd of students had gathered outside the restroom. Classes had just ended, and predictably, everyone was making a beeline to either answer nature's call or retouch their makeup.

Not that another class was waiting as the school was currently prioritizing club showcases, team practices, and leisure activities to dazzle parents during the upcoming Parents Week.

But right now, there was a very different kind of drama playing out.

Lila, small but fierce, had stretched out her arms wide like a one-girl barricade, standing tall in front of the restroom doors.

"What the fuck is wrong with you? Let me in already! I'm bursting!" a girl wailed, doing a desperate little jig from foot to foot.

Lila felt bad, really, she did. But her princess' need took priority. Period.

"I'm sorry, but I cannot let you in. I have strict orders from a cardinal alpha to guard this entrance with my life." She said it with the solemnity of someone reciting sacred vows.

Well, it was the truth. Kind of. All Roman had done was flash that wicked grin and purr, "Would you be a darling and buy us a bit of time?" Then, like the unrepentant scoundrel he was, he'd disappeared inside.

"Bullshit!" someone shouted. "What would a cardinal alpha be doing in a ladies restroom? Did you do something wrong and you're trying to hide it?!"

"Yeah! What are you hiding in there?!" another voice chimed in.

At once, the clamoring escalated. A thin sheen of sweat broke out on Lila's forehead. Whatever Violet and Roman were doing inside, she couldn't hold off this crowd forever. And now their shouts were drawing attention—any second, a staff member might show up.

"Grab her!" a random student hollered. "Let's shove her aside and see for ourselves!"

"Yes! Move her!"

Lila braced herself as rough hands grappled her arms, trying to wrench her away. But she clung to the door frame with surprising strength, courtesy of her fae blood. The two humans straining to move her found her limbs weren't budging.

Panting, they backed off, muttering, "We need a wolf for this. She's too strong."

Right on cue, a tall, muscular half-breed girl stepped forward. Her eyes gleamed with cruel anticipation, like she was relishing the idea of taking Lila down. Lila swallowed hard, but held her ground. Damn it — she was the protector of the princess. This was her moment of glory!

Just as the half-breed advanced, the door swung open from within and Lila stumbled backward, catching herself just in time.

The students froze, jaws dropping at the sight of Roman Draven casually stepping out of the ladies' room like he hadn't just committed social war crimes.

"Oh my god," someone squeaked. "Is that—Roman Draven?"

His appearance alone was scandalous enough, but it only got worse when Violet Purple emerged right behind him. A collective, half-disbelieving gasp echoed through the corridor. They looked from Roman to Violet, noting their slightly rumpled clothes, and leapt to obvious conclusions.

Roman turned to Violet, saying with curved lips. "I never thought there'd come a day I'd be lost in the ladies' restroom. Thank you for showing me the way out, Rogue Queen."

Violet gave him a look that screamed, Seriously? But she played along like a true drama queen. "You're too kind, Alpha Draven. It was simply a privilege to help out."

"Oh, you did help quite well," Roman added, reaching down to subtly adjust his pants—subtly, of course, if subtle meant doing it while the students was watching.

There were more gasps with whispers exploding through the hall. "What the hell?" "Were they—?" "No way."

"All good, then," Violet said quickly. She caught Lila's sleeve, steering her away. If Roman left first, the crowd might swarm her and Lila. This way, at least, they could flee before the students pounced.

And so the awestruck students stood there, parted like a wave, letting Violet and Lila slip by. Not two seconds later, the horde rushed into the restroom. The half-breed girl from earlier stepped inside and sniffed once, staggering back with a horrified expression.

"Goddess help us," she breathed. "They really did it in here."

She spun toward a girl beside her. "You have to tell Elsie. That bitch is going after her man."

The girl nodded, already pulling out her phone as she ran off, likely composing a paragraph-long message and voice note combo for good measure.

Meanwhile, Violet and Lila didn't say a word until they reached a secluded corner tucked away from the curious eyes of the students. Then they halted, scanning their surroundings cautiously. Only when they were satisfied the coast was clear did they finally relax.

"That was a long time you spent with Roman," Lila teased with a light tone, her eyes knowing.

Violet rolled her eyes in response.

Lila smirked, holding out her hand expectantly. "Did you get it?"

"Of course, I did. Who do you think I am?" Violet said with pride, opening her palm to reveal two long, unmistakable strands of green hair. "Will it be enough for the hex?"

"More than enough," Lila replied confidently. "Give me an hour to prepare it and you'll see the result for yourself. Just make sure you're there with your camera to capture it all. We wouldn't want our efforts going unnoticed."

"Good," Violet nodded. "Go on, then. I'll cover for you here."

At the same time...

Elsie was seated with the other elites in the west wing hall, surrounded by swatches of fabric samples, menu cards, all part of the meticulous planning for the upcoming Legacy Luncheon. She was just about to finalize the floral centerpieces when Grace suddenly came to whisper something in her ear.

