

Defy 31

Chapter 31: Elsie's Choice

Violet had not planned to make an entrance on the training field, let alone one like this. She remained completely still after Asher spanked her butt, seething inwardly instead.

Screaming and shouting would only draw more attention to herself. Not that it made much difference; being perched on Asher's shoulder had already garnered enough attention. She was literally a walking red flag, drawing countless eyes her way, and she could feel what felt like hundreds of stares on her.

At least Violet made herself go limp, hanging off Asher's shoulder like she had been forced into the position. It would be a disaster if people thought she actually enjoyed being thrown over a psychopath's shoulder like a caveman carrying off his prize.

And thank the gods she was wearing pants, because she shuddered at the thought of the guy who once commented on her video about what was beneath her clothing.

But Violet's efforts could have been for nothing because the students eyes still widened at the sight of her dangling off Asher's shoulders. To make it worse, she saw them whip out their phone and began to film her, their laughter renting the air.

Great. She was about to trend on Moonfeed again.

Violet glanced around, noting that everyone was dressed in their respective sports gear, each uniform reflecting the colors of their houses.

As expected, House West wore their sleek black tops with green accents, - the color green which happened to be the official color of Lunaris Academy.

The other houses followed a similar pattern with subtle variations in color: House East had red with green accents, House South wore orange with green accents, and House North sported blue with green accents.

As much as Violet hated Asher's ass — an ass she could clearly see now that she was upside down — she had to admit that the west house wore it better. But she would never admit that out loud to Asher. Never!

Out of the sea of students, her gaze accidentally collided with Elsie's. Or was it Lyka? Violet wasn't sure which name the pure-blooded she-wolf liked to go by. But the look in those eyes, full of murderous intent, made her shudder.

It wasn't hard to guess the reason. Violet knew Elsie's issue with her — she didn't want her anywhere near Asher.

Whoah, wait a minute, was Asher her choice? Oh, thank the gods! She was finally free!

What was Elsie waiting for? She needed to come over here and claim her man so that she would be free of Asher once and for all.

At that point, Violet didn't care if Elsie painted her the bitch who attempted to steal her boyfriend, she just wanted to be free of Asher. That was her prayer right now.

Except that didn't happen. The girl just kept glaring at her until Asher finally walked away, carrying Violet out of her line of sight.

Noooooooo!

Violet inwardly wailed. For a moment there, she had hoped she'd be free of Asher, but it wasn't going to happen anytime soon.

Almost immediately, Asher dumped her in front of a man, a proud look plastered on his face. "Caught one of the runners, coach."

Huh? Coach? Kill her now.

"Good work, Asher," the coach said, patting him on the shoulder with approval. "We can't have any more of these humans running away from training."

Violet almost lost it right there. She could barely contain her rage at what Asher had done, making it seem as if she had tried to run away from training on purpose when it was clearly his fault.

Rising to her feet, Violet glared at Asher, who merely grinned, his eyes hidden behind his ever-present sunglasses. He knew exactly what he had done.

Her gaze then shifted to the coach, and contrary to her expectations of a potbellied, beer-breathed, whistle-wielding man with a nasty attitude like the one at her old school, Violet was met with the complete opposite.

The man was incredibly tall, with broad shoulders and defined muscles, giving him an imposing, almost statuesque physique. He looked younger than she had imagined a coach would be. Violet immediately guessed he must be a werewolf because no human could look this perfect.

"Join the others, Miss Purple," the coach instructed, his voice carrying a hint of warning. "And don't think of running again. I'll be deducting points and handing out punishments enough to make it hurt."

Violet bristled at his words, glaring at Asher one last time. She shot him the middle finger, which only made Asher laugh as he sauntered away to join his peers. She was livid. This wasn't over.

"Violet!" Lila appeared by her side, her face filled with concern. "Are you okay?"

"Peachy," Violet replied, her lips pressed into a thin line, her eyes still burning with fury. She wasn't about to let this go. Asher might have won for now, but she'd definitely get her revenge soon.

Then Violet looked around the field properly this time and her breath hitched at the sheer scale of the setup.

The massive field encircled various stations for different activities like an obstacle course with towering walls and swinging ropes, a high-tech climbing wall with shifting panels and a lot more she couldn't exactly describe.

As if that was not enough, a section of the field was cordoned off with banners reading Elite Alpha Training Zone, where the bastard Asher was mingling with his fellow werewolves.

Violet sneered. For a moment there, she thought this might be a space where their usual hierarchy didn't apply, but it seemed she was greatly mistaken.

"Today must be blessed and interesting, even Alpha Roman is here," Lila commented, looking in the direction of the green-haired Alpha. Roman was laughing at something a girl who was unashamedly feeling his arm had said.

Blah! Violet made a gagging face when she recognized him. That was the bastard who had caused her near-death experience with Griffin Hale. Yes, the man-whore.

Violet had not forgotten what he did and she still planned on paying him back one way or another. Soon enough.

Lost in her thought, Violet had not heard what Coach Harrington had said until some girl had jabbed her at the side.

"Move it, Purple head! Stop gawking!"

Violet sighed. Some people never learned their lesson, did they?

Chapter 32: Fresh Meat

"Hurry up! Move it! Move it!" Coach Harrington's urgent voice urged Violet and the rest of the students to gather near the track.

Humans and werewolves stood side by side. Although it was obvious that the werewolves were more relaxed, exuding an air of quiet confidence while the humans mostly exchanged nervous glances.

Even Lila, usually so chirpy and full of energy, hadn't said a word since they arrived, which worried Violet greatly. Who knew what awaited them for this exercise?

By the time everyone had assembled, Coach Harrington looked utterly satisfied with the arrangement, then announced, "Alphas, take over."

Wait, what? Violet turned so quickly her neck almost cracked. What the hell was going on here?

Before she could understand a thing, Asher and Roman had stepped out from among the group, pure evil smiles plastered on their faces. Whatever they had planned, it was obvious none of them would like it.

Would the coach really sit back and let the students take over his class like this? It couldn't be. Except that was literally the case.

Violet's eyes almost popped out of their sockets as she watched the coach settle into a folding chair, legs crossed, a large umbrella parasol shielding him from the sun. On the table beside him was a cold drink that he was already sipping. It was as if he were on a luxurious vacation rather than in charge of a training session.

What the hell? Where had all this even come from? She'd only turned her head for a few seconds, and he was already lounging comfortably. What in the goddesses' name was going on? Violet's head spun.

"And it begins," Lila finally spoke after what felt like an eternity of silence.

"What begins?" Violet turned to Lila, an impending sense of dread tightening her chest.

"Their games. We're basically entertainment to them. You'll see."

"You knew?" Violet was dumbfounded. "You had all this information, and you chose to keep it to yourself?"

Lila furrowed her brows. "I thought you didn't like it when I talked too much."

