

Defy 291

Chapter 291: Elsie's Secret Uncovered

Elsie Lyka Lancaster always wore a tight, perfect mask. But right now, that mask was cracking, even though she covered it up by laughing too hard at the jokes those bimbos told. Even though she drank like hell to drown the blinding white-hot anger running through her veins.

And yet, it wasn't enough.

The audacity of that bitch.

Still, she didn't let it show. Keep your composure, her mother Caroline had drilled into her since she could talk. If you must fall apart, never do it in public.

So Elsie danced harder, smiling through the irritation that buzzed like an itch beneath her skin, refusing to let it win.

But as soon as the last guest was gone, leaving just her and Grace, she let the monster out.

"Damn it!" Elsie screamed, grabbing one of the glass cups and hurling it against the wall. The sound of shattering glass gave her some sort of satisfaction. She felt better releasing her frustration this way. But it still wasn't enough.

At once, Elsie's gaze drifted to Grace, and she made up her mind like a lioness who had just decided on which prey to pounce on. She strode over to where Grace was cleaning up and grasped her cheeks tightly, the pressure almost painful.

Grace winced, her heart racing as she looked into Elsie's intense gaze. "What did I do wrong this time?" she asked fearfully.

"Nothing. It's simply time to play games, Gracey," Elsie said cryptically.

But at the mention of games, Grace's fear vanished, replaced by a spark of excitement that danced across her eyes. "As you wish, Elsie," she replied, her voice tinged with what sounded like delight.

Then Grace disappeared into the adjoining room, the door creaking slightly behind her while Elsie waited with anticipation. When she returned, her face was obscured by a meticulously crafted mask resembling Asher.

Yes. Asher Nightshade.

The mask was an uncanny likeness, capturing Asher's features in a way that was both artful and eerie. But the mask was only part of the transformation because Grace also held a wicked-looking whip, its leather tightly braided.

Instead of being freaked out or even questioning the weird transformation, the queen bee's demeanor changed entirely. Elsie walked up to Grace, her hips swaying, and sank to her knees with sultry grace.

"I need to confess something, Alpha Asher. I've been a bad girl," she purred, her voice dripping with desire.

Grace, now fully embodying Asher's persona, straightened her posture and adopted an authoritative tone. "Good. Bad girls need to be punished. Now go kneel before the couch and accept your punishment," she commanded.

"Yes, Alpha Asher." Elsie Lancaster was all in with complete seriousness.

Elsie moved over to the couch. Then she slipped off her short skirt with an intentionally tantalizing slowness, letting it fall to the floor and revealing the white panties she wore beneath. With a seductive flair, she removed them as well, her breathing heavy and charged with anticipation.

"Punish me, Asher," she pleaded, eager for what was to come as she bent over the couch.

Standing over her, Grace wielded the whip with a sense of power, bringing it down across Elsie's bare skin, the sound reverberating through the room like a crack of thunder.

Elsie gasped from the sudden sharp pain, but she chuckled delightfully the next seconds, obviously drinking it all in. The pain was delicious and she panted, "Again!"

It was obvious that this was not the first time they had played this game seeing the way Grace flogged her with much more force yet she laughed in pleasure.

"Yes, Again! Asher! Please break me! Use me for your satisfaction." Elsie moaned in wanton need, egging Grace who flogged her over and over again till her ass cheeks were red. Yet she didn't want her to stop. She could take the pain. She could take it all for Asher.

Since the Alpha King had forbidden the cardinal alphas from laying a hand on her till one of them had fought and claimed her, it was clear that Elsie Lancaster found satisfaction through other obvious means — her fantasy.

And who better to indulge that fantasy with than her favorite, Asher Nightshade? In this twisted game, it was her Asher who desired her, not that street-born whore, Violet.

Elsie had heard the rumors about Henry's abuse and figured Asher had developed a taste for pain. If he liked it rough, she would be ready. She would make herself his perfect tool.

So she cried out, "More! Give me more!"

"You must have a taste for pain, bitch," Grace laughed, slipping from her role for a moment. Her eyes were wild, fueled by the power play and the thick adrenaline in the air.

Elsie didn't care about the words, if anything, they turned her on. She imagined it was Asher saying them in that husky, sexy tone of his.

Grace didn't stop the punishment, each lash falling harder than the last until Elsie's skin broke open in angry, crimson lines. Her moans grew louder, desperate, a twisted symphony of agony and ecstasy that echoed through the space.

And then, Elsie shattered.

Her body seized, thighs clenching tight, grinding against the couch for friction as a raw, trembling orgasm ripped through her, fed by the sting of pain and the fantasy she had built around it.

Her breath came in fast as she turned and sat back, the aftershocks still dancing under her skin. One would think that after such an intense experience, Elsie would be satisfied. But no, it was not enough. She wanted more.

Thanks to Alpha king Elijah's decree, she couldn't cross certain lines. She had to stay untouched, the perfect pristine prize waiting to be claimed by the alpha deemed worthy. A white dove locked in a golden cage.

The rule made things difficult especially now her body was wound so tight it felt like her skin couldn't contain it anymore. The ache hadn't gone away, their game had only intensified it.

Good thing she'd found the perfect loophole, just enough to dance around the rule without losing her precious virginity.

So Elsie sat and spread her legs and Grace who was kneeling before her didn't need to be told what that move was for.

The girl took off the mask and dove down, pressing her lips to her heated core. Elsie's head lulled back in delight, her lips parted in a gasp. God, It felt so good and Grace was shockingly good at it.

Grace explored every inch of her with her tongue, lavishing her until Elsie reached that explosive climax.

This was goddamn heaven.

Chapter 292: Rogue Pack

For over a minute, none of the girls said a word. Not after what they'd just seen.

"I think I'm traumatized," Ivy was the first to break the silence. "I need a drink." She took a few steps before throwing her hands in the air. "We don't even have a damn drink!"

Lila stood. "Give me a minute."

She vanished and returned moments later with a bottle filled with some strange blue liquid. Before Ivy could even comment, Lila had already poured her a glass.

Ivy eyed the drink skeptically. "Is this even safe?" It would be foolish to assume Lila had just pulled a random bottle from the heavens. This had Fae concoction written all over it.

"Yes, it's safe for humans. And perfect for the kind of uncomfortable situation we find ourselves in," Lila said, urging her to try.

Well, what's the worst that could happen? It's not like she'd dance until her feet blistered and her heart gave out. Right? She'd read all about humans and enchanted Fae food. But Ivy chose to believe she hadn't done anything to provoke Lila. Kind of. Hopefully. Whatever.

Ivy tilted her head back and downed the shot, only to groan seconds later as it hit her like a lightning bolt to the brain. "God!" she gasped, then laughed. "This is insanely strong, yet tastes perfect at the same time. I don't even know how to explain the feeling."

"I need one too," Violet said.

"Same," Daisy echoed, clearly convinced after Ivy had just served as their very brave, very dramatic test subject.

Minutes later, the girls sat slouched on the sofa, half-drunk drinks in hand, staring blankly into space. No one dared bring up what they had just watched, each waiting for the other to speak first.

Daisy had already shut the laptop and put it away. Goddess knows she couldn't stomach a second more of that unexpected horror.

And, unsurprisingly, she was also the first to break the silence. "You do know this is going to be intense, right?" Her question was aimed directly at Violet.

Violet downed the rest of her drink in one go, put the glass away and, and finally replied. "Yeah, it's going to be explosive. That wasn't the secret we were hoping for, but it's massive, and more than enough to finally put Elsie in her place."

"I know Elsie's a terrible person," Ivy said hesitantly, "but I suddenly feel kind of weird. Like, uncomfortable putting her secret out like that."

Before Violet could speak, Lila jumped in, saying with a fierce voice. "Elsie wouldn't hesitate to do the same to the princess if she got the chance. Oh wait, she already did. Don't tell me you're having second thoughts." Her narrowed eyes bore into Ivy with enough heat to make her heart stumble.