Whatever she said, it made Elsie's entire demeanor shift. Her posture stiffened, and the glint in her eyes sharpened like ice.

Natalie, who sat directly across from her, noticed the change and asked. "Is something the matter?"

"Nothing is the matter," Elsie replied too quickly, the words forced and clipped.

Natalie gave a casual shrug. "Whatever you say."

Although Elsie's mask returned, as poised as ever, on her laps, her fingers curled into a white-knuckled fist..

Violet Purple was really asking for death.

#### Chapter 265: Roman's Punishment

Lila was crouched low in the backyard of their shack, hovering over a small bed of flowers that she had grown. A strange lilting hum escaped from the back of her throat, sounding like the chant of the ancient. One that her other partner could never understand.

Ivy was the other partner. She was standing a few feet away on watch but precisely came to offer moral support. She glanced over her shoulder for what had to be the umpteenth time, frowning.

"You've been making that noise forever and nothing's happening," the girl said with her arms crossed, and the slightest edge of boredom in her tone.

Lila, who by now looked like she had completely transformed into that strange, cold, otherworldly version of herself—the same one from the night of the Running Game —turned to Ivy with a glare.

"Don't distract me."

That tone alone was enough to shut Ivy up. She lifted her hands in surrender and kept her mouth shut, deciding to just wait it out and see whatever weird Fae spell Lila was weaving.

Not long after, Lila's whistling changed pitch, and the petals on the flowers began to tremble. One by one, they peeled themselves from the stems, lifting into the air like delicate dancers caught in a breeze.

Ivy's eyes widened in disbelief as the petals bunched together, forming one large blossom. And then, with a sound like a soft pop, it exploded in a flurry of pink confetti-like fragments. A trio of tiny creatures emerged from the fluttering pieces, each barely the size of a thumb.

This time around, Ivy's jaw dropped. They were pixies! She had to be seeing things!

Each pixy had delicate wings that shimmered in a different color: one with iridescent sapphire blue, another with a fiery crimson sheen, and the last a glistening green like new spring leaves.

They had bright eyes, button noses, and plump cheeks, undeniably cute even if their high-pitched chirps filled the space with an almost hectic energy. Yet, despite their constant bickering among themselves, they somehow managed to flutter about in sync.

Lila began chattering back in a language Ivy guessed was Fae. Though Ivy couldn't understand a word, the little pixies seemed to follow Lila's every word. Still, the three small creatures quarreled incessantly, batting each other as if they just couldn't agree on one opinion.

Then Lila said something and pulled out the green strand of Roman's hair. Except

the moment she held it up, the pixies went wild. Their eyes gleamed with mischief, and in a blink, one of them snatched the hair. Only for the second to yank it from her. Then the third swooped down and claimed it as her own.

They began spinning around each other, trading the hair like it was a prized relic in a game of sky-tag. Ivy didn't understand a word they were saying, but she could swear the next thing Lila hissed under her breath had to mean: "Behave."

And they did stop fighting.

Then one of the pixies flitted up to Lila's face, squeaking demandingly. From the dramatic way she thrust out her miniature arm, Ivy guessed she was asking for payment.

Without hesitation, Lila pressed her palm to the earth, and from the ground rose a massive, knotted nut, easily three times the size of the pixie.

But the little creature squealed in absolute delight, threw her arms around the nut like it was a long-lost lover, and chirped madly to her companions. They squeaked back, circled the prize, and in a flash of glittering wings, vanished. The nut included.

Lila dusted her hands and stood. "It's done."

Ivy blinked, still trying to wrap her head around everything she had just seen. "What just happened?"

"I summoned them from our realm to help," Lila said casually, as if she hadn't just pulled mischievous spirits from thin air. "When it comes to hexes, those creatures are the best."

Ivy, now half-impressed and half-terrified, dared to ask, "What exactly is going to happen to Roman?"

Lila's lips curved into a wicked grin that sent a chill down Ivy's spine. "That is what we're about to find out."

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[I heard an interesting rumor. I hope that's not true. If it is, you're dead. ~ Asher.]

Roman stared at the threatening message from Asher, and instead of panicking, he burst into laughter. The fact that even the puppet master had taken the bait meant the act was sold.

He didn't bother replying. Let Asher stew in it. Besides, he made peace with the fact that the West Alpha would likely deal with him if they crossed paths in this mood of his. But until then, he would enjoy every second of the fun.

It was break period, and the school lawn was alive with students, wolves and humans alike lounging on the grass, playing games, or gossiping in circles. And amidst the crowd, Roman's gaze found her. The purple-haired beauty, Violet Purple.

She sat under the sun with her roommate, laughing at something the beautiful nerdy one had said. Only days ago, Roman might have gone after the beautiful nerd just to know if she was good down there as she was smart up there. But strangely enough, no other woman interested him any longer. He was hooked on Violet Purple. Fully, helplessly, hooked.