Violet felt like tearing her hair out. She threw her hands up in frustration. "Not when it's the right information!" she said, exasperated. "A little warning would have been good, and maybe then, I'd have skipped training altogether."

"Trust me, you can't skip this," Lila replied with a low voice. "They take it upon themselves to make sure everyone is here for this moment."

"Listen up, everybody," Asher's voice spoke up, drawing their attention effortlessly. "Like our last date, we're here to take the load off the coach's shoulders by teaching his class. By the end of this lesson, you can bet your ass we'll make something out of you."

And it was that "something" that Violet feared. Her heart only pounded faster at the way Asher's eyes gleamed with bad ideas.

For the first time, Roman's usual playful demeanor was nowhere in sight. Instead, he stepped forward, his expression all business. His eyes scanned the crowd, calculating and cold. "Fresh meat, step out from your better halves right now," he ordered sternly.

For a moment, Violet was confused by what he meant by that until she noticed two distinct groups forming. Before she could decide which way to go, she noticed Lila moving, and instinctively followed her. Her friend had gone through this before, having started at the academy earlier than her.

Seeing Violet's lost expression, Lila explained quietly, "Fresh meat are the scholarship students and anyone who joined this semester. In one word, all new students. The better halves are mostly made up of elite students who've been at Lunaris Academy since the first or second year."

Violet glanced around, and Lila hadn't been kidding. The fresh meat group consisted mostly of new students, both humans and werewolves. At least this time there was a sense of equal treatment. Well, to a certain extent.

However, there were no top twenty students in their group, and Violet figured that perhaps the elite students had immunity from whatever Asher and Roman had planned for them.

Slowly, Violet began inching backward, her heart pounding in her chest as she hoped to make her escape unnoticed. She took small steps, her eyes shifting cautiously as she approached the elite group.

Just a little further and she'd be safe, she thought, until she bumped into a solid wall of muscle. Her heart skipped a beat, and even without turning around, she knew exactly who it was. The dark, spicy scent enveloped her senses, and her body went rigid.

Violet hadn't planned on playing this card, but she had no other choice now. She forced a sweet smile and turned to face Asher, trying to mask her nerves. "I'm in the top ranking, surely I don't need to do this, right?"

"Yes, you are," Asher said, nodding as if he was considering her words, making her heart leap in hope. She was safe!

But then, Asher grinned darkly, "But unfortunately, you're still fresh meat." He flashed his canines at her, and before she could react, he pushed her back into the line.

Laughter erupted from the elite section, loud and mocking, and Violet could feel the heat of embarrassment creeping up her neck and flushing her cheeks.

She clenched her jaw tightly, her nails digging into her palms. That asshole! Violet seethed. Just when she thought he might do her a favor. Damn it!

"Now listen up!" Asher barked, his voice thunderous and sharp, silencing the noise. Silence fell almost immediately.

He continued, his eyes flickering over each face, human and werewolf alike. "Today's session is meant to push you to your limits. We don't care if you're human or werewolf. In this training, everyone's equal. You're not here at Lunaris just to study and get a better life. No, we're the best out here, and you have to be evidence of that as well. So, for warm-up, ten laps around the track."

"What?!" Disbelief rippled through the fresh meat group, the humans especially.

Almost immediately, murmurs of shock turned to shouts of protest. This was an Olympic-sized track, and he expected ten laps for a warm-up? It was insane! They were going to die.

The murmur of dissent grew louder,

but all it took was for Asher to half-transform, his face elongating into something feral. His lips pulled back, baring his sharp teeth, and he let out a guttural, deafening howl that reverberated across the field.

Panic spread instantly. Every protest ceased, replaced by the sound of hurried footsteps pounding against the track as they all took off, running as fast as they could from the beast behind them.

Chapter 33: Evil With Finesse

"Hey, Purple whore!"

Violet turned just in time to see a ball flying straight at her. She barely had time to flinch before the ball smashed into her face, her head snapping back from the force. The sting of pain flared instantly, and she felt warm blood begin to trickle from her nose.

What was supposed to be just a regular P.E. session quickly turned into the perfect setting for Jasmine and her lackeys to thrive, turning sports time into their personal playground for tormenting her.

"Would you look at that? It flowed out like ketchup!" Someone mocked and laughter erupted around her.

Her bullies were practically in hysterics, their sharp and mocking voices sounding like nails scraping a chalkboard.

Violet's vision swam for a moment, but her anger burned the pain away. She saw Jasmine with her smug smile, so proud of herself for humiliating her. Oh, no, not today.

Violet wiped at the blood with the back of her hand, glaring daggers at her bully and nemesis. Without a moment's hesitation, she lunged for the ball that had fallen to the ground.

Grabbing it, she locked her eyes on Jasmine, who was still laughing like the witch she was. Then with all her strength, Violet hurled the ball straight at her.

The dull thud of the impact was deeply satisfying as Jasmine's laughter was cut off abruptly, and replaced by a high-pitched screech, like a turkey being slaughtered for Thanksgiving. Call her a psychopath but the sound of her pain felt oddly thrilling.

The ball hit Jasmine square in the face, and Violet watched in delight as she stumbled back, her hand flying to her now-swollen eye.

"How does a taste of your own medicine feel, bitch?" Violet shouted, her voice filled with venom and dark gratification as she watched the bully clutch her face, her eyes watering.

But before the purple haired girl could savor the moment to her heart's content, she heard a shout of rage. Anisha, one of Jasmine's lackeys, grabbed a ball, her face contorted with fury and threw it sharply towards her.

Violet saw it coming and managed to dodge it, her heart pounding, except it wasn't over. That was just the beginning.

It wasn't just Anisha. One by one, all of Jasmine's lackeys grabbed the balls, their expressions set with vengeance. Jasmine had never been one to fight with honor and her foolish followers were her prototype.

They hurled them at her, each of their throws filled with anger and with the intention to hurt her.

However, she was not a quitter. Violet did her best to fight back, ducking and weaving, grabbing balls and throwing them as hard as she could.

She got a few hits in, enough to make some of them yelp in pain and her heart to leap in joy. But there were too many of them. It wasn't long before Violet was overwhelmed.

The balls came at her from every direction, each one hitting her arms, her stomach, her back. Violet gritted her teeth against the pain, refusing to give them the satisfaction of hearing her cry out...

The only difference between her old school and Lunaris was that Jasmine and her lackeys fought dirty, but the elite students at Lunaris? They did so with finesse. Every jab was carefully thought out, every taunt cloaked in faux civility, and every act of cruelty served with a thin veneer of elegance.

To be honest, Violet had always thought of herself as fit but it seems she had been kidding herself all along. She was not prepared for this kind of punishment. But no matter how poor her efforts seemed now in the face of this challenge, it still was something compared to how the others were faring.