"Of course not!" Ivy laughed nervously.

"Good." It was just one word from Lila, but it was enough to send shivers crawling down Ivy's spine. Damn that Fae was terrifying.

Eager to deflect the attention off herself, Ivy asked, "So... Elsie's a lesbian?"

"I wouldn't really say that," Daisy replied thoughtfully. "I think she's experimenting. And with the Alpha King's rule in place to keep her away from the cardinal alphas, this is her way of scratching that itch without technically breaking the rules."

"So she's bi?"

"Bi or not," Violet said firmly, "this little fix of hers just handed us the perfect ammunition. Elsie Lancaster is going down on Sunday. No questions asked."

And to that, the girls nodded in agreement.

Suddenly, Violet stood up. Facing the girls, she said, "This has become more than just a revenge plan. It's a revolution. And if it gains the momentum we're aiming for, then it's safe to say, not just the cardinal alphas, not just Elsie, but the school authority is going to be gunning for us. If they find out..." Violet didn't finish intentionally, letting the implication settle in the air.

If the school traced it back to them, there was no doubt they'd be expelled. Maybe someone like Ivy had parents wealthy enough to secure her future elsewhere. But for girls like Daisy and Violet — well, not anymore, she was a Fae princess now—they all had something to lose. Lunaris Academy was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to build a better future.

In one word, Violet was giving them a chance to back out before things escalated.

She waited. And it was no surprise when Daisy stood up first.

"I just spent hours of my life scouring through Elsie's secrets and now have an image of her ass permanently imprinted on my brain. What makes you think I'd back out now?"

"I'm just saying, it's not too late." Violet's voice was soft, but serious. If push came to shove, Daisy would be the most affected.

"Well, bring it on, bitch. We started this, and we're finishing it together, come what may. We're a pack now. And what pack member abandons its Alpha?"

"What?" Violet blinked, startled at the sudden proclamation. She glanced at the others as if to silently ask, Did you all just hear that?

But Ivy stood up with a smug smile. "Yes. We are the Rogue Pack. And we've got a bitchy Fae princess as Alpha, a multi-skilled, smartass nerd —"

"I'm not a nerd—" Daisy protested.

"Don't ruin my grand speech," Ivy cut her off immediately. She took a dramatic breath, chin raised. "We have a smartass nerd. The helpful, sassy aristocrat—me." She gestured proudly.

Daisy groaned in exasperation.

"And then," Ivy continued, "our ruthless protector and Fae guardian as beta. What more could we ask for? We are the perfect Rogue Pack!" She beamed.

A slow smile crossed Violet's lips.

Then it was Lila's turn. She shrugged, nonchalantly. "I guess we just have to be careful, then. We're all in this. Moreover..." Her voice turned chillingly casual. "I could always eliminate anyone who tries to cause trouble for us."

"No killing, Lila. Like ever." Violet's command was immediate.

Lila pouted in annoyance. "You're just as soft and stubborn as the Fae queen."

At the mention of her mother, Violet's throat tightened. She still needed answers about the woman who birthed her but Lila had never been forthcoming.

Before she could dwell on it, Lila chimed in loudly, "So we're really doing this."

"Yes. We are."

Chapter 293: Taking Turns

Before revenge came sleep.

With her room half destroyed, Violet had no bed to lie on. Lila, of course, had eagerly offered up her own room for her to stay the night. And while the Fae could easily fix the damage, the situation was too precarious. What if Alaric returned unannounced and offered to handle it himself? What would they do then?

So, they left the room as it was. At least until morning, they'd figure something out by then.

Predictably, Violet had turned Lila's offer down. As much as Lila was her guardian, it didn't mean she was her servant. The girl couldn't keep going out of her way just to make her comfortable. It just didn't sit right with her.

Except that wasn't the only reason.

Violet had a gut feeling that a certain "animal" might come sniffing around for her. And staying in Lila's room? Yeah, that would've been very uncomfortable especially knowing how sensitive these creatures were to intrusions. Strangely enough, Lila hadn't pushed it. She simply let her be.

So in the end, Violet ended up curled up on the couch in the living room.

And just as she predicted, a few minutes past midnight, a certain green snake slithered its way into the house through a small hidden hole. The soft hissing sound reached Violet's ears, snapping her awake with a jolt. Her heart nearly leapt out of her chest when she saw the snake coiled near her.

Thankfully, she recognized the signature green scales and let out a long breath. She did glare at him though for almost scaring her into cardiac arrest.

In the blink of an eye, Roman shifted back into his human form, kneeling in front of the couch with a shit-eating grin plastered on his face.

"Hello, my lady purple."

Violet did not smile back.

"You are really pushing your luck here," she whispered urgently. "I thought I told you not to—"

Roman cut her off immediately with a deep, filthy kiss that curled her toes and had her lips tingling, her breath catching mid-sentence.

"Now that is quite a welcome," Roman said with a grin when he finally pulled back.

Violet was left speechless. The audacity of this guy.

Not that she was a hundred percent angry.

Sure, she scowled and tried to glare him into the ground, but deep down? She'd been expecting him. Maybe even hoping for him. Not that she'd ever tell him that. Roman's ego didn't need any more stroking.

Trust her on that.

Roman stood to his feet, and Violet's lips instantly felt dry because he was stark naked before her. Not just that, with the proximity between them, all she had to do was lean forward and his already hard dick would be in her mouth.....

Whoa, whoa. What was she thinking?

Not today, Satan!

Roman caught her reaction and smiled, the bastard. That wolfish grin of his was all teeth and mischief.

"It's not a crime to ogle this huge slab of meat, Lady Purple," he teased shamelessly.

Violet scowled, hissing, "Where are your pants? Get decent, now!"

"Yes, ma'am." He threw her a mock salute, then turned and began strutting toward the front door like he owned the place.

"Roman, wait—" she whisper-yelled. "What are you doing...?"

But he was already gone.

Violet turned back with her heart pounding, ears straining for any sign that someone might have woken up at the sound of the door opening. But all was silent.

A full minute passed before Roman returned, now in pants with his bare chest on full display. That's when it hit her that he must've stashed his pants nearby before sneaking in as a snake.

Smart bastard.

Maybe, just maybe, she should start keeping a few of his clothes around for easier access next time—Wait a damn minute. What the actual fuck was she thinking again?!

Why was her brain cooking up the weirdest ideas tonight?!

Her gaze followed Roman as he approached her. Without warning, he scooped her up like she weighed nothing.

Violet didn't even get the chance to squeal, too scared of waking the others. Not that Roman seemed remotely concerned about that. He simply sat down with her still in his arms, before settling her astride him on his lap.

The confidence of this guy!

"So, do tell," he began smoothly. "Why are you lying here, and why's your room a mess? Snuck there room first, couldn't find you, door was locked. Had to come this way, and voilà. Lucky me."

"Indeed. Lucky you," Violet replied dryly, but went on, "Just as you saw, my roof collapsed under Alaric's watch. Plus a bunch of other misfortunes that I can't explain." She lied tactically.

"Wait a minute." Roman frowned. "Alaric was here? That shy but sneaky wolf! He must've taken advantage of my absence to make a move on you..."

Then, as if a thought struck him, he muttered, "Fuck. Is this how it's gonna be between us? Are we going to have to take turns spending time with you?"

"Roman, I haven't actually decided—"

"My animal side bonded with you. I can't stay away from you, sweetheart. You must consider that. Perhaps convey that to the others."

His eyes lit up suddenly. "Although the idea of sandwiching you between my Cardinal brothers doesn't sound so bad. Especially Asher. I'll balance out his coldness." He smirked. "Think of it like having a hot bowl of spicy jollof rice on a cold evening. It'd be awesome." Roman even winked.

At this point, it was safe to say that Violet was officially done with Roman Draven. She couldn't deal with him anymore.

"I'm going to bed now." She tried to get off him, the move an unsuccessful one.

