

Defy 321

Chapter 321: Souvenir

Violet's eyes widened. "A-are you sure?"

Griffin caught her hand and pressed a warm kiss to her knuckles, his voice laced with amusement. "Just admit you've been lustng after my hair."

Violet couldn't help it. Laughter burst out of her. Damn it, he was right. She had been obsessing over his hair. What a weirdo she was.

"Let's go, then." Griffin didn't even hesitate. With a devilish grin, he scooped Violet up by the waist and carried her straight toward the shower.

"Wait—Griffin!" she squealed, laughing as she clutched his shoulders, but he was already sliding the door open with one hand and stepping inside with her in his arms.

"Trust me, you'll want to see this," he murmured with that teasing glint in his eyes.

Violet barely caught her breath before he set her down and gestured toward the built-in shelf lined with an impressive lineup of shampoos. She blinked, genuinely stunned.

"Is this sandalwood?" she murmured, fingers grazing the bottle. She picked up another one and smiled. "Peppermint... cedar... citrus bergamot? Griffin, what are you— secretly running a hair spa in here?"

Griffin let out a deep chuckle. "What can I say? Even a big guy needs to take care of the goods. Besides, you should blame my mother for that." He tossed his hair back with a grin. "Pick your poison, queen."

Violet shook her head in amused disbelief and reached for the cedar and sandalwood blend, popping the cap open to let the rich, earthy scent fill the air. "Mmm. This one's you."

Griffin stepped under the water, his long hair soaking instantly as the steam filled the space. Violet hesitated only for a moment before stepping behind him, rising on her toes, while her fingers slipped into his thick, wet hair.

"Good luck with that," Griffin teased over his shoulder.

"Shut it." Violet grinned, massaging the shampoo into his hair, her fingertips working with slow, circular motions as the lather built. His groan was low and unguarded, vibrating through his chest as she worked, and the sound sent a delicious thrill through her.

The water poured down around them, soaking Violet's sleeves and clinging to her skin. She laughed breathlessly as a stream ran down her neck.

"Ugh, Griffin, this is horrible! Don't you have a stool or something?" she protested, half-laughing as she stretched to reach over his broad shoulders.

Griffin turned his head slightly with a smirk. "I have something even better."

Before Violet could ask, he reached around her, his strong arms wrapping around her thighs, and lifting her off the ground in one smooth motion.

"Griffin—!" Violet gasped, her arms instinctively winding around his neck as she laughed. "Okay, okay, you win!"

But Griffin only grinned, his hands secure at her waist. "Told you. This is better."

Mmhmm. It was quite comfortable. If you know what she meant.

With her heart racing, Violet balanced herself and pressed her fingers back into his hair, rinsing out the last of the lather between soft giggles. The closeness, the heat of the water, the rough strength of his chest under her fingertips, had all tangled together, turning something as simple as washing his hair into something unbearably intimate.

Finally, she rinsed him clean, brushing the wet strands away from his face as his vivid brown eyes met hers. It was dark, hungry, and locked on her like she was the only thing in the room.

Violet barely managed to whisper, "Done..." before Griffin tilted his head, his lips catching hers in a kiss that was soft at first, then deepened as if neither of them wanted to let go.

A groan rumbled from Griffin's throat, his hands tightening at her waist, pressing her flush against him as her fingers slid through his damp hair. The heat of the shower, the wet slide of skin, the muffled sounds of their kisses, every part of it blended into a heady, feverish rush.

When they finally broke apart, Violet was gasping softly, her forehead resting against his as she tried to catch her breath. She looked down, and burst into laughter.

"I'm drenched," she swiped water from her face as her soaked clothes clung to her like a second skin.

Griffin only grinned lazily, his eyes dark with affection and mischief. "Yeah. But you're gorgeous, soaking wet."

Violet playfully shoved at Griffin's chest, laughing as he carefully lowered her back onto the floor. He seemed genuinely happy as he brushed a wet strand of hair from her cheek.

"You can grab anything from my closet," Griffin murmured, giving her a crooked grin. "I'll be out soon. I still need to bathe."

But Violet's eyes gleamed with mischief, her voice dropping into a sultry purr. "I could join you, if you want."