This was the sixth lap, and many humans had already fallen behind. If any species was thriving, it was undoubtedly the werewolves. They moved like they were born for this, their expressions barely showing any strain. Though sweat trickled down their faces, it seemed more like a sheen of triumph than any sign of fatigue.

As expected, some humans had collapsed along the way, giving up entirely. Violet had also considered it. The thought of just dropping to the ground and letting her sore body rest was too tempting to resist. The alphas could go fuck themselves for all she cared. But then, Violet was no quitter. Not to mention, Lila's warning.

According to Lila's words, the students who quit face the worst punishments

like cleaning the communal toilets and bathroom of all the dorm houses which was a nightmare no one wanted to be subjected to.

In one word, there were unspeakable things being done there and cleaning up was traumatizing. Lila didn't need to explain further, Violet had understood already and that was enough reasons to motivate her to run further. Moreover, the humiliation, the degradation, the admission of failure. It wasn't something Violet wanted to be subject to.

"You must run a lot!" Violet panted, glancing at Lila, who ran beside her with an easy rhythm. She seemed almost untouched by the brutal pace.

Lila flashed her a grin. "I love running," she said, and as if fueled by those words, the petite blonde suddenly surged forward, her feet pounding the track as she left Violet behind.

Violet watched her go with a mix of awe and disbelief. That girl was something else.

But there was no time to waste, Violet focused on her own race. She pushed herself to keep going, each stride bringing her closer to the starting line, marking the beginning of the seventh lap.

And just as she crossed the line, Violet felt something cold splash her — something so cold that it stole her breath away. A gasp escaped her lips as icy water soaked her from head to toe, chilling her instantly.

"What the hell?" Violet whipped her head to the side, her eyes widening at the sight of Elsie Lancaster holding a hose, her lips curled into a smug smile. The pure-blooded she-wolf looked down at her, disdain etched across her perfect features.

It wasn't just her. Several of the "fresh meats" were being greeted with the same treatment. It seemed the evil elite students — yes, they were evil — had upped their game, splashing cold water on the humans as they crossed the line, an extra hurdle to demoralize them further.

Asher and Roman were nowhere in sight, busy tormenting the students who lagged behind and probably having the time of their lives. It wouldn't have surprised Violet if this little water stunt was part of their plan as well.

Violet stopped in her tracks, glaring up at Elsie. The werewolf raised an eyebrow, her expression showing a flicker of surprise at Violet's defiance. But that surprise quickly vanished and was replaced by annoyance.

"What are you still standing here for, Purple Head? Move it!" She spoke with a condescending tone.

Every part of Violet screamed for her to deal with this bitchy she wolf. But it was not worth it, Violet told herself. Elsie was the Queenbee of not just their class but the entire school. Already Lunaris was proving to be a pain in the ass already, she couldn't worsen her fate. However, that doesn't mean she would let that go easily.

To everyone's shock, Violet slipped her hand into her waistband, her fingers curling tightly. She then pulled it free and extended her arm, giving Elsie the middle finger. Not just any middle finger, but the most obnoxious, insult-laden middle finger she could muster.

Silence fell over the group of elite students, a few gasps echoing through the air. Violet saw their shocked faces, the wide eyes, the open mouths. All except one girl who laughed so much it made Elsie Lyka Lancaster, the pure-blooded she-wolf, go crimson with rage.

Knowing she had crossed a line and knowing Elsie wasn't the kind to let things slide, Violet didn't stick around to see what happened next. She turned and took off running, adrenaline pushing her forward.

She could feel Elsie's burning gaze on her back, and Violet knew she had just made herself a permanent target. But for some reason, she didn't care. Not today. Elsie Lancaster could hate her, she didn't care considering the feeling was mutual.

Three more laps. Just three more laps and this hell would be over. Although Violet had no idea how she'd get through them, especially with Elsie gunning for her now.

Chapter 34: Icy Feelings

"Get her!!!" The furious screams echoed all around as Violet reached the finish line once again, marking her eighth lap. Just two more laps, she reminded herself, panting heavily.

"Oh, God." Violet barely had time to take in a sharp breath before torrents of freezing water struck her from multiple directions. The attack was like standing beneath a waterfall and getting beaten down by the furious pressure.

Just as she had feared, Elsie Lancaster had it out for her after that little stunt. And of course, Elsie didn't wage her war alone.

The pureblooded she-wolf had rounded up her loyal supporters, who all turned their hoses on Violet, unleashing blasts of freezing water on her and completely ignoring the other runners.

Violet knew at that moment that the rest of the students must be thanking their gods right now for not being in her position. She was boring the brunt of it all.

Where in the world did they even get that many hoses? Yet that was the least of Violet's worries at the moment as the streams of water hit her from every angle, leaving her disoriented.

She could barely see as her vision blurred by constant sprays of cold water, and her breath was ragged, interrupted by the choking sensation of water forcing its way into her nose. Her ears filled with a dull, oppressive pressure, muffling all surrounding sounds. The entire world was narrowed to just that icy, blinding flood.

But Violet fought through it. She pushed through the cold onslaught, her body burning with exhaustion but refusing to yield. She wasn't going to let herself be defeated here, not like this and give Elsie the satisfaction.

Violet knew she was in for something much worse if she fell now. Elsie and her lackeys would probably drown her if given half the chance.

Finally, Violet managed to outrun them, stopping just long enough to catch her breath. She very much looked like a drowned rat with her hair stuck to her head in tangled, wet strands.

Her training gear clung to her like a second skin, dripping with water, the fabric outlining every curve. She shivered slightly, grateful at least for the bra she wore.

If she hadn't, her nipples—which had pebbled from the cold—would be visibly outlined beneath the fabric. It would have been another humiliating disaster to add to this mess.

As if to confirm her fears, Violet heard an appreciative whistle coming from the elite sidelines. One of the werewolves had his eyes fixed on her, his gaze running shamelessly over her soaked figure. Violet's stomach twisted in revulsion, and her jaw clenched.

Except that attention lasted for only mere seconds. A blur shot forward, and before Violet could blink, Asher barreled straight into the whistling werewolf, his fist connecting with the guy's face in a brutal punch. The sound of the punch, a dull, sickening thud reverberated through the field and silenced everyone.

Some of the other werewolves who had been eager to follow in the unlucky guy's footsteps quickly abandoned the thought, stepping back as Asher's punch landed a second time. It seemed the psycho Asher had his eyes on the new meat named Violet, considering this was the second time he'd fought her battle in one day.

What the...? Violet was dumbfounded at the sight. What the hell was Asher doing? He couldn't just go around beating up every boy who looked at her the wrong way.

This was exactly the kind of attention she was trying to avoid. Now everyone was going to think they were together or something. So great!