He only smirked. "You mean 'we're' going to bed."

Then, with that annoyingly charming strength of his, Roman lay back on the sofa, dragging Violet with him so that she lay sprawled on top of him. Somehow, the cramped space managed to hold them both.

"Roman! What are you doing?" she scolded.

"I missed you so much already. Think of this as me recharging the energy I lost yesterday." He yawned. "Don't worry, I'll be gone before you know it."

The fight left her then. Violet simply lay on him. It wasn't a bad position, honestly. He was warm and smelled nice, even though she tried her hardest to ignore a certain hardness pressing against her.

Still, it didn't bother her that much. It was a part of Roman she was pretty used to now.

Violet was just beginning to fall asleep when Roman's greedy hand crept down and rested on her ass.

She smacked it away. "Hands off, fox."

Roman grunted in disappointment, but that was the end of it.

And just like that, they both drifted off to sleep in each other's arms.

Chapter 294: Elsie In Charge

Ah yes, a week of family bonding, proper etiquette, and unfiltered chaos. What more could a girl ask for?

Spotlight Alert: Violet Purple!

But of course, it wouldn't be Lunaris without a little scandal on the side, and who else but Violet Purple to steal the spotlight again?

Because guess what? Our lovely rogue girl was seen leaving Asher Nightshade's bedroom yesterday. Yes, you heard me right. Bedroom. Morning. Same sentence. Somebody fetch Elsie a cold drink!

At this point, we were convinced Violet's royal roster only included the Lightning Prince Alaric and the sexy gentle giant Griffin, but it looks like she's on a roll. One might say she's collecting Kings like Pokémon cards. Gotta catch 'em all, right?

Now if that doesn't reek of revenge, I don't know what does. Or—wait, could this be love?

Because if so, Violet Purple may very well be the luckiest girl in all of Lunaris history. I mean, who needs flowers when you've got four Alpha heirs tripping over themselves?

But then, where does that leave Queen Bee Elsie? No Kings. No Knights. Just one party throne and a burning grudge. Could this be the season where the Queen becomes queen without a kingdom?

And speaking of burning, what in the flaming hell does Asher mean by "punishment?" I don't know about you, but that sounds very fishy. Hopefully, the only thing Asher's catching this time is feelings—and not, say... Super Chlamydia.

(Yes, yes, I'm still side-eyeing those of you who believed that rumor. Get help.)

Meanwhile in Tragedy Land: Alaric.

Now switching gears to our prince Alaric Storm. Once, he controlled thunder and lightning with a flick of his wrist. But now he's attracting bird poop, wasps, banana peels and shit puddles. He's been demoted from Cold Prince to Cursed Prince in under twenty-four hours. Obviously, the universe seems to be running a sitcom at his expense.

Some say it's karma for what he did to Violet. And if that's the case? Touché, Universe. Touché.

Health Watch: Mary Out

Now onto some sobering news, our favorite sweet student guide, Mary, will not be leading the parent tours this year due to "health complications." In her place, Yennifer has taken over. Let's hope she doesn't get lost halfway through the tour.

Elsie's Counterattack?

Don't count Elsie out yet because she's already dominating the scene. Our Ice Queen intends to host a killer Luncheon that would steal the heart of the parents. The gloves are off, and she's ready to steal back her crown and maybe her men.

And Violet? I don't know, sweetheart. Things aren't looking so bright. Your fire's flickering, and if you're not careful, Elsie might teach you how to move in packs, not alone.

As usual, you don't have to worry, Oracle Nation, with parents in the building and tensions high, I expect nothing less than tears, threats, romance, and a healthy dose of drama.

So stay tuned, my lovelies. 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

8:00 AM.

Unlike the tension the Oracle had so gleefully predicted, Lunaris Academy was suspiciously perfect. There was not a scream, squeal, or scandal in sight.

The hallways which was usually chaotic gleamed as if someone had gone mad with a polishing charm. The tiles sparkled, the air smelled like fresh lilies and lemon wax, and the old glass showcases where Lunaris' long list of awards were kept now shone like new crowns. They had even gone as far as aligning the trophies by year. And it was a long one!

The school flowers had been replaced as well with Hydrangeas, Orchids and blooming roses saturating the air. Classes were somehow in session with teachers teaching and students actually listening. Not one student could be spotted loitering in the hallway. The students raised their hands, asked intelligent questions, and took notes timely.

It was like someone had cast an enchantment of "Good Behavior" over the entire academy. If one didn't know any better, one might have actually been fooled. Impressed, even.

But of course, this was Lunaris Academy and anyone who truly knew the school knew one thing for sure: Perfection was the biggest red flag of all.

Not all the students were in class, though...

"So do remember to smile sweetly, bow slightly, speak softly, and vanish when not needed," Penelope said, her voice so prim it nearly gave Violet hives.

The girl might've looked like a model from a powdered rose commercial, but her tone dripped with superiority.

Violet would have thought the nightmare ended yesterday but apparently not. They had been summoned this morning to make final arrangements before the main event.

"As for your uniforms..." Penelope clapped her hands like some fairy godmother and, right on cue, a group of elite girls in matching pastel blouses walked forward, arms full of neatly wrapped packages.

They began handing them out one by one with stiff smiles and judgmental eyes. When they reached Violet and her friends, the handoff was a bit more aggressive. The package practically slammed against her chest, but she said nothing. She just took it with the kind of calm that promised vengeance.

All around them, eager squeals broke out as the girls began tearing their boxes open excitedly like Christmas came early.

But Violet stared into the box like it was a coffin. Inside of it was a blush pink fitted A-line dress with a modest neckline and cap sleeves that screamed choke on polished perfection. The waist was cinched with a delicate ribbon belt to maintain that classic rich girl silhouette. But it didn't stop there.

Tucked neatly beside the dress were white gloves, flat shoes, a tiny pearl earring set, and a miniature pin with Elsie's face, because of course, branding was everything. Even your suffering had to carry her initials.

Violet's stomach churned.

"This is a sick joke," she muttered under her breath.

But Penelope wasn't done. Not even close.

"Hair must be tied back in sleek ponytails or buns, no frizz. If your hair's curly, straighten it before the occasion," she announced, pacing like a drill sergeant. "Pearl stud earrings only. Anything more is an insult to our hostess, Elsie."

Violet could feel Lila vibrating beside her like a ticking bomb. She probably wanted to murder someone right now. The mighty Fae guardian being commanded by a mere mortal. It was nearly hilarious.

"No perfume unless it's the one we've selected. Some of our guests are sensitive to cheap fragrances," Penelope added with a prim smile. "Which is why we'll be providing it. You must feel so grateful."

Violet raised her hand. Not like she was in a classroom, but because it was better than throwing the damn pastel dress across the room.

"I can't wear this," she said, voice calm but edged with fire. "It's uncomfortable."

Heads turned and Penelope's lips parted in pure disbelief as if Violet had just announced she was going to start peeing in golden goblets.

"What do you mean uncomfortable?" Penelope asked slowly, her gaze narrowing.

"I mean I won't be able to breathe in this corset-stitched nightmare," Violet deadpanned. "And I'm not showing up to any luncheon dressed like a frosting-covered servant."

Ivy stepped up immediately. "Honestly, the gloves are itchy. I think I'm allergic to forced elegance."

"I second that," Lila chimed in dryly. "Also, these shoes are criminal."

"I look like a depressed cupcake," Daisy added, squinting down at the shoe in the package.

Penelope's smile strained. "Well, that's unfortunate. But if you plan on being part of today's occasion, then you'll need to wear the uniform as instructed."

Violet folded her arms. "Then maybe I won't be part of it."

A hush dropped over the room so fast it felt like the air had been vacuumed out.

"You what?!" Penelope blinked. "You can't just quit."

"Watch me," Violet said, already turning slightly as if daring her to try and stop her.