She fluttered her lashes dramatically, with that teasing little smile she knew could melt even the most guarded walls.

Griffin paused, raising an eyebrow as if tempted, his lips twitching at the corners. "Really?"

"Yes, baby," Violet murmured, stepping close enough that her fingers brushed along his bare arm. "I'm all yours..."

For a split second, it almost worked. Griffin leaned in, his face so close she could feel the brush of his breath. But then, with a wicked grin, he murmured against her ear, "Not today, Satan."

Before Violet could blink, his palm gave a playful slap to her ass, making her squeal and spin in surprise.

"Get behind me, trouble," Griffin chuckled, sending her away before that little minx put her in temptation.

Violet stood there with a mock pout, lips pushed out and arms crossed as the bathroom door clicked shut before him.

She huffed softly. Her charm didn't work this time. But all hope wasn't lost because she got the chance to explore Griffin's wardrobe and pick any of his shirts — one she didn't intend to return. It would be her souvenir for this visit.

She couldn't hold back the grin creeping over her face as she turned toward his closet.

Inside the bathroom, the sound of running water picked up again. Griffin looked down at the erection brought on by Violet's request and shook his head.

Violet Purple would be the death of him.

So Griffin Hale finished his shower. Alone.

Chapter 322: Mummy And Daddies

This. Was. A. Dream. Come. True.

Violet adored each of her men equally, but every now and then, she craved the warmth of someone with Griffin's easygoing, cozy nature. Quiet Moments together like these felt like the perfect kind of date, especially in the middle of the chaotic whirlwind that was Parents Week.

She was currently wearing one of Griffin's shirts, which, on her, might as well have been a dress, brushing the tops of her knees. Yep.

But Violet didn't care, because right now, Griffin was stretched out on the bed with a deep, satisfied groan, his long, burly frame sinking into the mattress. His damp hair, still tousled from the shower, spilled in wild waves across her lap as she sat cross-legged near the headboard.

And yes, she was combing his hair. You heard that right. His hair was hers to pamper today.

Her roommates were probably searching for her by now, since she'd only told them she was stepping out to the restroom. Luckily, Violet had already scheduled a message to ping their phones, just vague enough to calm them without revealing her location. Lila had her phone anyway. Violet had deliberately left it with her so she wouldn't suspect anything when she "went to the restroom." And it looked like Lila had swallowed the bait. Ha!

Violet smoothed her palm over Griffin's thick mane, marveling at how soft it felt between her fingers.

"Has your mother spoken to you since yesterday's incident?" she asked, slipping a wide-toothed comb gently through the first dense section.

"No, not yet," Griffin replied, a low, contented rumble vibrating from deep in his chest, one hand resting lazily over his stomach.

He glanced up at her. "You don't need to worry about her. My mother's known for her fiery temper, but she'll calm down eventually. You'll see." Griffin's voice was a rough velvet, his eyes closed, and a rare look of complete peace softening his usually fierce features.

As Violet worked through a stubborn knot near the nape of his neck with delicate fingers, she shifted the conversation. "You have such fine, thick hair. It's unfair. I'm jealous."

That earned a lazy chuckle from Griffin, his shoulders shaking lightly. "Of course you are."

"So, just asking," Violet started, "This hair thing, it's hereditary, right? I mean, I wouldn't mind having kids running around with a thick mane like this."

Griffin let out a mock gasp. "Violet Purple, you're thinking about children already when we haven't even plowed that garden yet?"

"I don't mind having kids..." Violet admitted softly, a bashful look on her face, especially as Griffin tilted his head up in that position, watching her speak. "...As long as there's enough resources to raise them. I wouldn't want my child going through the same suffering I experienced in District One. Most especially, they would have both parents to raise them."

There was a beat of silence until Griffin turned around fully, hands braced on either side of her, facing her directly.

"You mean they'd have their mummy and their daddies?"

At once, Violet's face lit up. She nodded, "Yes, their mummy and their daddies." She leaned in to seal the sweet agreement with a soft kiss on his lips.

Griffin's gaze lingered as he asked, "Do you like a large family?"