"What do you think you're staring at, asshole? Want me to pluck out those eyes and feed them to you?" Asher snarled, his voice brimming with fury.

"No, Alpha Asher!" the unlucky werewolf whimpered, his heart pounding in his chest.

"But you do have to admit, she's quite a sight," a voice said with a chuckle, and Violet found herself locking eyes with Roman Draven.

Just like the unfortunate werewolf, Roman also gave her body an appreciative once-over, but instead of Asher launching a flurry of punches at him, he merely growled a warning. Roman laughed in response, completely unfazed by Asher's threat. So it seemed Lila had been right. Roman was the only Cardinal Alpha that Asher could tolerate.

Almost immediately, Violet's eyes connected with Asher's, and even with the glasses hiding them, she could sense the brewing storm behind them. There was something so intense and overwhelming about the way he looked at her, it made her stomach twist with a mix of fear and thrill. He excited and scared her if that even made any sense.

"What are you still waiting for, little purple?" Asher taunted, his tone dark and laced with something almost sinister. "Why aren't you running yet? Or do you need me to chase you to motivate you?" The way he said it made shivers run down her spine.

Hell no!

Violet didn't need to be told twice. Without another second's hesitation, she turned and took off, sprinting away as if her life depended on it. She could hear Asher's laughter behind her, mocking and amused, but she had no intention of looking back.

She wasn't about to give him a reason to chase her, not now, not ever. She was going to finish this damn race, no matter what it took.

Violet was focused on reaching the finish line when she ran past Ivy Sinclair, her roommate.

The once-perfect looking blueblood now looked the exact opposite with her sweaty and disheveled appearance. It seemed just like her, Ivy had fallen victim to the water spray. Though she wasn't as thoroughly soaked as Violet, she still looked a mess. And from the way she was staggering in the name of running, it seemed she might collapse at any moment.

It was none of her business, Violet told herself. The girl was too proud for her own good and hated her guts, so why should she care?

Yet, as Violet caught sight of Ivy stumbling and falling from the corner of her eye, she let out an annoyed groan and turned back toward the girl.

This kind heart of hers was going to get her into trouble one day, she just knew it.

Chapter 35: Two Lovely Couples

Violet slowed her pace as she approached Ivy, who was struggling to push herself back up. The scene was quite hilarious to be honest — if only she could watch it forever. Unfortunately, Violet couldn't laugh at her, not when she was on a mission.

The exhaustion was plain on Ivy's face, her pride bruised along with her body. Violet could see the frustration etched in her expression.

After all, Ivy was someone who carried herself with so much pride it was annoying. She probably detested this show of vulnerability, especially right now with her — Violet — to see her like this.

"Get up," Violet grumbled, the annoyance clear in her tone.

Violet didn't want to be here right now. No, she didn't even want to help Ivy at all. It would be so nice to see the look of disgust on her face when she washes the toilet. It would surely make her day.

Perhaps Lila's camaraderie was rubbing off on her but Ivy was her roommate and they needed to pass. In situations like these, she had to be the bigger and better person.

So Violet reached down and grabbed Ivy's arm amid her protest, pulling her back up. Ivy looked at her with shock and irritation, as if she couldn't believe someone like Violet was the one helping her right now.

"You do know that I don't need your help," Ivy spat, though her voice sounded shaky, betraying her real condition.

"Sure you don't," Violet retorted, rolling her eyes. "But it looks like you need it anyway. So shut up and move."

"You don't understand," She shrugged away from Violet's grasp. "My feet hurt and I'm so exhausted right now I can't lift a finger anymore. So just let me be."

But Violet clicked her tongue in disapproval, "You're exhausted, you say, and yet here you are whining. Believe me when I say if you have the energy to talk, then you have the energy to keep running."

Almost immediately, she let out a dramatic sigh. "But then, if you want to quit, it's no problem. I'm sure you'll have a nice time washing the communal toilets and bathrooms."

At that reminder, Ivy's eyes widened, as if suddenly realizing the severity of the punishment. She stood up, her gaze shifting hesitantly to Violet, her face flushing slightly. "So... how do we do this?" she asked with uncertainty.

"Come on, start moving. I'll teach you how to run properly so you don't burn out easily."

And just like that, the two of them began jogging, with Violet taking the lead. "Breathe in through your nose, and out through your mouth. Regulate your breathing. This will help you maintain a steady rhythm," Violet instructed while Ivy nodded, trying her best to follow along.

"And remember, keep an even pace. Don't push yourself too fast or you'll tire out quickly," Violet added. "Running at a steady speed, rather than in bursts, helps conserve energy. Just take it easy."

Ivy observed Violet closely, doing her best to imitate her every movement. She focused on staying relaxed, keeping her shoulders down, and matching Violet's stride.

It was still difficult to be honest. It almost felt like dying with her breath wheezing from the effort it took to run, but Ivy realized it wasn't as bad as before.

With someone by her side, showing her the ropes, the burden felt lighter. Having Violet there, running alongside her, gave her the motivation to push through the exhaustion.

The two of them ran side by side, looking almost like best friends. If only. Deep down, the both of them knew it was the situation that demanded this truce and once it was over, they'd go back to hating each other. But for all it was worth, Ivy disliked Violet a tad less now.

When they reached the finish line, Violet couldn't help but notice that no one sprayed them with water. She was surprised but quickly understood why. Or rather, who was behind it. It seemed that particular part of the bullying didn't sit well with His Highness, Asher Nightshade.

Someone sure didn't like other boy's attention on her.

Good for him. Because Violet didn't care if they stopped or not. Nothing was stopping her from finishing this race.

"I don't think I can hold on," Ivy breathed, her chest feeling like it was on fire, each breath becoming a desperate gasp.

But Violet responded with determination, "Hold on, we're almost there. We can make it."

Without hesitation, Violet grabbed Ivy's arm, throwing it over her shoulder, supporting her as they trudged through the final stretch of the race.

It felt like mission impossible; Violet herself was exhausted, and Ivy's added weight made her legs threaten to buckle beneath her. But she gritted her teeth, her mind focused only on the finish line, and pushed forward with sheer willpower.

Finally, they made it.

The instant they crossed the finish line, they didn't even bother stepping off the track. Instead, they collapsed on the bare ground, breathing heavily.

What a relief.

Both of them were drenched in sweat, their clothes clinging to their aching bodies. Violet felt like her muscles had gone through a blender, aching in places she didn't even know existed before today.

"If I didn't know any better, I'd think this is a military school," Violet muttered, her voice tinged with exhaustion and sarcasm.

Ivy burst into laughter at that comment, but the laugh quickly turned into a cough. Her throat was dry, parched like a desert. She desperately wanted water, but she was far too exhausted to even think about getting up.

Suddenly, a shadow loomed over them. Violet frowned when she looked up and saw Roman Draven standing there, a smug expression plastered on his face.