That was when the clack of heels echoed through the room, and all heads snapped to the source, and like clockwork, Elsie Lyka Lancaster made her entrance, dressed in a soft gold blouse and an air of authority.

"What's going on here?" she asked, though the amused tilt of her lips showed she already knew.

Penelope rushed to fill her in, her tone all too eager. "Violet says she can't wear the uniform. And she's threatening to pull out of the event."

Elsie's eyes glittered as she approached. And when she stopped, she was right in front of Violet, only a breath away.

They stared each other down, the tension between them crackling like live wires.

"Well then," Elsie said sweetly. "If you don't like it, do your little alterations if you must. Stitch on spikes or wear it inside out, I don't care. After all, you're rogues. What were we expecting? Silk and satin? Do you even know what that is?"

The words were insulting but Violet didn't flinch. Elsie could laugh all she wanted, because it would be the last of it.

"Elsie asking us to make our own alterations, if that doesn't scream trap, I don't know what does," Daisy said as she leaned against the desk. They had managed to find an empty class to regroup after that doomed Luncheon meeting.

"She intends to humiliate us." Ivy glanced down at her phone as if expecting a call. She bit her lip.
"We're rogues. She wants to make that clear to every parent attending that Luncheon."

The girls didn't need Ivy to finish. It was as clear as daylight.

Even if her family was new money, they were still aristocrats—and they would attend the Luncheon because Elsie had made sure an invitation was sent. They could see the game being played here. Elsie wanted the Sinclair family to see their daughter at her worst. Hanging out with rebels? Rogues? Her parents would be mortified.

Perhaps Elsie reasoned that Ivy's parents would scold her and try to move her into one of the pack Houses. That way, not only would Violet lose a supporter, but it would also break up their dynamics.

What Elsie didn't know, however, was that Ivy wasn't going anywhere. Not that she could. She knew a certain princess's secret, and that crazy guardian of hers wasn't about to let her walk free.

Yep, she was stuck either way.

"So we dress differently, we're branded rogues. We dress the same, and we're her little bitches serving drinks at her party. I see what she did there." Violet nodded, clearly annoyed.

"So we fake it, then." Lila said suddenly, drawing everyone's attention.

"What?" Violet asked, curious now.

"Fake it till you make it." Lila shrugged as if it were obvious. "Elsie wants us to be branded as rogues because rogues are supposed to look poor, dangerous, undignified. But what if we look more than they expect us to be?"

"You mean steal the show?" Daisy said, her mind already spinning with the possibilities.

"Yes. Exactly." Lila smirked. "Instead of people looking down on us, they'll be impressed. After all, how many of them have seen rogues who actually look this good?" She proudly gestured to her body.

Violet chimed in, "You make a fine point. I know Elsie too well. And while she wants her girls to reflect elegance, she would never let them outshine her. No wonder the uniform was so horrible."

Standing taller now with a plan forming in her head, Violet said confidently, "She timed this perfectly. She knew we wouldn't have time to make alterations and would probably settle for whatever we had. But what she doesn't know is..." She pinned her gaze on Lila, "We've got an ace card."

She turned to Lila fully and asked, "Any chance you can be our fairy godmother and turn this into magic?"

"I'm no witch, Violet," Lila replied, only for her lips to curve into a sly grin, "but this Fae has got a few tricks up her sleeve, and enough materials to work with."

She took one of the dresses and held it out, scrunching her nose in distaste. "So, what'll it be? I'm guessing you each have your own flair and preferences?"

At once, Violet, Ivy, and Daisy's eyes lit up with excitement. The next few minutes were dedicated to animated chatter as they described their dream outfits, each detail etched carefully into Lila's mind.

"Since that's all, I'll get to work. You girls just give me some time. I'll be ready before the Luncheon. " Lila said, gathering their dresses into one neatly bundled package.

Just as she turned to leave, Violet reached out and grabbed her arm. "Don't overdo it, Lila. No Fae sparkles or shimmers. Just normal human clothing, alright? We don't want to draw attention, remember?" she warned seriously.

"Aye, princess!" Lila gave a cheeky salute and whisked herself away.

"Fuck," Daisy muttered suddenly. "My brother's here. I'll catch you guys before the Luncheon."

"Can I tag along?" Ivy asked. "It'd be nice to meet your family before mine arrives."

"Urm... okay, sure." Then Daisy turned to Violet, asking carefully, "What about you? Do you—?"

"I've got a few things I need to handle on my own," Violet said with a polite smile, already stepping back as if to dismiss any further questions.

Ivy and Daisy exchanged a quick glance, concern showing in their eyes, but said nothing as they watched her walk away.

Violet left without even looking back, although she felt her roommates weighty gaze, but that pushed her into walking further away from them.

It was safe to say that Violet had evolved than the first time time when it comes to letting someone in. But yet, she still had those walls in place.

Today, every parents would be coming to see their child's progress. But not hers. She hadn't even heard from Nancy, not to mention her making an appearance. The woman simply didn't care and she wasn't going to dwell on it. Moreover, she was a grown woman and didn't need some sort of validation from mummy.

So yes, she wasn't going to hang around her roommates family like a miserable third wheel. They would see later for introductions, but for now, she would rather be on her own.

Lost in thought, Violet squealed in alarm when a hand suddenly reached out and yanked her into the classroom so fast her head spun. She was already preparing to fight when Asher's face came into view and before she could even catch her balance, his lips slammed against hers and he kissed her.

Perhaps because her emotions were already high, Violet returned the kiss with feverish urgency. She gripped his uniform and pulled him closer, her hands tangling into his hair, their lips colliding, tasting,

breathing each other in. She moaned, and he greedily swallowed it, his hands sliding down to wrap around her waist and stay there.

There was literally no space between them as they made out until they were breathless.

Asher leaned back with a crooked smile and said, "So I did bring the body. Time for you to rate it, don't you think?"

Violet couldn't help the laughter that burst from her lips.

Chapter 296: No Excuses

~Asher~

Asher Nightshade was not done kissing her. No, he was just getting started. He had craved Violet for so long that now that he had her, he wanted to devour her. To know every bit of her and what made her tick.

In the past, that had been easier with the use of his mind power. He could get all the answers he needed without breaking a sweat. And while he might have moaned the inability to use his powers at first, Asher had to admit that having to work for it was a little exciting.

The fact he had won without the powers he so heavily relied on was so much more satisfying. Right now, adrenaline was pumping through him, his heart pounding loud and strong, his body strung tight with the need to claim her. But patience.

He was the big, bad wolf. And he would certainly devour her—but not here. Not in a classroom where anyone could walk in. His purple queen deserved better. When he claimed her, it would be just them both. Alone. For as long as he wanted.

Mine.

She was his. Theirs. But his first.

With their lips still fused together, Asher walked her backward and she instinctively wrapped her legs around him until he placed her safely on one of the desks.

Then he parted her thighs, wedging himself between them. His hands wrapped around her waist and he pulled her flush against him, grinding her into the obvious bulge in his trousers even as their kiss turned dirtier.

Their tongues moved in rhythm, and Asher groaned greedily, tasting the inside of her mouth like it was the sweetest thing he'd ever had. And he could've drowned in it if not for the sudden, obnoxious sound of a ringing phone.

It wasn't his phone because that wasn't her ringtone. It had to be Violet's. But he didn't want her answering it.

So he kissed her harder, hoping the distraction would work and the damn thing would shut its mouth.

It did stop ringing, and Asher rejoiced inwardly. Finally, just him, the wolf, and his little sweet Purple Lamb.

But no sooner had that thought crossed his mind, the phone blared again. Oh, for heaven's sake.

"Asher—mmm—no, Ash, umm—wait, Asher—" Violet struggled, managing to push him off by sheer willpower because, clearly, the guy was intent on kissing the soul out of her.

Asher Nightshade groaned, annoyed. "Next time we're together, you're turning that phone off."