His eyes trailed over her long legs, the same ones that had wrapped around him earlier in the restroom. The memory made him shift where he stood. His gaze dropped to her lips, the ones he'd kissed as well. It hadn't been enough. He wanted more.

Fine. Tonight, he'd visit her again. And this time, he'd push a little further. Roman was confident he would soon have Violet Purple screaming and moaning beneath him as he fucked the daylight out of her.

He was so lost in his wicked thoughts, he didn't see the ball flying at him until it smacked him square in the face.

"Oooh!" whooped one of his packmates, presumably the culprit behind the throw. "Sorry, Alpha," his Beta, Abel, added with a mischievous grin. "D'you mind tossing it back?"

Roman rubbed his face and gave them a dry look. "Funny," he drawled, grabbing the ball as he rose to his feet, already planning on launching it straight at Abel's gut.

But as he raised the ball, a sudden jolt of agony made his grip falter, and the ball dropped from his hand.

"What the hell—" he gasped, groaning loudly.

It felt like a thousand fiery ant bites had targeted one very sensitive spot. Grimacing, he yanked his pants down in a frenzy, scratching his nether region with manic urgency. A chorus of gasps and exclamations rippled across the lawn.

"Alpha!" Abel shouted, rushing up to him. "You can't—this is—" But Roman let out a strangled moan, doubling over. The moment he stopped scratching, the vicious, maddening itch flared again. So he kept going, completely disregarding that an entire audience was witnessing the spectacle, and filming it.

"I can't stop!" He cried in a heady mix of agony and embarrassing relief.

While Roman was scratching the itch, it looked as if he was relieving himself in public instead. A few students snickered at the 'view', while others cringed in secondhand horror.

Abel tried once more to yank his Alpha away from prying eyes. "Get a hold of yourself—"

But Roman jerked free. "No—this... oh, God, it's getting worse!" His eyes wild, he sprinted to a nearby tree and started scratching himself up against the trunk, like a deranged person.

"Oh my God..." one girl muttered, looking both horrified and morbidly fascinated.

"He's gone rabid!" another announced.

"This is going viral," another student gleefully announced, phone angled for the best shot.

"Someone call a nurse!" came another.

But it was too late.

By the time Abel managed to drag him away, all the students present at the time had glimpsed far more of Roman Draven than they ever thought possible.

And later that day, virtually every student's phone in Lunaris Academy contained some evidence of the cardinal alpha's bizarre meltdown.

Chapter 266: Alpha Scratch Post

"Welcome back to the land of the living, Alpha Roman , " Abel grinned at Roman, who stirred from his long sleep. Due to the severity of his condition, he had been sedated to prevent further aggravation.

Right now, he groaned from the infirmary bed, feeling a crick in his tone. He sat up, stretching the affected area.

"I'm guessing I'm at the infirmary," he said, glancing around.

"Yes."

"What time is it?"

"8 p.m." another voice answered, and Roman turned his head to see Adele approaching with a clipboard in hand, and his cardinal brothers standing behind her.

"Oh great," Roman thought inwardly, sure they'd come to mock him and rub salt in his wounds.

"Well, well, well," Griffin was the first to speak, humor lacing his tone. "Isn't it the famous Alpha Roman? Quite the stunt you pulled today."

"Fuck off," he retorted.

"How can you say that when we came to check up on you?" the big guy teased further.

Roman rubbed his temple. "If you're here to gloat, save it. I'm already humiliated. You can't do more damage."

"Oh, sweetheart," Adele spoke up, "this isn't gloating. It's a clinical assessment."

Roman stared at the corners of her twitching lips, watching her fight back a laugh, and groaned in annoyance. She was clearly in on this with them.

Great. Fuck his life. Wasn't he supposed to be the patient here? They should be pampering him, maybe even giving him "get well" kisses—though the mental image of being kissed by his cardinal brothers made him cringe. Instead, they were here to make him feel even worse.

"What went wrong with him?" Asher cut straight to the point.

At least he could count on the West Alpha not to kick him when he was already down. What a friend he had in Asher. Roman was genuinely glad.

Adele flipped the clipboard. "According to the injury report, Patient Roman presented with—" she paused dramatically, "'severe genital discomfort described by him as biting fire, despite no visible rash, boils, hives, or dermatological inflammation indicating infection, fungus, or parasites.'"

"Charming," Alaric remarked, speaking for the first time.

Roman shot him a death glare.

Adele continued. "Skin shows linear abrasions, mild lacerations, and surface bruising consistent with repeated aggressive rubbing against external surfaces...most likely a tree."

Alaric clarified all too accurately: "You humped a tree, Roman. In public."

"I didn't hump the tree!" Roman growled under the sheet. "I attacked it."

"Your dick was the weapon of choice, apparently," Asher remarked dryly.

Roman felt his heart crack. He'd thought Asher was his ally. So much for that sacred brotherhood.

Adele said to him, "I think you should be grateful it's only localized swelling from trauma and not a fracture or tear in the penile shaft. Otherwise, the southern pack would've been on their knees, praying to the goddess for your ability to sire an heir in the future."