She hated that guy, and she still had a long-standing score to settle with him.

"Aww," Roman drawled, looking down at them with mock adoration. "Look at you two, all cuddled up like sweet lovebirds. But, as much as I hate to ruin this romantic moment, I have to let you know that you've got only five minutes to recover before we resume training. So make the most of it, bask in each other's company. It's limited." He winked before walking past them.

With Roman gone, Violet turned her head to the side, her eyes meeting Ivy's, and suddenly she understood why Roman had made that comment.

They were both lying on the ground, clinging to each other, Ivy's head resting against Violet's arm in a rather intimate manner. The scene was, indeed, misleading.

Violet studied Ivy for a moment. As she noticed before, her roommate was quite beautiful, and in another universe, they might have looked like a perfect couple. But as their eyes locked, the realization seemed to hit them both simultaneously, and without a word, they shuddered, scrambling to move away from each other.

That was so weird.

What in the name of nonsense thoughts has Roman Draven planted into her head?

Chapter 36: Fight Like Dogs

Violet was not the first to finish the race; there were already human males who made it with their masculine strength, not to mention Lila as well. But then, she wasn't the last either.

However, the race was over, and right now, the result was obvious—those who had made it and the ones who quit halfway. And among the quitters, Violet saw Daisy Fairchild.

"Fuck!" Violet cursed when she saw Daisy looking around with what looked like a crestfallen expression and tears in her eyes.

When their eyes connected, it felt like the emotion slammed straight into Violet's chest. She hadn't helped her, having been busy with Ivy. And now the guilt hit her hard.

Lila must have noticed the exchange and picked up on her thoughts because she said, "It's not your fault. You can't save everyone, Violet."

Then, as if to lighten the mood, she added in a chirpy tone, "At least, on the bright side, you've just proven you're not as emotionless as stone."

"And whose fault is that?!" Violet snarled and took off.

She couldn't bear to be around Lila or stare at Daisy's disappointed face right now, which didn't make any sense because it was none of her business. This was a race. Everyone was on their own. But then she had helped Ivy, the roommate she liked the least, and abandoned Daisy, the warmer one. Well, "abandoned" being a strong word, but whatever.

This was why Violet preferred being on her own. It wasn't because she was a social outcast, no, she knew better than that. Violet knew the truth, and it was because she cared too much. And in a brutal world like this one, caring too much only got you betrayed, a knife in the back for your trouble.

Violet took a moment to gather herself, forcing her emotions into submission. This was all Lila's doing—her words, her presence, were making her feel things she didn't want to feel.

But then, she wouldn't let that girl's influence undo her. By the time Violet opened her eyes, the tight grip of anxiety had faded, and she felt back in control once again.

In her effort to collect herself, Violet had moved to the back of the crowd, where she suddenly caught sight of Griffin.

Wait a minute, Griffin Hale?

Violet wasn't sure she'd ever seen that brute smile, and he certainly wasn't smiling now. The anger rolling off him was almost tangible, like a living force that made her skin prickle. It brought back memories of yesterday when he had nearly choked her to death. Was it really just yesterday? It felt like a week ago, with so much happening in between.

Violet froze as the space between her and Griffin closed up, and she expected him to grab her by the throat once again and perhaps this time finish her off for good.

But Griffin strode past her, his shoulder brushing by ever so briefly, but that small contact felt like she had been enveloped in flames. Heat traveled to every part of her body and left her burning.

She had caught his scent, and it was a rich blend of sun-soaked woods and warm amber, infused with hints of fresh summer citrus and earthy spices. He smelled full of life and strength.

Instinctively, Violet turned to follow him, curious about who had drawn his wrath this time. Others seemed to sense his rage too, parting before him like a sea of bodies. His strides quickened, his focus sharpening as if he had locked onto his target and couldn't wait to unleash his fury.

Violet slipped through the opening in the crowd before it could close, trailing Griffin to the front. She arrived just in time to see the exact moment he locked eyes with his prey.

Oh, fuck.

Asher Nightshade was in the middle of a discussion with his friend and fellow cardinal, Alpha Roman, when Roman suddenly trailed off, his gaze shifting to the angry figure rapidly approaching them.

As if he could sense the storm brewing behind him, Asher turned at precisely the right moment, only to be met with a guttural roar from Griffin. The sound was wild and dangerous, cutting through the air with such force it sent shivers racing down Violet's spine.

Almost simultaneously, Griffin's fist connected with Asher in a punch so powerful it sent him flying meters away, a clear display of the stunning strength packed into that one strike.

But Griffin didn't stop there. He advanced on Asher without hesitation, grabbing him by the front of his shirt and yanking him upright with an almost feral intensity. Then he began driving punch after brutal punch into him.

Each blow landed with such force and intensity that it made her stomach twist, a visceral reaction to the sheer violence unfolding before her eyes. It was horrifyingly clear. Griffin wasn't going to stop, not until he killed Asher.

"Asher!" Violet screamed his name before she even realized it, her body moving instinctively as she took a step forward. She barely managed that step before someone grabbed her from behind, halting her.

She turned sharply to see who it was, her anger flaring, but the familiar face of Dion met her gaze.

"Let me go! That bastard is going to kill him!" Violet shouted, struggling fiercely against his grip.

"Are you out of your mind?!" Dion snapped, holding her firmly. "No one interferes between two alphas fighting, unless you want to end up dead."

"But he's going to kill him," Violet snarled, her hatred for Griffin bubbling to the surface. It wasn't as if she was a die-hard supporter of Asher, but if there was anyone who had helped her since she arrived at this academy, it was the West Alpha. Whatever his twisted motives might be, at least he wanted her alive and thriving. She needed an ally like him alive, not dead.

"No, he won't kill him. This isn't the first time two alphas have fought," Dion said with a sharp edge, his voice intense, leaving her momentarily stunned. "In case you haven't figured it out yet, fighting is the way of the wolves. They fight to survive. Fight to prove themselves. Fight to own the things they want. Fight to be at the top."

The heat in his words seemed to hit her harder than his grip, but it also worked to settle her nerves. Her anxiety dropped slightly as she turned her attention back to the fight. Asher was finally landing punches of his own, but it was clear Griffin still had the upper hand.

As if to prove Dion's point, the coach stood casually from his seat, his demeanor entirely unbothered, as if this fight was nothing out of the ordinary. It was no cause for alarm at all.

At once, Violet felt a sudden wave of embarrassment for overreacting.

The coach's voice carried over the chaos. "Alright, this is the point where we'd unfortunately have to call it a day. You should return now."

Some of the students cheered at the prospect of skipping another round of grueling training, but not a single one moved. Their attention remained glued to the fight.

"I don't understand," Violet said, her brows furrowed. "Do they just wake up and pick fights like mad dogs, or is there a reason Griffin is doing this?"