Violet rolled her eyes like he'd just asked the most ridiculous question. "I grew up alone. Of course I want a big family."

"Perfect." Griffin smiled, pressing a kiss to her neck. Violet sighed, a soft exhale of contentment escaping her lips. Warmth bloomed in her chest, stronger than she expected. She tilted her head back, silently inviting him closer.

"How many kids are we thinking here?" Griffin murmured against her skin, his lips trailing up her neck.

"I could give you ten," Violet said without missing a beat.

Griffin froze. His lips stilled on her skin, and he slowly pulled back, blinking. "Are you kidding me right now?"

But Violet only shrugged. "Their daddy has money. We should aim for the sky."

Griffin couldn't hold it in. Laughter burst out of him, deep and uncontrollable. The gods help him with Violet.

"Fine," he managed between chuckles. "Ten kids for me." He pulled her closer, holding her tightly. Then he asked, teasingly, "What about Asher?"

Violet bit her lip thoughtfully. "Five children for Asher—three girls and two boys. I wouldn't mind seeing a bunch of little versions of him running around."

"You really think Asher can handle that?" Griffin asked seriously, "Honestly, I wouldn't even be surprised if Asher didn't want kids."

Violet didn't know why, but that comment made her chest tighten. If Asher didn't want kids, she'd respect that, but deep down, she knew better. She'd been inside Asher's head, seen the boy who'd been denied a childhood.

No, Violet had this quiet conviction: Asher would be a fiercely devoted father, the kind who wouldn't let anyone harm his children. And well, he had already promised to put a babe in her belly.

Damn it. Why did that thought turn her on?

"Asher wants kids," she murmured confidently. "Trust me. He'd be an amazing father."

Griffin gave her a curious look, as if trying to figure out what gave her such certainty. But he let it go, a crooked smile tugging at his lips. "Alright. And what about Roman?"

"Oh God," Violet groaned dramatically at the mention of Roman, making Griffin burst into laughter.

"For Roman," Violet declared with mock exasperation, "I'll give him three kids. All girls. No boys, please."

A boy for Roman? Goddess help them.

The female population would never recover. Violet shuddered at the thought.

"And then, two kids for Alaric," she added, grinning. "Our little prince and princess. That should be enough for that busy nerd to handle."

Griffin broke into another deep laugh, his chest rumbling. It was the kind of laughter that warmed the whole room.

"So," Griffin teased, "twenty kids total. You've got your work cut out for you, Rogue Queen. Sounds like we're building a whole community."

"Oh yeah? And you don't?" Violet shot back, her eyes sparkling. "You owe me ten kids, or have you forgotten?"

"How could I forget?" Griffin drawled, amusement heavy in his voice. "Looks like I've got the hardest job after graduation, giving you ten kids."

With that, Griffin tugged her down onto the bed, her head hitting the pillow with a playful bounce. Then he slid between her thighs, bracing himself over her, and leaned in to kiss her with a wicked grin.

Violet's legs instinctively wrapped around him, her fingers threading into his still-damp hair. She gave a slow, languid massage to his scalp, coaxing soft, content murmurs from Griffin as they melted into the kiss.

The world outside slipped away, leaving only the two of them tangled together in this private moment. One that belonged only to them.

Chapter 323: Asher's Surprise

Violet lay tangled in Griffin's arms, their breaths soft and steady, his chest rising and falling against her back.

His muscular arm was slung protectively around her waist, anchoring her in place while his nose was buried in her hair, breathing in the subtle scent that was uniquely Violet.

His warmth enveloped her, his scent grounding her, and in that cocoon of comfort, they both drifted deeper into sleep.

The match with the parents would occur later that evening so both of them had enough time for themselves and weren't bothered about being disturbed. Well, not for long.

The sharp ring of Griffin's phone cut through the peaceful silence, jarring but not quite enough to stir them. It rang once and both of them ignored it, nesting closer instead, as if daring the world to try harder to pull them apart.

It rang again, this more persistent and shrill, but still, neither of them moved. Violet pressed her face deeper into his arm, and Griffin's hold on her only tightened, a low, contented sigh escaping his throat.