Violet didn't answer, her brows drawn in confusion as she stared at the screen. The number was unfamiliar, and the call had already ended again before she could answer.

"Who is it?" he asked.

"Don't know," Violet replied, still frowning.

"Great," Asher muttered, throwing his head back. "I just ended the best make-out session of my life for an unknown number."

The moment the number called again, Violet didn't hesitate and picked the call with a cautious, "Hello?"

What followed made her stiffen instantly.

"Hello, Violet. It's me."

Violet's breath caught in her throat and her fingers clenched around the phone. It seemed like a wrecking ball just came crashing into her and Asher, who had been beside her, immediately noticed the shift in her aura. His gaze sharpened.

"Who is it?" he asked.

Violet swallowed hard, her throat suddenly dry. She hesitated at first, then forced the name out through gritted teeth.

"Nancy."

The moment the name left her lips, a dark cloud settled in the room. Asher's expression changed, but Violet didn't notice it because her fury had already taken the reins.

"Finally," she said into the phone, her voice thick with venom. "My guardian remembers I exist."

On the other line, Nancy's voice cracked with guilt. "I know no excuse can make up for my behavior—"

"Damn right, no excuse is enough!" Violet snapped, her voice rising. "You might not be my biological mother, but you don't get to disappear suddenly and waltz back in when it's convenient for you!"

"Violet, please. Listen to me. I had a valid reason, alright? I lost my phone and I couldn't reach you and—!"

Violet didn't get to hear the rest because

the phone was yanked out of her hand.

"What the hell?!" she snapped, turning just in time to see Asher with the phone already at his ear.

"Give it back!" Violet reached for it angrily but Asher ignored her.

From the phone came Nancy's confused voice. "Hello? Violet? Are you there?"

Then Asher answered, "I'll handle this, Nancy." And just like that, he ended the call.

The tension in the room was so thick, it crackled like a live wire.

Violet's eyes had darkened with anger and suspicion and she asked with a taut tone, "How did you know my mother?"

There was no mistaking it now. Asher didn't care about most people. He never did. Not unless they meant something to him. And the way he spoke to Nancy wasn't how you addressed someone you had never met.

"I know you're not human. You never were. There's always been something off about you." Asher confessed.

But that wasn't what mattered most. That wasn't what Violet wanted to hear.

"How did you meet my mother?" she pressed, again, her voice firmer.

Asher let out a slow breath, his shoulders tense, jaw clenching. There was no point hiding it now.

"I visited District One," he admitted. "I went to your place, Violet."

Violet didn't flinch. Didn't move. Her expression remained blank, but those betrayed, hollow eyes cut right through him. It was like she was staring at a stranger.

"So that's why you wanted me," she said quietly. "To figure out what I am. Is that all that matters to you, what I am?"

Asher growled, "No! Violet, you know that's not true."

But she wasn't listening anymore. She was already building the wall back up, brick by brick, as every memory she'd shared with him shattered.

"I should've listened to the others when they warned me about your intentions," she whispered bitterly. "You're no good for me. Even if I ripped out my heart and handed it to you, you'd never be content. You'd never stop scheming. Never stop chasing whatever ulterior motive you've buried underneath that pretty face."

She turned away, brushing her fingers over her wrinkled uniform, smoothing herself like armor as she prepared to leave.

"Violet, I didn't mean to hurt you. I just—"

She spun around with blazing eyes, getting right in his face.

"You had no right!" she hissed. "How dare you go behind my back to meet my mother?! To look into my past like it's some puzzle you need to solve?! How dare you!"

"I know. I know, Violet. But I—"

It was quite unfortunate that Violet ignored his excuses and stormed out.

Chapter 297: Meeting The Family - 1

The parents had begun to arrive, which meant that the once quiet ground was now transformed into a whirlwind of activity. Lunaris Academy buzzed with life as students rushed across the lawns, flinging themselves into the arms of waiting parents, laughter mingling with tears, the kind that made your chest ache.

And Violet's heart did ache. But not in a good way.

Seeing all the teary reunions and laughter made Violet feel all the more miserable. It felt like everyone had a good thing going on for them in their lives except her. Why was her own life so hard? And just when she thought things might just turn out for good, it ends up slapping her right in the face.

She had trusted Asher, and he went behind her back to investigate her background. Was he never interested in her as a person? Has it always been her mysterious lineage?

Alaric had warned her of the potential chaos Asher could unleash if he got to know what she was and worse, if it supported his cause. But she thought, just maybe, he would have a change of heart. That he would come to realize she was worth more than a weapon. But apparently, she was wrong.

Violet didn't even dare to imagine what Asher would do if he got to know she had Fae blood running through her veins. Lila had warned her as well. Apart from her small group, no one else was to know. It was for her own safety.

But then again, she knew Asher's secret too. She had unintentionally walked into his dream and seen everything he was. That was an invasion as well. Not to mention, she had even told the others.

God. Violet groaned, running her hand down her face in frustration.

Perhaps she had been a bit harsh and should have heard him out. But God, who knew what Nancy said to him, or even did to him?

Anger and revulsion filled Violet. Surely Nancy wouldn't dare! Asher didn't strike her as that sort of person. Hence, it was her mother she didn't trust.

If Nancy had dared to lay a hand on her man—wait. Her man? Yes—no. Ugh, she really needed to talk to someone before she lost her mind right now. And she knew exactly who.

It was not hard to find Griffin Hale. He was in the cardinal alphas' common room, speaking with not just members of his pack, but the other wolves when like a magnet, his eyes found her through the crowd and rested on her. The others noticed it as well and turned to stare at her.

Fuck. Violet felt like a spotlight had just been shone on her.

"Urm, just go ahead with whatever you guys were obviously doing before my impromptu arrival," Violet said, scratching the back of her head awkwardly.

Griffin smiled at her—a heart-melting, innocent, panty-dropping smile that vanquished all her problems in one sweep. Then he turned to the wolves and said, "We'd go as decided. If there's any other alteration to the plans, I'll let you guys know. Now I need the room to myself."

Without hesitation, everyone in the room began to move. Violet didn't miss the curious glances—and the heated ones—thrown her way. Griffin really shouldn't have ended the meeting so abruptly for her sake.

As soon as the room was emptied, Violet quietly walked over to him. By standard, Violet was quite tall for a girl, and yet, she still had to crane her neck to speak with Griffin.

"You shouldn't have ended the meeting abruptly," she told him. "I was the one who came at the wrong time."

"Don't care," he said, his arms already reaching for her waist and pulling her closer. "When the Queen calls, we come along." He then sniffed her, adding with a chuckle, "You smell like Asher. What have you guys been up to?" He sounded as if he wasn't offended at all that she'd been with another guy.

Violet had honestly thought this would pose a problem, despite all their claims that they were fine with it. But so far, they all seemed chill instead. Good. Because she could not bear it if all four of them fought to the death for her.

She breathed, "Can we talk?"

Griffin noticed the change in her demeanor immediately. "What's wrong?"

Realizing they couldn't just talk while standing, Griffin sat back down on the couch, pulling Violet along with him. He placed her on his lap like some baby, but Violet didn't protest. Griffin always exuded that safe, cozy aura that grounded her.

If he wrapped some bibs around her neck right now, popped a feeding bottle into her mouth, and treated her like a newborn, she wouldn't mind. Okay. Maybe that was exaggerated.

But this was a good position. She could look straight into his beautiful brown eyes and catch him try to lie to her.

"Tell me, what happened?" Griffin asked once she was comfortable.

Violet looked at him for a moment before asking straightaway, "Did you know Asher looked into my background? That he traveled to District One?"

At once, Griffin shifted in his seat with her on his lap, as if realizing this was a sensitive question that could land him in deep shit if he answered wrongly.

"About that, the thing is—"

"Don't you dare lie to me," Violet told him sternly.

Griffin pursed his lips, then let out a sigh of resignation. He confessed, "Remember last week when he was missing from school? That was when he left."