Roman spoke bitterly. "Trust me, that would've been nice."

At once, an awkward silence settled over the room, heavy and telling, as if everyone instinctively understood the deeper meaning behind those words.

Abel cleared his throat, addressing Adele. "If there was no infection or skin disease, what caused this? My alpha was in real pain."

"It may interest you to know that cases like these are not exactly as rare as you think. I suspect magical interference or a hex is at work here." Adele slapped the clipboard against his bed with finality. "Roman Draven, in your long line of sexcapades, have you by chance dated a witch?"

Silence reverberated in the room as the implication sank in. Then Griffin and Alaric burst into mocking laughter.

"Oh my god, he's fucked," Griffin snorted.

Roman's face flamed bright red. "I never dated any witch! I haven't slept with anyone outside the academy this semester!" he protested.

Griffin leaned closer, teasing. "Think harder, Roman—maybe you pissed off a girl enough that she hexed your little alpha?" He smiled sweetly. "Or...not so little, judging by the videos floating around campus."

"They're what?!"

Alaric chimed in this time. "You trended on MoonFeed before dinner. I haven't seen that many close-ups since the last talent show you hosted. And based on the comments...yeah, let's just say you're now called the Alpha Scratch Post."

"Fuck. Me." Roman dropped back onto the bed, horror on his face. There goes his social life. Of all the scandals, he had to put his dick in bad light.

Griffin tried to pat his shoulder, but Roman flinched. Smirking, the big alpha said, "You'll live. Next time, try not to break a witch's heart. It's bad for your ego—and worse for your groin."

Unlike the others, Asher pointed out, "If that's true, we might have an undocumented witch on campus."

Lunaris Academy wasn't exclusively home to werewolves and humans. Incidents like what happened to Roman were precisely why every creature needed to be accounted for. If a string of murders ever broke out, the wolves would be the first to take the fall, tarnishing their already fragile reputation. But if those other beings were properly documented, they could be tracked, monitored, and their presence made public knowledge.

Unlike the wolves, witches had never gone to war with humans. But that didn't mean they felt safe. On the contrary, witches rarely revealed themselves, wary of retaliation. They were good at hiding in plain sight, blending seamlessly into human society and retreating into the safety of their covens.

"So," Asher continued, "I'll need a list of whoever you've hooked up with. We'll weed out the witch before she causes more trouble."

Roman sighed. "I don't exactly keep that list in my head."

"We'll start somewhere," Asher said firmly.

"Fine."

Adele turned back to Roman. "You'll be staying here overnight. I need to monitor any flare-ups."

Roman's face fell at once. There would be no sneaking off to Violet's bed. Tonight was going to be torture.

"Don't worry," Abel said, as if sensing his disappointment. "I'll keep you company."

Roman managed a fake smile to cover up the grimace crawling up his face. Great. Just great. All he wanted tonight was Violet Purple, her soft skin, and all. Instead, he was stuck with his beta.

"And here—" Adele handed him a container of numbing salve, "It should help in case the pain flares up again. That means no sexual activity, transformations, or strenuous training until further notice."

"Come on!" Roman cried out. "I have a lot planned on my plate for tomorrow!" And what did she mean no sexual activity when he already had plans for his purple human?

"I guess tomorrow will tell that," Adele said, compromising just a bit.

"Well, since you're in safe hands, I'm out," Griffin said.

"Me too," Alaric added.

Asher leaned over Roman's bed. "Guess I won't have to punish you for trying to fool me. The gods already did."

With a smirk, he turned and left first. At the door, Griffin paused for a final jab. "Do try not to scratch it off before Parents' Week, hmm? Bad for PR."

With that, he left, dragging Alaric along with him while Roman swore up a storm, their faint laughter echoing just outside the door.

#### Chapter 267: Angry Eyes

Natalie kept true to her word. By the time Violet and the others returned to the shack, there was already a package waiting for them.

They carried it inside and opened it, finding not just one but two recording devices that were so small and sophisticated that Violet knew she could never have acquired such a model on the open market. If they hid these properly, no one would ever realize they were there unless they looked closely.

"I'll plant it in her room tomorrow after she leaves for school," Lila offered at once. "I'll use my ability to conceal myself. Not even a shadow would notice me going in or out of her room."

"I'll guide Lila enough to ensure we get the best view," Daisy contributed, grinning.

And just like that, their plan for the next day was sealed. They'd have their moment, and it would be perfect.

Then they had dinner, their stomachs growling after the day's events. The whirlwind of gossip about Roman's mishap had so consumed the school that none of the other students paid much attention to them grabbing food in the dining hall. Even so, the girls were too pleased by their own successful scheme to eat much.

"So, I guess Asher's next," Daisy said, eyes twinkling with intrigue.