Dion turned to her, his expression incredulous. "You haven't figured it out yet?"

"Figured out what?" she asked, confused.

His gaze grew serious, his voice low as he said, "Clayton is part of Griffin's pack. Asher beat him up. Think of this as Griffin getting revenge."

"Oh, fuck," Violet breathed, her chest tightening.

This fight was because of her.

Asher was taking this beating because of her, and she had no idea how to feel about it.

Chapter 37: Freak Show

Asher's glasses must have fallen off during the fight because, in a sudden and horrifying turn of events, Griffin was ferociously punching his own face. The sight froze everyone, their expressions full of shock and disbelief. It was then that Violet realized that Asher had charmed him into doing it.

However, before things could escalate further, Roman stepped in, positioning himself between the two alphas. Even from where she stood, Violet could hear his commanding voice, "Let go of him, Asher. This has to end now."

But Asher's response was anything but calming. He bared his bloodied teeth, a crazed smile stretching across his bruised and battered face. Violet felt her stomach churn having recognized that look. Asher didn't want this to end. He wanted it to escalate. Chaos was his element, and he thrived in it. The guy was insane, for crying out loud.

Her attention shifted to Griffin, who had managed to grab his punching hand with his free hand, desperately trying to stop the self-inflicted assault. The struggle was obvious in his eyes, his face contorted with the effort of holding back his own strength. Yet, no matter how hard he tried, the hand continued to rise, inching closer and closer to strike his face again.

Asher's power was in the psych, giving him control over his opponent's brain, and in turn, over motor functions. He had willed Griffin to harm himself, manipulating his mind like a puppet. But Griffin was a Cardinal Alpha, his will and strength unmatched by most. Violet couldn't help but wonder if he was strong enough to resist Asher's powers.

That wasn't the only alarming development. Violet's eyes widened as she noticed Griffin's body begin to swell, muscles expanding as his mass increased. It shouldn't have been possible, but nothing was impossible with the Cardinal Alphas.

She wasn't the only one to notice. Beside her, Dion let out a sharp intake of breath. "Fuck, this is bad."

Violet's heart raced. "What's going on?"

Dion's tone was grave as he explained, "Griffin's main power is his strength, but it also gives him the ability to rage out. When that happens, he's hardly in control. It's not safe anymore." He glanced around, his eyes scanning their surroundings nervously. "We have to get out of here."

Violet had no idea what "rage out" meant but something told her she didn't want to find out.

Dion wasn't the only one coming to that conclusion. The once-calm coach now wore a look of sheer panic, his composed demeanor completely gone. He began yelling at the students, his voice booming with urgency. "Get away from here! Get inside right now!"

The students must have understood the sense of urgency now, as everyone began to flee in a chaotic panic, werewolves included. Only a few werewolves remained, keeping their distance at what they must have thought was a safer range.

None of the humans stayed behind, not when their fragile lives were on the line. Violet came to an abrupt halt when a ferocious roar ripped through the air, shaking the ground beneath her feet. A cold shiver ran down her spine as birds erupted from the trees, scattering in alarm at the palpable danger.

Violet turned, and the sight before her knocked the breath from her lungs. She saw Griffin, or rather, what had become of him.

Griffin Hale was now a monstrous, towering humanoid figure, standing over seven feet tall. Violet could only swallow hard as her eyes swept over the impossibly large muscles bulging across his body. His massive arms and legs seemed capable of obliterating anything—or anyone—in their path, and the only thought racing through her mind was how easily he could rip her in two. The gods help her.

His shirt had not survived the transformation, hanging in tatters, while his trousers clung to him in scraps. Whatever beast Griffin had become radiated an aura of pure chaos and destruction, yet Violet couldn't stop the brief flicker of awe that rose in her chest. Who in the world had created such an abomination?

That sense of awe, however, lasted only seconds. Griffin let out another deafening roar, the sound like rolling thunder, and then he charged forward. His target was clear: Roman and Asher, who stood rooted in place, wide-eyed like two deer caught in headlights.

Violet wanted to scream a warning, to tell that idiot Asher to run, but Griffin closed the distance too fast. He charged like a raging bull, unstoppable and furious. Yet, Asher stood his ground, that wild glint in his eyes as if he already had a plan to neutralize Griffin, despite the immense disadvantage in size.

Roman, however, stepped protectively in front of Asher, taking a fighting stance. But his bravery was short-lived. One powerful punch from Griffin sent Roman hurtling through the air, his body flying so far that Violet was sure he was a dead man.

But to her shock, Roman transformed mid-air. What landed on the ground—and on its feet—was no man. It was a massive, impossibly green-colored yeti, its size rivaling Griffin's. The creature let out a ferocious roar, a defiant declaration that it had survived.

Violet stood frozen, utterly dumbfounded and overwhelmed by what she was seeing. How could any of this be real? This wasn't a school—it was a goddamned freak show!

Roman's transformation proved to be a momentary distraction for the beast. Griffin turned back toward the now-unprotected Asher. He raised his hand, but it stopped halfway, trembling in place. It was clear Asher had charmed him again, using his power to regain control.

For a moment, it looked like Asher had won. Except, to everyone's shock, Griffin managed to fight through the charm and delivered a brutal punch straight to Asher's face, sending him flying several meters away.

Great. Idiot.

The yeti roared again from across the field, stealing Griffin's attention. Their eyes locked, and Violet instantly knew this was going to be a showdown. And judging by the murmurs and stares, so did everyone else.

"Fuck it, Violet, we have to leave now!" Dion's voice broke through her daze as he grabbed her arm, pulling her urgently.

Violet didn't need to be told twice. She took off running, her heart pounding in her chest. She wasn't about to stick around and become collateral damage.

But just before she slipped through the doorway, she caught sight of Asher lifting his head from where he lay sprawled on the ground. At least the bastard wasn't dead.

Chapter 38: Straying Thoughts

One might assume that after such a distressing event, classes would be canceled for the rest of the day to allow students time to recover and process the unnerving experience. However, nothing of the sort happened.

Instead, Principal Jameson announced through the speakers that the Alphas had been "cooled down," and students were now free to resume their normal activities. And, of course, she added ever so gracefully:

"Loitering during class hours will not be permitted and would be punished. Missing classes will result in point deductions and may lead to disciplinary actions at the teacher's discretion. Most importantly, fighting is strictly prohibited on academy grounds unless supervised and conducted as part of the approved curriculum. And that would be all. For now."

And yes, that was indeed all. Fights like that were surprisingly common, though not as frequent as Griffin unleashing his beast, which was a true game-changer. For the older students, such events were almost routine, something they breezed through without much thought.

However, for Violet, a newcomer, witnessing nearly all the Alphas display their powers for the first time had left her shaken. To everyone else, though, it was just another power struggle between the Cardinal Alphas, the reigning kings of the school. And, as if to make matters worse, it seemed to excite them.