"Of course. I should have known." It finally made sense to Violet.

She hardened her gaze at Griffin. "What else are you not telling me? Spill it now!"

"Calm down, spitfire," Griffin said, and Violet could feel his hand trailing to her exposed lap where he began to draw circles. The sensation felt good. And as much as it was a soothing gesture, Violet knew it was also a form of distraction. And yet, she let him.

"We don't know much. Asher wouldn't tell us the results of his findings. He said we should go work it out ourselves." He looked her straight in the eyes. "You're mad he looked into your background without informing you."

Violet's throat tightened. "Why is he so eager to know what I am? That's my business, not his. Asher told me once that I'm his rebellion. Is that it? Is that why he wants all of us together? So he can use me as a weapon in his twisted revenge against the Alpha King? Because if that's the case, I don't think I'll be willing to give a chance to this thing between—"

"Whoa, calm down, Violet." Griffin immediately cut her off. Perhaps scared that she'd slip through his fingers if he didn't act fast, Griffin clasped her face in his big palm.

He said, "Asher Nightshade spouts a lot of nonsense. He likes to be feared, and it wouldn't surprise me if he said that on purpose to scare you. To rile you up and taste your response. The guy's a little twisted like that. Also, would you be so blind not to notice that the Asher from a few weeks back isn't the same Asher you're seeing today?"

Violet swallowed nervously. Griffin's words made sense. Yet, there was still that small voice of doubt in her head.

"You're right, but—"

"I like you, Violet," Griffin confessed so suddenly the breath hitched in her throat.

Before she could think of a response, he continued, "I honestly cannot explain this connection I have with you. It just doesn't make sense. However, even I have to admit that Asher's dedication to you is borderline obsession. You could literally stab that bastard in the chest and he'd still love you with his dying breath.

"So yes, I know what you're scared of. But Asher would never hurt you. That is, unless he doesn't realize it's hurting you. I know the boy's got issues. All of us know. The point is, you have nothing to be scared of. Also, you cannot give up on Asher now. On us. I beg of you. Please, Violet," he said, giving her those pleading eyes.

There was no way on earth Violet could keep up the anger, not with that sincere pleading in his eyes, that slight pout on his lips, and that strand of hair falling over his face that she couldn't help but reach out and tug away. Yep, it was confirmed. Griffin was a weapon fashioned against her. A hot, sexy weapon.

"Okay," Violet breathed, and one should have seen the way Griffin let out a huge breath of relief, burying his face into her body.

Violet said, "Perhaps I was hasty to jump to conclusions. It just happened so suddenly, I guess I lost it." She breathed again. "Asher and I will talk. And I'm very much interested in knowing what he found out about me."

"That's my girl," Griffin broke into a huge grin, pulling Violet in to kiss her cheekily on both cheeks in such a way that made her feel ticklish.

However, that seemed to give Griffin an idea.

"Someone does feel ticklish," he grinned with a cruel glint.

Violet's eyes widened with realization. "Oh no you don't—!"

Griffin didn't give her a second to run.

He swooped right in and tackled Violet right back onto the couch, his fingers already dancing mercilessly over her ribs.

"Griffin—no!" Violet squealed, her laughter erupting in gasps as she twisted and squirmed beneath him. "Stop—stop, I'm going to die!"

"Die? Not yet, rogue queen," Griffin grinned wickedly, pressing a little harder, tickling with both hands now. "I haven't even started."

Their loud laughter filled the room, full of warmth. Violet tried to fight back, her hands pushing at his chest, but he was too strong and far too determined. And without warning, the shift happened.

The laughter faded slowly as their gazes locked, and for a heartbeat, neither of them moved. Then Griffin dipped his head, and their lips met.

The kiss was soft at first, as if testing the waters. But then Violet's arms curled around his neck, and the passion ignited. Griffin deepened the kiss, his body pressing more firmly into hers as he lost himself in the feel and taste of her. Her fingers tangled in his hair, and his hands slid along her sides, one of them curling around her waist as if he couldn't bear the thought of letting go.

Violet's back arched slightly under the weight of him, and for a moment, nothing else existed. Until—

"What the hell is going on here?"

The both of them broke apart like guilty teenagers caught red-handed, breathless and disoriented.

Violet blinked rapidly as she looked up, her lips still tingling, and came face-to-face with a red-haired woman glaring down at her.

Well... crap.

Chapter 298: Meeting The Family - 2

"Mom?!" Griffin choked out as he carefully lifted Violet off his body and got to his feet with her.

"M-mom?" Violet shouted, nearly suffering a whiplash in her haste to get a closer look at the woman.

Oh fuck her life.

There are a few things you really shouldn't do the first time meeting your potential mother-in-law and this definitely topped that list. After all, first impressions matter and Violet was pretty sure this one just got scorched into the family history for all the wrong reasons.

In Violet's defense, the plan wasn't to be caught like this when meeting the woman who raised him but here we are. At least she was fully clothed — and full of regret.

Alpha Irene was tall. Really tall. And sturdily built like someone who could toss a grown man over her shoulder without breaking a sweat. A mop of rich, red hair spilled down her back, thick and silky, and for the first time, Violet understood exactly where Griffin got his ridiculous, unfairly gorgeous mane from. Some strands were braided and decorated with beads and cowries. It was beautiful. She was beautiful. Regal, wild, and the kind of woman who didn't need to say a word to command a room.

Although she wasn't as tall as Griffin or as muscly, she was still a force to be reckoned with, feeling every bit as much an Alpha as any of the males Violet had ever met. That suffocating, commanding Alpha aura rolled off her in waves, thick enough to choke on. But then again, Violet had never been affected by it.

And when she spoke, her voice was just as sharp. "This is what you're up to on a day like this? You couldn't even give me the courtesy of knowing I'd be here?"

"I can explain!" Violet said hastily, putting her body in Griffin's way as if trying to shield him from his mother's wrath in case she decided to take off her shoe and hurl it at him.

Irene raised a brow. "In this situation, it's usually the male who does the explaining, but go on. Say it, let's hear it."

"Violet, are you sure you want to...?" Griffin wanted to handle it.

"I'm good. Don't worry," Violet smiled at him, squeezing his hand just a little—an interaction Irene noticed but said nothing about. The woman gave no expression out at all.

Taking a deep breath, just as Violet was about to launch into the explanation, someone barged in saying, "...said it's here. Wonder what's keeping her from finding our boy...?" An equally handsome-looking man stepped into the picture, looking hesitant at what he probably figured out was a tense scenario.

"Dad?" Griffin squeaked.

His dad? As in, one of the two fathers that birthed him?

Oh crap.

As if his mother was not enough, now she just met his father?

Kill her now.

Griffin's father was as tall as his wife, and bulky. His thick beard did not diminish his handsomeness one bit, and he also had a mane of long, thick ebony hair. The East really did not joke with their hair. It was quite a sweet custom, especially considering she was into Griffin's hair.

Unfortunately, Violet had bigger problems than her hair quirks. This was certainly not how she imagined this family meeting would go, and certainly not this early. She and Griffin hadn't even gone on a date yet!

"What are you doing here, Dad?" Griffin asked in surprise, before he turned to his mother. "I thought you said you were visiting alone?"

"She was. But then, she and Aeron had a fun date at the Alpha King's territory the last time, so now it's my turn." Arion's sleazy smile suggested there was more to those words than he was letting on.

"God, no." Griffin face-palmed.

Then Arion's gaze rested on Violet. "Who's the pretty damsel?" He looked at his wife. "Your mother looks like she's about to obliterate someone on the spot?"

Violet lifted her chin and introduced herself. "I'm Violet Purple, the one your wife just caught moments ago making out with your son." She delivered the news like a bombshell.

Arion was left dumbfounded. However, he seemed to catch himself quickly and said, "I'm Arion, the father of the rascal you were caught making out with," he said playfully, winking at her.