But the third ring finally pierced through their cozy defenses. Violet was the first to stir. Her brow was furrowed as she let out a sleepy murmur. "Griffin," she mumbled, her voice still thick with sleep. "Pick up your call."

With a groan of pure annoyance, Griffin reached blindly for the phone without even cracking an eye open.

"Hello?" he mumbled, his voice hoarse.

"Bring Violet," came the familiar voice on the other end. It was short, and straight to the point and then the call ended.

Griffin slowly lowered the phone, blinking now as Violet shifted in his arms to look at him, her hair a soft, wild mess around her face.

"Who was that?" she asked, rubbing at her eyes.

Griffin let out a long breath. "It's Asher." He reluctantly pulled his arm from around her, sitting up. "He wants me to bring you back to the school now."

Violet blinked, confused. "Why?"

"I don't—" Griffin started, but his phone buzzed again with a new message. He swiped it open, brows drawing together as he read. "Asher says he has a surprise for you."

"Surprise?" Violet echoed, sitting up straighter, her curiosity piqued.

In the past, the word surprise from Asher might have set her nerves on edge, but now it stirred excitement in her chest. Whatever it was, she trusted him.

With a burst of energy, Violet hopped from the bed and hurried to grab her clothes from the balcony where they'd been drying. She pulled them on with lightning speed, her heart already racing. She was hundred percent eager to know what kind of surprise Asher had for her. So yes, she couldn't wait.

"Let's go," Griffin said with a grin, already dressed as well. He knew they were about to walk out of his room where anyone could see and had zero hesitation about it.

The rumors could fly. Not that Violet cared. After all, Alpha Irene had practically given them her blessing at the luncheon yesterday.

Perhaps, Violet thought with a wry smile, she had Elsie to thank for that. If not for her, she and Griffin might still be sneaking around in secret. But not anymore.

The East House hallways were quiet as Violet and Griffin descended the stairs. But the moment they reached the common area of East House, a small cluster of students lounging nearby turned their heads.

Violet braced herself, half-expecting the usual stares of outrage. After all, she was a rogue walking hand-in-hand with their Alpha. But instead, what met her was their mild, almost casual surprise? Some of the pack members even gave knowing smirks or approving nods, as if they had been waiting for this moment all along.

Violet blinked, her mouth parting in disbelief. She turned to Griffin, silently asking for an explanation, but the big boy only grinned and tugged her along with a breezy "Let's go."

Still dazed, Violet allowed herself to be led forward, stumbling slightly as her mind scrambled to catch up. Unfortunately, good things never last.

The instant they left East House and stepped into the broader academy grounds, the atmosphere shifted. Students from other houses were out and about, and their own reactions were far less restrained.

They looked at them wide eyes. Some of them even pointed fingers at them in disbelief while low murmurs began to spread like wildfire.

"Is that... Violet? With Griffin Hale? No way..."

"Does Elsie even know about this?"

Some of them secretly took pictures of them but Griffin didn't flinch. His grip on Violet's hand tightened with determination as he guided her through the gawking crowd.

When they reached the school grounds, Violet's eyes swept the area, searching but there was no sign of Asher.

She turned to Griffin, frowning. "Can you ask Asher where exactly we're supposed to meet him?"

"Sure thing," Griffin replied calmly, pulling out his phone to tap out a message.

Within moments, Asher's response came through. "Outside."

Violet let out a small huff of impatience. "Let's go, then."

They stepped onto the front lawn, where students and parents were scattered in loose clusters, laughter ringing out, drinks in hand, enjoying the festive atmosphere. Violet sighed, scanning the area again.

"Trying not to kill the excitement here, but what exactly is Asher up to—"

Her words caught in her throat as her gaze locked onto a figure across the lawn.

Violet's heart stopped.

Her breath hitched.

No... it couldn't be.

"Is that—"

Without another word, without thinking, Violet's fingers slipped from Griffin's grasp as she took off running, feet pounding across the grass.

"Nancy...!"

The name tumbled from Violet's lips as she hurled herself forward. And then familiar, beloved arms were wrapped tightly around her, pulling her into the kind of embrace that no time or distance could weaken.