Violet hesitated for only a second. "We can't strike at Asher the same way we did to Roman," she said with a deep exhale. "Besides, he didn't hurt me like the fox did. Not to mention, the guy's too careful and smart. We'd only be shooting ourselves in the foot if we tried. The best we can do is use Lucille's matter against him when the time comes. The world needs to see the kind of games he plays with his power. He needs to be curbed. He needs to learn restraint. Consent."

"I'm all for that," Ivy said. "I definitely don't want Alpha Asher's wrath pointed at us. He's scary."

"Fine. Alaric, then?" Daisy asked.

At the mention of his name, Violet's expression darkened. Her shoulders stiffened, and her jaw set. "We'll go ahead as planned. He hurt me, I hurt back."

"Fair enough. I've prepared his punishment." Lila pulled out a white paper covered in strange symbols.

Violet raised a brow. "What is that?"

Lila's eyes glinted with mischief. "Some humans think talismans confer only things like good luck, health, or power. What they don't know is that it can work the opposite way. This hex is from my people and it's designed to bring bad luck for an entire day."

She said in a lowered tone. "I could stretch the effect to weeks, maybe even a month, but I don't think you'd want that..."

Violet's heart picked up speed. "A day is more than enough. Thank you," she said, feeling both grateful and a little frightened. Lila could be terrifying at times.

Clearly, Violet wasn't alone in thinking that, because Daisy said ominously, "Remind me never to get on your bad side."

Lila blinked. Why were they overreacting? It was just a little hex.

"What's the catch?" Violet prodded, knowing there usually was one. Roman's hex had required his DNA, after all.

Lila explained. "This paper has to stay in close contact with the intended target for at least three hours for the bad luck to fully settle in. Since it's nighttime, the best place would be his bed, but you've told me that Alaric rarely spends time at the North house."

"Yeah. He spends most of his time at his lab, especially when his head is full of ideas or if he's stressed and needs to distract himself with work." Violet said.

Lila tapped the edge of the paper thoughtfully. "So, we can't know for sure if he's at home or in the lab. Breaking into his lab would be difficult, to say the least."

"So, how do we get him to sleep in his bed? If he's not home, the hex won't work. Even if he is, he could leave before the three hours are up unless we... I don't know, drug him or something, but that's basically impossible. How do we pull this off?" Daisy asked.

"Maybe we think of something else," Ivy suggested. "A different hex?"

"We don't have time." Violet groaned and pressed her palms to her face. "Parents Week is almost here."

"Well, if it doesn't work, we can—" Daisy was mid-sentence when Lila suddenly raised a hand to her lips, hushing her immediately. The room went still.

An abrupt seriousness took over Lila's face as she tilted her head, ear cocked as though listening intently to something outside.

Without saying a word, Lila picked up her phone and typed something. Then she lifted the screen to their faces, the sentence reading : Talk naturally.

Violet's brows furrowed slightly, but she trusted Lila's instincts and right now, it seems something wasn't right.

So she cleared her throat and said casually, "What happened to Roman today was quite unfortunate."

Daisy caught on quickly. "Quite unfortunate indeed," she echoed, nodding along.

Ivy added with melodramatic flair, "Poor Roman."

Right then, a knock came at the door and all of them tensed, their thoughts leaping to worst-case scenarios. Then again, if someone meant them true harm, would they knock? Most of the time, no.

They rose to their feet and Lila signaled for Violet to stay behind her. She strode to the entrance and swung it open, fearlessly, only to feel her jaw drop.

"Oh," was all she managed.

"Who is it...?" Violet unable to resist, stepped closer and peeked out.

Her breath caught because standing outside was the last person she expected to see. The one person who had betrayed her in front of everyone. The North Alpha.

Alaric Storm.

But instead of anger, a strange calm settled over Violet. Because at that moment, all she could think was one thing.

The gods were on their side.

"Hello," Alaric Storm swallowed nervously as four pairs of angry eyes pinned him on the spot.

#### Chapter 268: Feel About Lucille

Violet might have welcomed him politely and offered him a chair, but right now, Alaric felt like he was seated on coals of fire. The girls all surrounded him, taking positions in various corners of the living room and giving him death stares. And wait a minute, did he just see a glint of metal?

Alaric's brows furrowed when he saw the short-cropped, blonde-haired roommate with a table knife in her hand, which she ominously caressed while giving him that disturbing look. Perhaps he shouldn't have come here. Perhaps he should have cornered Violet before class and made a public apology—even if Roman's drama had pretty much stolen the limelight of the day.

Violet must have sensed the awkward tension in the air because she said, "Guys, do you mind?"

"We do mind," all three of them answered in unison.

Alaric rubbed his wet palms down his thighs. They were really not going to go easy on him. Not that he blamed them. He deserved this, if not worse. It was even a miracle Violet was being calm right now.

"I need some privacy," Violet insisted.

But the dark-haired one replied coldly, "He didn't think of privacy when he humiliated you in public."

Alaric opened his mouth to speak but found out he could not let out a word. What could he say anyway? The girl was telling the plain truth.