It was quite a relief to know that Griffin's other father was easygoing, but then, Irene was still waiting for an answer.

Violet was about to speak when Griffin spoke at the same time, hence it was a chorus of:

"I like Griffin."

"I like Violet."

Huh? Griffin and Violet turned to stare at each other in surprise. That was unexpected.

Meanwhile, Arion was won over instantly, and he fawned over them. "Gosh, aren't they both adorable?"

But Irene grunted. It was obvious she was not easily bought over like her husband.

This time, she said to Griffin directly, "I allowed you fool around because I believed you had the end goal in mind, nonetheless, so what is this?" She demanded an answer.

"Elsie does not like me," Griffin confessed, stepping away from Violet's body this time and standing beside her. "No matter what I do, it's not good enough. She has her eyes on Asher."

Violet added immediately, "And she treats your boy like shit. I'm sure you don't like anyone treating Griffin like that, because I won't."

For the first time, Irene looked honestly impressed. However, she pushed down the emotion as soon as it came, her unreadable mask back on again.

"And what if you win the battle for the throne? The rule is for the winner to marry Elsie Lancaster. What would you do then?" she asked her son.

"I would still not marry her, come what may."

Irene frowned. "You would rebel against the Alpha King's decree?"

"Yes, Mother. Isn't that the way of the East? We don't succumb to conventional rules," Griffin said fiercely.

For a moment there, there was tense silence until Irene's face suddenly broke into a huge grin.

"My boy!" She closed the distance, pulling him into her arms with so much strength she lifted Griffin off his feet a few meters.

Violet was definitely impressed. That was so much strength.

Then Irene began to shower his face with kisses. "How much you've grown! You don't know how much I've missed you, my baby boy."

"Mom!" Griffin was mortified by the childish treatment, especially as he saw Violet stifling a giggle. The gods help him. This was embarrassing.

Irene finally noticed Violet, who gulped as the woman approached her. She tensed when Irene placed a hand on her shoulder, but to her surprise, she began to turn her around and check her out like someone appraising goods.

"Hmmm," Irene said thoughtfully. "She's tall. Good. Childbearing hips. More than enough. Now look at that ass. Perfect."

"I'll rate her nine out of ten," Arion said.

Violet was left speechless. What in the name of the goddess was going on here? If Griffin wasn't here, Violet was sure she'd be freaked out by now. She looked at Griffin, who gave her a look that said, Don't worry, it will be over soon.

"I'll say eight," Irene said, scrunching her nose. "She has no meat on her body, but I'm sure Griffin would take care of that, wouldn't you?"

Griffin nodded without hesitation.

Violet was still speechless.

Arion added, "And she looks strong. I'd say our son made a good choice. Our people would like her. She'd make a powerful Luna."

"That is yet to be known, Arion. So don't give her ideas. Graduation is still months away. Many things could happen in that space of time."

Well, she did make a point. Violet couldn't agree more.

Suddenly, Irene asked her, "Do you know the way to the Luncheon? I'm in need of an escort."

Violet realized what this was. Irene was extending an olive branch to her. However, an idea hit Violet, and she said to Irene with a mischievous smile.

"If that's the case, I hope you don't mind being escorted by a pack of rogues?"

"Eeh?"

Chapter 299: Impress Irene

"Elsie darling, I must say you look stunning."

"Elsie, you look amazing. You never fail to impress as always."

"Your Luncheon shines just like your personality, Elsie Lancaster. What an impressive woman you are."

"Darling, you look perfect! And what a well-thought-out Luncheon you have here. Everything from the design down to the food is perfect!"

"Well, thank you."

"Thank you so much."

"You flatter me. Thank you so much."

"It's nothing, ma. Thank you."

That was Elsie Lancaster responding to the countless compliments she received from the parents in attendance of the Luncheon. And as expected, she basked in the attention.

Truly, Elsie looked stunning in the custom liquid gold silk gown that was tailored to perfection. The fabric clung to her perfectly like molten metal, rippling each time she took a step.

For the elites, the color of the day was liquid gold, but it was not surprising that Elsie dressed the best and was easily the star of the occasion. She was queen bee, after all.

Her fitted gown had a high neckline, accented with an elaborate mock neck collar embroidered in delicate gold thread and encrusted with tiny opals. The sleeves were long and slightly flared at the wrist, with slits lined in soft pearl mesh.

She wore the dress with champagne-gold stilettos, while her silver-colored hair was styled in a classic low chignon. It was sleek and had a twist of golden thread braided in it. Not even a single strand was out of place.

Of course, for jewelry, Elsie wore diamond stud earrings and a thin gold bracelet engraved with legacy names that she wore for flex.

Elsie was so stunning that it left people wondering—if she looked this perfect for a simple Luncheon, how then would she look at the Gala Night? It was bewildering.

But on the contrary, the arrangement was not as perfect as people thought.

"Where's Violet and co?" She hastily asked Grace after she had successfully disentangled from a parent who had held her attention in a long boring talk.

"I have no idea." Grace answered.

"What do you mean you have no idea....?!" Elsie snapped at first only to realize she was in an event where all eyes were on her. She looked at the closest parents and flashed her a charming smile, hiding the turmoil inside of her.

She needed Violet and her pack of rogues in a place where her eyes could track them. And so far, she had not seen them.

Elsie leaned closer to Grace and whispered, "Find them. Find her in particular." She didn't say Violet's name, but the venom in her tone made it unmistakably clear.

But Grace said, "Do we even need her? The Luncheon is going perfectly already and the parents love you..."

Grace trailed off, instinctively taking a step back when Elsie's features darkened so dangerously it scared her.

Elsie must have noticed it too, because she calmed down at once. Then, intentionally, she placed her hand over Grace's hand and gave it a small squeeze. But she let her hand linger there before slowly tracing soft circles.

To any outsider, the gesture was harmless. Sweet, even. Just Elsie being her kind, sisterly self. But to Grace, her breath hitched and it was for all the wrong, sinful reasons.

And Elsie knew.

That's why she shifted the rhythm between each stroke, drawing patterns she knew her body would remember. Patterns she knew Grace liked.

Then Elsie said, with more intensity this time, still stroking her palm. "Violet Purple needs to learn her place and what better way to remind her than in a room full of important parents?"

Her voice suddenly dropped, low and grave. "Find her."

Grace nodded. "Fine. I'll do it."

"Good girl." Elsie then leaned in carefully to whisper into her ear, "Who knows, maybe you'd be rewarded tonight?"

Like a dog at the promise of meat, Grace's eyes lit up at once, but they were interrupted.

"Is something wrong?"

Both girls jumped apart, and Elsie looked up with annoyance only to see that it was her mother, Caroline, and her guards went up at once.

She turned to Elsie and said in a professional tone, "Go. Do as I say?"

Grace did not need to be told twice. She left at once, but not without one last look at her mother.

Caroline, in question, eyed Grace until she was out of sight. But she obviously did not suspect anything going on between the girl and her daughter, seeing as she asked, "Is anything the matter? Is any of the girls getting out of line? This is why you need to use an iron grip on those girls and solidify your authority. They need to know that you're—"

"I have everything in control, Mother," Elsie said firmly.

But Caroline replied in a faux sweet tone, "Really? Are you sure? Because information reaching me is that Irene is in the building, and yet she's not here. Aren't you supposed to be concerned?"

Oh God. Elsie wanted to be anywhere but near this woman right now. She was suffocating her.

"When Irene is ready, she'll find her way down here. Moreover, she's not even a legacy or an alumni."

And that was exactly the case. Irene Hale had never attended Lunaris Academy.

Actually, most people from the East didn't. It just wasn't their thing. They preferred learning real-world skills or diving straight into occupations, or fighting, rather than wasting years boxed in classrooms studying things that might never serve them.

Even most wolves, especially Alphas, barely bothered with universities. Not when they had entire packs waiting for them the moment they graduated. Their future was already set in stone. It was a responsibility they could not run away from.