"My sweet child," Nancy whispered against Violet's hair, her voice raw with emotion.

Violet clung to her mother, face buried in her shoulder, shoulders trembling as tears slipped down her cheeks.

They stood there, wrapped in each other, oblivious to the curious stares of students and parents alike.

Chapter 324: Play The Game Smart

Among the parents watching Violet and Nancy's joyous reunion was a certain Alpha of the South and his prodigy, Roman Draven. They had been having a conversational stroll when they stumbled upon the scene and stood to watch.

"Who is she?" Alpha Leon asked.

"Which of them?" Roman asked with a taut voice. One that Leon didn't realize. He hoped to God it was not the "who" he was thinking.

"The one with the purple hair," Leon said, his gaze fixed intently on her. "She's pretty."

Roman didn't even know when the threatening growl rumbled from his chest, and that finally drew Alpha Leon's attention. He raised his brows at his son's attitude, then stared in the direction of Violet and then back at his son again.

"Don't tell me you're into her?" he asked playfully, hoping that wasn't the case. But when he saw the resolute look on Roman's face, it dawned on him at once what was going on.

"Oh God." The expression drained from his face. "You've fallen for her. She's the reason you went celibate. You're fucking in love with the purple head," he said it as if it was a bad thing.

"She has a name, and it's Violet. Not that I want her name coming out of your mouth," Roman snarled at him.

Leon looked around and realized they were in the open where anyone could eavesdrop on their conversation. He grabbed his son by the arm, saying firmly, "Let's talk somewhere more private." Then he pulled him along.

Roman did not even protest as his father yanked him forward as if he were a child. He already saw this coming when his fate became entangled with Violet. He was a cardinal alpha with responsibility on his shoulders. His fate was decided even before he was born. It was the reason he was given these powers. His life was never his to live. But for his people. His pack. His father. And now he was about to risk it for Violet. So yes, he never expected it to be easy.

Alpha Leon's jaw was clenched tight, and his strides were angry. It seemed he didn't have the patience to wait any longer because he pulled Roman to a corner of the building, secluded from view, and hissed in his face, "What the fuck is going on? Spit it out right now!"

Roman lifted his face and told him, "You already know it. Why ask again?"

"Don't get cheeky with me!" he warned angrily. "I thought you and Elsie were getting along! What the fuck happened?!"

"We are no longer together. That is what happened. The girl is a fucking bitch, and I can no longer stand her. She treated me like a fucking tool she could use and dispose of whenever she needed!"

"Fucking bitch or not, we need Elsie Lancaster!" Leon yelled back, every ounce of his playful personality gone and the shrewd businessman he was known for coming to life.

"She's the clause Elijah added as a requirement to being his heir. Elijah hates your ass enough, all of the cardinal alphas already. And you want to test his patience by rejecting the woman he has promised to his heir. Or..." his eyes narrowed sharply with suspicion, "are you planning on giving up on being his heir already?"

Roman gulped.

He quickly answered, "No."

"Thank God," Leon breathed as if that was a long relief.

Then he reached out and grasped Roman's face with his palms, intending to speak sense into him as he said, "The same way you fell in love with the purple head—"

"Violet," Roman corrected firmly.

"Fine, Violet," Leon accepted the name, if that would change his mind about the foolish decision he was about to take. "You fell in love with Violet, you can fall out of love with her. Or have you forgotten what I taught you, Roman? Men like us are the prize, and women would always flock to us no matter what. I'm sure you think Violet is the one and only one meant for you. But trust me, there are a thousand Violets in the sea. You cannot allow yourself to be weak right now. Not when it's just a few months to graduation and everything would be ours, son..." he leaned his forehead against his, saying with endearing passion, "... you'd be the next Alpha king, and our pack would rise above the others. Just think about it, son, envision such a future, Roman."

Of course, Roman envisioned the future. Every day. That was the reason he had stayed by Elsie's side. Because he needed her. Once he became king, it was supposed to be the both of them together. So he had forced himself to try to love her. To look beyond her faults. To stand. To defend. Because of what was ahead. The future.

But that was until Violet came along, and he saw a different future. One where he could breathe. One where he could be happy.