Clips of the fight were already trending on Moonfeed, solidifying why the Cardinal Alphas remained at the top. Their constant drama kept the students captivated, so why wouldn't they be popular? They provided endless entertainment, allowing the students to live vicariously through their chaos and excitement.

However, if such violent outbursts occurred daily, Violet wondered why she hadn't come across them on other social platforms. While she hadn't owned a phone back home, gossip still made its rounds, and her old school's outdated computers, as crappy as they were, had been her go-to for "research." if you know what she meant.

Even when she had first researched Lunaris after receiving the scholarship, she hadn't found a single piece of dirt on them. Not one negative video about fights or bullying surfaced.

Their website painted an idealized picture, boasting about a holistic learning environment and other flattering claims meant to impress the public. Their record was impeccably clean, and now Violet finally understood why.

Whatever happened in Lunaris, stayed in Lunaris. Every student understood the unspoken rule: no incriminating information that could tarnish the academy's reputation was ever to leave its walls.

This expectation was clearly outlined in the welcome handbook, and students were expected to comply. Failure to do so came with consequences. While the specific punishments weren't explicitly detailed, Violet had already learned one thing, and it was that when it came to discipline, Lunaris knew how to make their point.

After all, if people knew what really happened at Lunaris, who in their right mind would send their children here? Especially the wealthy, elite families.

For kids like her, though—those from the gutter—Lunaris was a dream come true. Even if students were murdered here, Violet had no doubt her kind would still come, drawn by the chance to escape their rotten districts and seize the opportunity for a better life.

Right now, Violet stood in the cubicle of the locker room, washing away the sweat and grime from the earlier training session. Her hands moved robotically, while her mind buzzed with a load of thoughts.

Was Asher alright? From what she had overheard, it was Alaric who had finally zapped Griffin until the beast receded, allowing him to return to himself again.

Why she worried about Asher, however, was beyond her. That idiotic Alpha of the West had brought the entire situation upon himself. If only he had released Griffin from his mind control sooner, and not pushed the beast to the brink, none of it would have escalated.

Yet, as if that was enough, Violet also found her thoughts straying to Griffin.

How did he have a beast? Wasn't his ability supposed to be just super strength? Was the beast some kind of unique extension of his power, or could it be a case of identity crisis? You know, a split

personality taking physical form? Did Griffin and the beast share the same mind, or were they two separate entities? Did they even get along?

Fuck! What was she even thinking?

She wasn't supposed to think about Griffin like this. She was supposed to hate him for what he did to her, not become fascinated by him, or, more specifically, by his beast. God, she was a lost cause. Violet knew she had to leave this place as soon as possible; otherwise, she'd lose herself to the madness completely.

A sudden knock on the door snapped her out of her spiraling thoughts, nearly startling her.

"What the fuck are you doing in there? Giving birth?" came a frustrated voice from outside the cubicle.

It dawned on Violet that she had been in there for quite a while. "I'm almost done. Give me a minute!" she shouted back.

Quickly wrapping a towel around herself, Violet stepped out of the cubicle to face the impatient girl waiting just outside.

The girl shot her a nasty glare. "Next time you want to jerk off, do it when there isn't a line of people waiting for you to finish," she snarled before disappearing into the cubicle, slamming the door shut behind her.

"Wait—what?" Violet stood there, dumbfounded.

Did the girl actually think she had spent all that time in there pleasuring herself?

Unfortunately, there was no point trying to explain herself now, not when the door was already shut in her face.

With a sigh, Violet moved further into the room, only to feel the weight of several eyes falling on her. Conversations quieted around her, and the once buzzing locker room went still as the other girls turned to stare at her in unison.

Even without them saying a word, Violet knew what this was all about. They had been talking about her, probably blaming her for what had gone down out there.

But Violet She didn't care. Let them gossip all they wanted.

Turning her back to the room, the purple haired girl let her towel slip to the floor, stripping without hesitation. If they had something to say, they could say it to her face.

Without shame or fear, she quickly changed into her school uniform, slammed her locker shut with a loud bang, and walked out, startling a few girls nearby.

Cowards were they for not Confronting her directly. After what had happened with Asher's violent display, it was clear none of them wanted to risk becoming a target.

With her head held high, Violet walked away. She would deal with one problem at a time.

Except it seems in Lunaris, problems never seem to finish.

Chapter 39: The Oracle

MOON FEED EXCLUSIVE: A NEW STAR ARISES

Written by: The Oracle

Hello, my dazzling denizens of Lunaris Academy! It's your ever-watchful Oracle back with the latest whispers sweeping through our academy grounds. So grab your lattes and settle in because this edition is one for the books.

The halls of Lunaris Academy have never been this electric, and no, it's not because of Alaric's lightning storms. There's a new player on the field, and she's turning tables faster than you can say "moonshine." Say hello to Violet, our purple-haired wildcard who's been stirring up more drama than a full moon weekend.

From Zero to Hero?

First things first, who is Violet?

This human mystery came out of nowhere breaking records faster than Roman's smirk wins hearts. Violet made history by landing in the top twenty rankings on her very first day. Mic. Drop.

A human—yes, you heard me right —climbing higher than some of our seasoned wolves. Coincidence? Maybe. Conspiracy? Likely. Talent? Oh, absolutely.

But this human hurricane hasn't just stirred up the leaderboard; she's whipping up chaos in hearts, classrooms, and perhaps even amongst the cardinal alphas themselves.

The Asher Angle

Speaking of chaos, let's talk about our brooding Alpha Asher. All eyes are on the West Alpha as he has taken quite the interest in Violet. His signature smirk has been spotted in her direction more than once. If you haven't noticed that, then you've clearly been living under a rock.

And let's not forget how his protective instincts flared earlier today. We can't help but wonder if this is just another one of his infamous games, or has the emotionless Alpha finally met someone who's immune to his mind games? Either way, we're watching

Starry-Eyed for the Lightning Prince?

Now before you assume Asher and Violet's story is just another classic tale of Alpha meets girl, think again.

Word from the front row of Advanced Biology is that our resident human has been caught giving none other than Alaric, the brainy and oh-so-reserved Alpha of the North, what some might call longing stares.

Whether it's his intellect, his power, or his untouchable charm that's caught her fancy, we can't say for sure. What we do know is that Alaric is the type to avoid drama like the plague, so if this becomes anything more, it'll be the scandal of the season.

Griffin & Violet: Hate or Heat?

And then there's the firestorm that is Violet's dynamic with Griffin Hale. After their not-so-friendly clash, some are wondering, Is there more to this friction. Is this animosity masking something deeper, or are they destined to be each other's ultimate undoing? Afterall with Griffin's monstrous charm and Violet's unshakable nerve, they would quite a power couple. Either way, it's deliciously messy.