It was quite unfortunate that those words provoked Caroline, who hissed, "Don't you dare—"

Recalling she was in public, Elsie mother caught herself. She said calmly instead, "Whether she's an alumni or not, we need Irene. Remember our plans, Elsie. Don't fuck it up. Impress Irene. Move her to your side. How many times do I need to remind you?"

"Fine, whatever. I'll send someone to find her," Elsie said, already scanning for one of the elite girls to send on the errand.

"Well, there's no need for that. And who the hell are those?" Caroline said, looking ahead with a frown.

"What are you talking—what the hell?"

Chapter 300: Her Mother-in-law

All eyes were on them.

Not on Irene who led the way—okay, maybe they'd stared at the woman at first—but now, their gazes were fixed on them. The little rogue pack escorting the famed Alpha of the East.

Lila had done justice with their outfits. Not flashy enough to be over the top, but just enough to draw attention. And most importantly, no shimmers or glimmers. At a glance, anyone would think it was crafted by skilled human hands, not with the dramatic flair of Fae magic.

Violet was the perfect rebel, stepping out in a hot pink blazer with silver spiking (thank you, Elsie, for the inspiration), layered over a white lace top. Her short skirt flared with pleated details and decorative buttons. While on her feet, she wore platform pink heels. Her signature purple hair was pulled into a slick, high ponytail that demanded attention.

Ivy wore a shiny, metallic pink mini dress paired with a white faux fur jacket and matching trapper hat. Chunky white platform boots wrapped in cozy faux fur completed the look, and her soft blonde waves peeked out beneath her hat.

Daisy opted for a bold, fitted pink pantsuit. Elbow-length white gloves with the fingers cut out hugged her hands, and her vicious boots clacked against the floor with every step. The tiny glasses perched on her nose were purely fashion, not prescription.

And finally, Lila herself looked sweet and poised in a light pink and white checkered blouse tucked neatly into a voluminous, layered tulle skirt in a deeper shade of pink. She wore powder-white heels and a delicate pink beret, with her short, wavy blonde hair pulled into a soft bun. A few loose strands framed her face like a masterpiece.

Individually, they may not have outshone Elsie. But together? They were quite a sight causing heads to turn, with whispers following them. Who were they? What were they doing with Alpha Irene?

The girls heard the murmurs, but they kept walking with their heads held high and backs straight. They were a rogue pack that looked anything but rogue.

It was not hard to spot Elsie. Not when they were heading toward her. Well, them. Elsie's mother was here too. It was not hard to identify Caroline. Not when both mother and daughter stood side by side, with Elsie being a spitting image of the woman.

Violet had expected Irene to stop when they approached. Elsie had even stepped out with a sweet smile to welcome her, but the woman walked on ahead without even glancing at them. It happened so quickly that Elsie froze on the spot, her welcome smile still plastered on her face.

The look on Elsie's face was so comical that it took Violet the grace of God to maintain a blank expression, because internally, she was dying with laughter. That move by Irene was a complete slap in the face. She had not acknowledged Elsie or her mother, treating both like mere air.

Violet had to admit she was impressed by Irene's audacity. But then, of course, she was an Alpha female. Elsie and her mother were supposed to grovel at her feet, not the other way around.

They continued on with Irene, who headed to one of the ordinary tables, purposely ignoring the high table that had her name tag on it, and sat down.

Violet and her girls were already planning to leave. Irene had already helped them make the dramatic entrance they wanted, so there was probably nothing else between them. They had no reason to be together again.

But Irene suddenly asked her, "What are you doing?"

"Huh?" Violet was confused, looking around to check if she had been talking to someone else. But her gaze was trained on her.

"We have to go and—"

"Leave me alone and go where?" Irene questioned.

Violet was suddenly speechless. She managed to ask, "Don't you want us to leave?" She was suddenly not understanding how things worked around here.

Irene continued, "Didn't you say you're my escort? So where are you going then? I didn't permit you to leave."

"Oh," Violet said. "So you want us to keep you company for the rest of the day?"

But Irene did not reply, her impassive look giving nothing away. Violet decided to risk it, signaling the others to take position behind the woman. They would guard her mother-in-law—fuck

, Griffin's mother. It was too early to start thinking nonsense.

But no sooner had they stood behind her, Irene sighed, causing the girls' brows to furrow with confusion. Were they not doing it right?

"Are you guys planning to crowd around me and keep the fresh air away?" Irene asked.

"Oh," Violet said, feeling sheepish all of a sudden. She was suddenly not the brightest when it came to this woman. "I don't understand." She scratched the back of her head.

"Take a seat, Violet. You and your friends." Irene gestured to her table.

Her table?!

"No," Violet shook her head, "You're the esteemed Alpha of the East."

"It is a good thing to be humble, but you're the Rogue Queen. You should have your pride as well, and right now, I insist. Sit." Irene looked around at her girls. "You and your friends. I want no one else at this table but the Rogue pack."

Violet and the girls looked shocked. They had not expected this kind of response from the woman. At the mention of the title "rogue", everyone else wrote them off. But not this woman.

Ivy looked so impressed she was on the verge of tears. "You're so impressive, Alpha Irene. You're my role model."

Although Irene waved the girls off, a small smirk crossed her lips. She just hid it quite well.

The table was arranged in a circular layout with only six seats, so the girls quickly filled them without fuss. But something cleverly subtle happened. Lila, Daisy and Ivy deliberately ensured that Violet sat directly beside Irene, while the rest of them took the seats following after her, leaving the other seat beside Irene intentionally vacant.

Irene noticed the maneuver, of course. But she said nothing. It seems the girls were smart, after all. Out of all five of them, her interest was clearly centered on Violet considering the fact that she was dating her son. She intended to know more about the girl.

However, not everyone was thrilled with the current arrangement, precisely the host herself. Elsie Lancaster.

Though she wore a polite smile, masking her features with the grace of a perfect hostess, inwardly Elsie was seething. A quiet rage brewed beneath her composure. Irene's little stunt had rattled her, even if she refused to show it. She should have known better than to give those rogues any leeway. Now, with Caroline breathing down her neck, she needed to reclaim control of her Luncheon, before it unraveled completely.

"It's an honor having you back here for another Luncheon like every other year, Alpha Irene," she said so sweetly, her voice coated in just enough charm to make sugar jealous.

But Irene barely blinked. "Go straight to the point, Elsie," she cut in flatly. "Enough with the pleasantries. I've had enough of them over the years, my ears are beginning to ring."

Elsie blanched.

She hadn't expected that. Sure, she and Irene had never been close, but the woman had always been civil. Polite, at the very least. Not this cold, dismissive attitude. She could barely believe it.

Her eyes flicked, almost unconsciously, toward Violet.

Of course. Of course it was her. Violet Purple. That little menace must have gotten to Irene first, turning and poisoning her mind against her.

Elsie cursed herself inwardly. She should have listened to her mother and sunk her claws into Irene first. She should have built the connection and secured her loyalty before Violet had the chance to weasel her way in.

Swallowing the heat rising in her throat, Elsie gathered her composure, forcing her voice to remain level.

"Irene, I'm afraid you are a special guest and the table doesn't fit your status. Moreover, you don't have the best of company at your table. These are—"

"Rogues. So I heard." Irene finished for her, tone dry.

Fuck.

Elsie's head snapped toward Violet again, stunned. She told her already? And Irene let her be? No rebuke? No switch? No disdain? How was that even possible? It just couldn't be!

Elsie's chest burned as her eyes narrowed. What kind of charm had that girl used on the Alpha?

As if that wasn't enough, Irene didn't stop there. She said, "I did not have the grace to see the four corners of a highschool. But if we go according to wolf customs, branding humans as rogues does seem over the top, don't you think?"

Just like that, Elsie was speechless and Violet didn't even have to lift a finger. Her future mother-in-law fought her battles for her.

Yep. For real. She was definitely marrying Griffin.