Roman lifted his face and said to his father, "I'm sorry, but I can't. Not with Elsie."

"And why can't you exactly? It's not like I'm asking you to dedicate your life to her! Look at your mother and me. You can do anything you want after you become the Alpha King. The kingdom of the wolves would be yours to dominate and rule, Roman! This is all I ask of you, Roman!" Leon demanded.

"I'm bonded to her!" Roman snapped.

"What?" Leon croaked.

Roman explained to him slowly, "My animal side is bonded to Violet."

At that moment, Alpha Leon looked like he was going to suffer an aneurysm.

"How did this happen?" The man looked genuinely scared as he asked. "Please don't tell me it's a mate bond."

"I don't know. I don't understand it myself. I'm the first of my kind, after all, and I don't know how it works. All I know is that I cannot stay away from her. My other side yearns to be with her. Tell me, is that how the mate bond works? Is she my mate?" Roman keenly inquired from him.

Leon looked shaken, his mind spinning as he scrambled for a solution to this unforeseen disaster. All the plans and visions he had for his son couldn't just fall apart like that. He quickly told Roman, "Don't do anything for now. Have you mated with the girl yet?"

"Mated?"

"Have you slept with the girl? Don't make me ask silly questions, Roman."

"No, not yet."

"Good," Leon said. "Let it remain that way. Have your fun with Violet, let her soothe your animal side, but don't get into her pants yet. Don't do it, Roman."

"Fine, I won't," Roman lied.

Leon breathed out. "I'll look into this and get you an answer as soon as possible. At the same time, try to get on Elsie's good side. We need to play this game smart if you want to become the next Alpha King. Do you understand me, Roman?"

"Yes, Father."

Chapter 325: One Happy Family

Elsie Lancaster and Caroline Lancaster stood before a door in the West House.

"Go ahead," her mother urged her.

Elsie took a deep breath before she knocked on the door. She was nervous, evidenced by the way her heart was pounding as she waited for the recipient on the other end to answer.

"Come in," Henry's voice came from inside.

Mother and daughter looked at each other, their minds made up, as they pushed the door open in unison and walked in.

Once they were inside, they were treated to the sight of a student urgently fastening the last button on her shirt. It wasn't hard to guess what had transpired, and Elsie's eyes narrowed at once when she recognized one of her elite girls.

Kelly.

That nasty bitch! Even planning to climb the social ladder in her absence.

However, Elsie controlled herself. Once she was done here, she would deal with the girl.

To think the girl dared to try to put her claws on her father-in-law? Did she think Henry was the type to be controlled? Ha, the bitch was in for the shock of her life.

This was why girls like Violet should never have been allowed into Lunaris in the first place. She was beginning to corrupt the other girls in this institution. After all, where would Kelly have learned such whore behavior?

As for Alpha Henry, he looked relaxed in his seat, not even bothered that he was caught having relations with a girl nearly the same age as his son. Was this why he had left his wife back at the West House? To have fun with the younger ones? Not that the wife wasn't young herself.

But from the rumors Elsie had heard, Asher's new mother was simply a trophy wife. Henry hardly took her out to important events — such as this — unless he was in the mood to show her off. Otherwise, the woman remained at home to serve his needs.

Elsie would have felt sorry for the woman, but then, that was what you get when you're a "nobody" married to men in power. You get exactly what you deserve. Nothing.

She still didn't understand why Alpha Henry had married a woman like that. She must have seduced him, just like Violet was doing to Asher. Perhaps Alpha Henry deserved the right to cheat after all.

Kelly vanished almost immediately, and Henry said to them, "You can have a seat."

Elsie and her mother sat down, looking around. It seemed Asher had exclusively designed the room for Alpha Henry to relax and receive his visitors whenever he visited Lunaris.

"You look more beautiful than the last time I saw you, Elsie. No doubt you would make a pretty wife for my son when he becomes Alpha King," Henry said with pride.

"You flatter me, Alpha Henry," Elsie said, blushing.

At once, Caroline took over. "And that is why we are here, Alpha Henry. To talk about our families' future, because if we don't take precautions now, then not only would your son lose Elsie, he might end up not being Alpha King at all."