And she noticed the gesture as well because she raised a brow. "Alright, go on, deny it. I'm waiting. What is it that you want to say now that would make up for what you did?" she taunted him mercilessly.

"Alright, Daisy, that's enough!" Violet scolded her, eyes flashing. "Yes, he did me wrong, but he's here to make up for his mistake. That's something."

"He did it in public. He should have apologized in public. Not scurry in here with his tail between his legs like some coward," she sneered.

"Daisy—!"

"No, she's right," Alaric cut in before things could get more heated than they already were. Moreover, he didn't want Violet fighting with her roommates because of him. He'd done enough damage already.

He went on, "Violet doesn't like attention on her. I wanted to apologize in private before taking it public, so as not to catch her unaware."

"Aww, so sweet," the longer blonde-haired one swooned, but the glare she received from the other two was enough to shut her up.

Violet took his hand and said, "We'll talk in the comfort of my room."

"What—no way?!"

"Both of you can't be alone in there!"

"Don't fall for his tricks again!"

The protests from all three of them rent the room but Violet shouted, "That's enough!"

Silence cut through the room, and Violet looked at them with a hardened expression, saying, "I am old enough to make my decision and bear the consequences." Then she looked at the short-haired one, whose name he finally got to know. "Lila, get us some refreshments."

Oh hell no. Alaric wanted to object. With the way Lila looked at him, he had no doubt she would do something to his drink. But before he could say a word, Violet was already dragging him in the direction of her room.

"Have a seat," she gestured to the edge of her bed, taking the position right next to him.

Alaric looked around, impressed at what he saw. From the outside of the house, one would think it would collapse any second, but they'd done a good job patching up the inside. Strangely, he didn't remember when or how they worked on it. The girls must be resourceful.

"You wanted to talk. Talk now," Violet's tone was firmer now.

Alaric stared into those beautiful golden eyes and let his vulnerability show as he said sincerely, "I know there's nothing I can say that would undo the past, but I'm sorry. These are all excuses, but then... Elsie wanted me to hurt you. It was the only way to satiate her pride and keep you safe. But I'm not going to deny I went too far, and my jealousy had a lot to do with it."

Violet didn't interrupt him. Instead, she listened patiently, waiting for him to finish, and Alaric confessed, "Roman and I have never gotten along, not after he stole my first love, Julia. It wasn't even the fact that he seduced her that was the issue. No, they didn't even date. Roman took what he wanted from her and bam! That was it. Julia and I could have had a beautiful relationship, but he destroyed it. Stole it away. So when I saw you together with him that night, something inside me broke. I know we didn't even date for long, but would it sound strange if I told you, it felt like I've known you forever...?"

Violet couldn't breathe as she found herself enraptured in those beautiful blue eyes, her heart pounding quickly because the truth was... she felt the same. She felt like she had known him forever too.

"I've never..." Alaric spoke as he tentatively reached for her hand with his bare hand, and when she let him, he intertwined them together. Electricity crackled between them, making her gasp as the power filled her. "...felt strongly for someone the way I felt for you. Not even for Lucille."

At the mention of Lucille, Violet was intrigued, and she asked honestly, "How did you feel for Lucille? How is it any different from how you feel for me?"

Alaric's brows furrowed slightly as he thought hard. He said one word: "Excitement. That was how it was with Lucille."

Then he went on to explain. "As you already know, I'm not really great with women, and my powers don't exactly make it easy either. If I lose control, I could kill someone, even in the throes of passion. But Lucille wasn't scared. She was brave and daring, just like you..."

Alaric was caressing the top of her palm now, as if drawing strength from her as he narrated. "After Julia, I was eager for a connection with someone, so we just clicked. I swear nothing could scare that girl, and it was no surprise she brought me out of my shell. So when I found out she was dating Roman, I was mad, but I didn't want to lose her. So we shared her. All of us shared her, and somehow made it work, until it twisted into something else. Not even the puppet master, Asher, who had basically groomed her, was safe. She turned our affection for her into a thing for sport. Made us fight and scramble for even a morsel of her attention. Her affection. And when it seemed like we were beginning to snap out of her charm, that was when she began to threaten us with her life."

#### Chapter 269: Right Or Left Glass

"One time, when Lucille learned Griffin's intentions to break up with her, she slit her wrist and let it bleed, threatening to kill herself if Griffin didn't give her his word not to leave her. The East don't joke with their promises. They are quite honorable, holding onto it like a damn covenant.

"Lucille knew that, and used it. Hence, Griffin was coerced into making the promise. Asher couldn't get into her head either. He had groomed a serpent that came to bite him in the heel. We actually taught her to build mental barriers against Asher so he couldn't even compel her to leave us alone, even if he wanted.

"However, no matter what, the cracks in our relationship were beginning to show, and Lucille was not blind to notice it, even if she pretended not to.

"The move that broke the camel's back was when she targeted Elsie. Lucille totally lost it. She believed we no longer wanted her because we took comfort in the hope that one of us would one day marry Elsie and be free of her 'shackles.' So, she decided to eliminate the false hope.