Fortunately — or unfortunately — It may seem our heartthrob Roman is the only one unaffected with the purple fever. But then, never say never. After all, Violet seems to be checking out prospective partners.

Queen Bee in Trouble?

Hope we did not forget Lunaris' reigning queen bee, Elsie Lancaster either. Word on the grapevine is that Violet's meteoric rise might be threatening Elsie's iron grip on the academy's social ladder.

Could our human newcomer actually shake up the status quo, or will Elsie hold her crown? With Violet's newfound attention from the alphas and her growing fanbase, it's clear this rivalry is only just beginning.

A Wind of Change or More of the Same?

One thing's for certain, my lovelies. Violet is the storm Lunaris never saw coming. Will she break the system, or will the system break her? The forecast predicts a whirlwind of drama, action, and maybe even a touch of romance.

Hence no matter the outcome, we'd live for every second of it. 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.

Yours ever nosy,

The Oracle.

"You're dead meat," Dion commented as soon as he was done reading aloud the article that turned out to be the cause of all the creepy staring.

Violet had no idea if Dion had been stalking her or what, but the instant she was out of the locker room, there he was, standing alongside Lila, ready to accept the offer of that lunch with her. Or rather, with them, she and Lila, to be precise. This was no date, just a little meal with friends.

Friends? Since when did she have friends?

Whatever.

It had been Dion's idea not to have lunch in the Silvered Court, so here they were like outcasts on the lawn, soaking up the afternoon rays under the shade of a tree. Not many students were around, mostly choosing the cafeteria hall to eat, and though she wouldn't admit it, Violet liked the scene and solitude.

The few students around were either talking excitedly or on their phones and didn't seem to mind her, which was perfect for Violet considering this was the reason she had agreed to avoid the cafeteria in the first place. Hence, Dion and Lila ended up bringing her lunch instead.

Unlike in the morning, most of the foods served at this time were comfort foods. Thanks to werewolves' fast metabolism, dishes rich in calories and carbohydrates were provided to help restore their lost energy.

"I'm not dead meat," Violet replied with a tone of frustration, taking a bite out of her burger with more force than necessary.

Violet didn't mind, but despite how delicious the burger was, it all felt like sand in her mouth. She just couldn't find her appetite, not with all that was going on.

Dion continued, oblivious to her distress, "The Oracle has dug an open pit for you; all that's left is for you to be pushed into it and cemented forever."

She put away her food in annoyance this time, saying, "Why would you say that? Why would some little gossip spread rubbish to get me into trouble? Who is she? Where is she right now? Perhaps I should teach her to mind her own business and stop writing baseless stories." Violet sneered, furious.

Chapter 40: Desire

"You staring at Alaric wasn't baseless gossip," Dion said with a knowing smirk.

Violet, the way you looked at him was so captivating, I swear the sparks in your eyes could have rivaled Alaric's own thunderbolts."

At once, a blush crept up Violet's face, and she couldn't exactly deny it, not when there was picture evidence. Yes, the Oracle had somehow captured her staring at Alaric while he slept during class.

But she had only looked because he was undeniably handsome at that moment. Unfortunately, her innocent admiration had been twisted into something more by the gossip column.

And to make matters worse, how dare that coward, hiding behind her pen and paper, suggest she had any kind of interest in Griffin? She would sooner cut her own throat than have anything to do with that bastard.

"Moreover," Dion said, the amusement fading from his face, "no one knows who the Oracle is, and neither do we search for her—"

"Why assume the Oracle is a 'her'? It could be a 'he' for all you know," Violet interrupted.

"From the tone of the articles, it sounds feminine—like gossip between girls—so we assume it's a she," Dion replied.

"It could also be a disguise, a trick to throw people off his trail in case anyone tries to find him," Violet reasoned.

"Whether the Oracle is a he or a she, the point is that no one searches for the Oracle. If anything, the Oracle finds you instead. She's a collector of information, which means she probably has secrets on everyone here, making her either a dangerous enemy or a powerful ally. It all depends on which side you want her to be," Dion explained.

But Violet snorted. "She doesn't scare me. I don't have secrets."

Dion frowned. "Don't push your luck. The Oracle has sources everywhere, making information retrieval look like a piece of cake. And look at what happened today, she doesn't need an ugly secret to turn your life upside down."

While Dion's warning sank in, Violet's gears began to turn. "So, she might be able to find my parents then?" she asked.

"What?" Dion said in confusion.

"That's the only secret I have. That is, if it even qualifies as a secret," Violet replied. "I'm sure the moment Asher pulled my records, he already found out I was adopted."

"About that, I don't know..." Dion said, uncertain.

"See?" Violet shrugged, making her point. "She can't find everything, after all. I don't have some incriminating secret like the rest of you. It's the ones who have the most to lose who have too many secrets to cover."

Dion groaned, rubbing his palm down his face. "You do know you're too stubborn for your own good."

Violet smirked. "I like to think of myself as difficult to convince."

They both laughed, and Violet realized she was enjoying Dion's company more than she had expected.

But then Dion said, almost out of nowhere, "The Cardinal Alphas all had females satisfying their needs before you arrived." The comment was so sudden that Violet, still caught up in the euphoria of their joke, felt the smile vanish from her face.

He went on, his tone ominous, "What do you think these women will do when some purple-haired girl comes out of nowhere and snatches away their prized Alphas? Alphas, some of them have already dreamed of having a future after graduation."

Violet's throat suddenly felt dry, and she swallowed before saying, "I have no interest in their Alphas."

"That's not what they see," Dion replied. He leaned in, his gaze boring into hers, as if he could see through the deepest parts of her soul. "And besides... desires can change."

For some inexplicable reason, Violet's heart began to pound, and she felt vulnerable beneath Dion's unnerving stare. No matter how much she tried to deny it, she knew he was right. Desires do change.

Asher was slowly breaking down her defenses. She still hated Griffin, but she was undeniably curious about his beast side. And then there was Alaric whom she might just have a crush on.

Fuck. This was getting bad.

Desperate for a distraction from the intensity of the moment, Violet's eyes fell on Lila. It was strange for Lila, the usual chatterbox, to have remained so silent, and from the looks of it, she was furiously typing away on her phone.

Without warning, Violet snatched the phone from Lila's hands. At that action, Lila's eyes widened in shock.

"No, don't, Violet! Don't go to the comments section!" she shouted, panicked.

But that was exactly what Violet did.

And from the look of things, it seemed that Lila had been using a bot account to defend her under the Oracle's post.

Instantly, Violet's stomach churned with dread. If Lila had been using bot accounts—gods knew how many—to write positive remarks about her, then the situation must be worse than she thought.

With a sinking feeling, Violet took a deep breath and clicked on the comment section, bracing herself for whatever lay ahead.