"Lucille might have been human, but she was smart, cunning, and resourceful. She shot Elsie with wolfsbane, poisoning her in the process to weaken her. Took her up to the hills where she planned to kill her. We were lucky enough to catch wind of her plans and stopped it on time else the girl would have committed murder. The Alpha King got involved afterward, and the rest was history."

Being stunned was an understatement, Violet was utterly shocked. From the way the cardinal alphas talked about Lucille, she knew the girl had hurt them but not to this extent. How could someone be that manipulative? Controlling? Wicked?

Alaric held her hand this time as he told her, "I'm not telling you this to garner pity or anything. I just wanted you to know it. It's the least you deserve after what I've done to you."

"What about me?" Violet asked him. "What does it feel like to be with me?"

"Like Life itself," Alaric confessed, lifting her hand to his lips and placing a soft kiss on it. "You are the other half of my soul, Violet."

"And you don't mind sharing me with Griffin?" Violet inquired tentatively. "You don't think I'll turn out to be worse than Lucille?"

"You would never," Alaric said with conviction. "You tend to hide it, but I see your heart, Violet, and it's pure, even if it's guarded by fire and more stairs than I could climb to get to heaven. But you would never hurt me. Not Griffin..." He held her gaze. "Not Roman."

Violet's breath caught in her throat, and she wanted to move away, feeling exposed under his scrutiny.

"I—I..." she stammered. "Roman and I are not like that—"

"I know you like him, Violet. You might not admit it, but you look at Roman the same way you look at Asher..." He added slowly, "At Griffin and me."

Violet's face heated, her heart fluttering. She shifted uncomfortably on her bed at being caught for her forbidden feelings.

She quickly said, "It's not normal behavior. I'll get over it."

"Nothing is normal here, Violet Purple." He called her name in a smoldering way that made her shivers dance up her spine. "I think it's high time you threw away your conventional way of thinking. You're in a new world, not your old one."

Violet couldn't breathe now as Alaric leaned in, his face just inches from hers as he told her, "Griffin's mother has two husbands. Some werewolves choose monogamous lifestyles, while others choose otherwise, so it's not exactly new to us. Moreover, it doesn't seem like you want to make a choice... or do you, my little vixen?"

Fuck. Violet felt a certain part of her body throb at that title he held exclusively for her. She still loathed him, yes, but her traitorous body certainly hungered for him. Alaric must have scented her desire because his nose flared and his eyes darkened. He inclined his head, about to seal their lips, when the door suddenly opened and Lila barged in.

She gave each of them a look, clearly suspecting what would've gone down had she not arrived, but pursed her lips anyway, saying nothing.

"Here's your refreshments." Lila begrudgingly placed the tray containing two glasses of fresh juice on a small stool she pulled out from the side of Violet's bed.

Alaric said at once, "I think I'm good."

"Why?" Lila sneered. "You must think us poor that we can't afford juice up to your standards?"

"No, that's not—"

"Or you think I poisoned it?" Lila laughed unkindly. "You think if I wanted to avenge Violet that I would give you a quick death? No, little prince. Now listen carefully to how I'd do it. I'd hunt your perfect ass

from whatever ends of the earth you are, then tie you down in a place where no one would find you, even if you screamed for eternity. First of all, I'd stab a knife into your lap and relish your scream before stabbing out one of your eyes—you don't need both to see anyway. Then I'd pull out your fingernails, toenails—all of them—one by one. I heard that stuff hurts a lot. Perhaps chop off some fingers while I'm at it. Then I'd carve my name on your chest to remind others not to mess with Violet when your body is found. No, now that I think of it, perhaps I shouldn't kill you. I'd leave you decapitated, so you can live out the rest of your miserable life in pain!"

By the time Lila was done ranting, Alaric's head whipped around with force in Violet's direction, an incredulous look in his eyes that seemed to ask: How the hell are you keeping this one around you as a friend?

Violet simply gave him an understanding smile. Then she reached out and took the glass of juice that had been placed in front of Alaric, saying, "Take mine instead."

"No, it's not what you're thinking..." Alaric trailed off at the end. Well, he was scared of the drink, but he still didn't want to inconvenience her. So he simply took the glass of juice in her direction and drank.

As Violet drank her own juice, her heart couldn't help but race. She hoped to God that Lila had been smart enough to figure out this would happen, and how it would turn out. Otherwise, she'd just drugged herself.

#### Chapter 270: Sorry Don't Heal Scars

Violet made sure to finish her juice entirely before setting the glass down on the tray. She watched from the corner of her eye as Alaric did the same, draining his glass and placing it beside hers.

Then Violet turned to Lila, whose heated gaze hadn't lessened one bit, and said, "See, he took it? Now could you give us some privacy?" She was practically begging at this point.

With a self-satisfied huff, Lila walked over and carried the tray with more force than necessary, her tantrum evident as she left without a care, slamming the door shut behind her.

Once the door was shut, Alaric turned to her and said, "How do you even deal with her?"

"Lila is very nice. Moreover, she's this way towards you. All of them are. You really hurt me, Alaric."

At once, the guilt returned, and Alaric said with his head lowered in shame, "I know, and I'm sorry. It would never happen again. I swore it upon my life." He said it with such conviction it made Violet's chest tighten with emotion.

She smiled at him. "I forgive you, Alaric Storm."

For a moment, Alaric didn't move but blinked at her as if unable to believe what he just heard. Then he was up on his feet, pumping his fist with a triumphant "Yes!" before rushing toward Violet, who only realized his intent at the last minute and tried to warn him not to—but it was too late. Alaric grabbed her and twirled her around so much that Violet had to squeal and plead for him to put her down.

Alaric finally set her down, only to drop to his knees. With his eyes shining with determination, he swore, "You will never regret giving me this second chance, Violet Purple. Thank you so much."

Violet's heart pounded hard in her chest. He sounded so sincere that she felt bad knowing the plan she had in store for him. But everything had been put in motion, and 'sorry' doesn't heal scars. She had forgiven him, but there were still consequences for his actions. When he's done taking the punishment like a good boy, then they could move on to the next phase of their relationship—if he still wanted her then.

Alaric got to his feet, still holding her hand. They stared at each other, the air between them crackling and sizzling with attraction. However, Alaric pulled out of it. Just because she forgave him didn't mean they were back to how they used to be. He had to give her time to heal from what he did and accept him back. This time around, he'd make sure of it, nothing would get between them.

"I guess I'll see you tomorrow," he said.

"Yes, tomorrow," Violet answered nervously, not just because the interaction between them had gotten awkward, but because she didn't know what to do next.

How long till the drug took effect? She wasn't feeling any different, which seemed to be a good sign that she had drunk from the right cup. He must have taken the drugged one. She could not let Alaric leave this room.

"Wait!" Violet said, moving ahead to block his way before he reached the door.

Alaric lifted a brow in surprise. "What is it?"

Violet's demeanor suddenly changed, and she purred, "You didn't actually think I'd let you leave that easily, did you?"

"Huh?" He blinked in surprise.

Then Violet placed a hand on his chest firmly, walking him backward until the back of his legs hit the bed. Alaric looked behind him, then back at Violet with a questioning look.

But Violet smirked darkly before giving him a hard push, and he fell back on the bed. She followed right after, climbing over him.

Alaric gulped. "Violet, I think this is not the right—"

"Shhh," Violet placed her fingers against his lips to hush him. Then she yanked him forward by the shirt in a particularly sexy move and said demandingly, "Don't protest when the lady's serving."

Alaric's throat bobbed. He swore to the gods, he came to apologize to Violet, not for this. But when Violet became like this, it was incredibly hard to resist. Not when his little vixen was sexy as hell.

"A-Are you sure about this?" Alaric asked, even as Violet pressed a soft, fleeting kiss to his lips.

"Mmhmm," she murmured, pressing her lips against his once more, and this time firmer, demanding for him to open up. He did open up, and the wanton moan that slipped from her lips as soon as their tongues met was pure sin.

Alaric grunted in return, his hands going to wrap around her ass, grinding her against his already raging erection. If she wanted this, then he wouldn't deny it, not when he missed her like hell and didn't want to waste any more seconds between them.

The kiss was deep, slow, and the sounds that emanated from her lips made it all the more sultry. Alaric shifted them so he was on top, and she giggled at the sudden power dynamic. Alaric smiled against her lips. How much he missed the sound of her laughter.

He began kissing her nose, eyes, jaw, then trailed down to her neck—every piece of her body he had missed lately. It was while he was suckling on the dip of her collarbone that a wave of dizziness hit him, and he held onto her so tightly that his nails dug into her.

"What's wrong?" Violet asked, concern in her eyes.

Alaric shook his head as if trying to fight off the dizziness. "I don't know... I..." Those were about the last words he said before a cloak of darkness enveloped him and he collapsed on her.

"Ooh," Violet breathed, his weight knocking the breath out of her.

She tried to push him off, but moon help her, he was so damn heavy.

"A little help here!" Violet shouted, knowing without a doubt that Lila was behind that door.

And just as she thought, the door clicked open, and all three of them came in at once. Those little gossips. They must have been eavesdropping all this while.

"Finally," Lila breathed with a gleam in her eyes as soon as she took in the sight. "Your act was beginning to get real, I got a little worried."

"I never deviated from the plan. Now please help me. He might look slimmer than the others, but he weighs a ton," Violet cried out.

Daisy and Lila combined their strength to push Alaric off her, and Violet was finally able to get out from under him. Then all four girls stood together, staring at the handsome prince completely out of it and unaware of their plans for him.

"I think I should get started," Lila announced.

"Yes, you should," the others concurred, leaving the room.

They couldn't be in the room once Lila began. Alaric alone needed to absorb the hex.