Henry's face darkened immediately. "What are you talking about?"

Mother and daughter exchanged a look of pure satisfaction, having gotten the reaction they wanted from Henry.

Without delay, Elsie pulled out her phone and showed him. "I'm sure you've met this face."

Alpha Henry looked at the picture with a frown. "Isn't that...?"

"The girl who splashed the water balloon on you? Yes, you're right. Her name is Violet Purple, and she's the daughter of a whore. Unfortunately, your son has been ensnared in her web as well."

"What are you talking about?" Alpha Henry demanded, his voice sharp.

At once, Elsie began to recount everything that had happened so far, all from "her own" perspective. By the time she was done, Henry's face was as dark as a storm.

To add to her daughter's story, Caroline said smoothly, "My daughter Elsie has tried her best to put the girl in her place, but Violet Purple takes comfort in your son's protection, and my dear Elsie can't do much. And it's much worse now that Irene has given her support."

"That damn woman! I should have known!" Henry hissed, slamming his hand on the armrest.

Caroline smiled inwardly, pleased to have achieved her purpose. Still, she pressed on, "So, Alpha Henry, I ask that you speak to your son and—"

She didn't get to finish, because the door was suddenly pushed open at that moment.

Everyone turned as Asher Nightshade appeared at the entrance. Caroline and Elsie froze on the spot. They had come here to tattle on Asher to his father, and here he was. Talk about bad timing.

But Asher wasn't alone. Beside him stood a taller, older man, one Alpha Henry immediately recognized.

"Alpha Ezra? Is that you? What are you doing here?"

Yes, Alpha Ezra was Nancy's mate and leader of the Midnight Pack. While Ezra held the title of alpha, Henry outranked him in the hierarchy, just as Elijah was the Supreme Alpha, aka the Alpha King. The West Pack was the capital, overseeing all packs under Henry's rule, including sub-packs like the Midnight Pack. The same structure existed across the East, South, and North Packs.

"My apologies that we're meeting under these circumstances, Alpha Henry. I've only just settled with my mate, and now I have no choice but to stand up for her daughter."

"Wait a minute, you have a mate? And your mate has a daughter?" Alpha Henry was visibly taken aback.

Before Ezra could respond, Asher smoothly cut in. "Oh, you know Ezra's new stepdaughter. You've pretty much met her already, and I'm sure they've helped introduce her to you as well." His words carried a pointed undertone, his gaze fixed on Caroline and Elsie, who now looked just as confused as Henry.

"Violet Purple is Ezra's new stepdaughter, and by extension, part of the West Pack. Our family just keeps getting bigger, don't you think?"

Chapter 326: Not Under His Control

Silence hung in the room for what felt like forever, until Elsie whispered, "That's impossible."

But Asher, lifting a daring brow, replied, "You mean to say congratulations are in order?"

Elsie opened her mouth to speak, but nothing came out. She glanced at Alpha Henry, silently begging him to step in, but his brows were deeply furrowed, and he said nothing.

Desperate, she turned to her mother, hoping she would have a defense in this critical moment, but Caroline was silent too, her expression tense and thoughtful.

Finally, Elsie looked at Asher. That infuriating, taunting expression was plastered all over his face, the same smug look that said loud and clear that he had just won.

And that was when Elsie snapped.

"This is all a lie! He's lying!" She pointed at Asher, then at Alpha Ezra. "And he's lying too. I bet the two of them planned this together!"

"Elsie!" Caroline hissed, trying to rein her in, especially seeing the way Ezra's expression had darkened. But Elsie was too far gone.

She went on, loud and unhinged now, her words aimed straight at Henry, knowing he was the only one whose judgment mattered.

"Can't you see? He's even lying for her! I told you that bitch Violet had her claws deep into your son! Just like her whore of a mother, Violet Purple has—"

Elsie didn't get to finish because everything happened in a blur. One moment she was spewing her venom, and the next, Alpha Ezra moved like lightning, slamming her up against the nearest wall. The impact cracked the wall, and Elsie gasped in pain. Ezra's hand was around her neck, squeezing tight as he snarled, "Did you just call my mate a whore?"

"Elsie!" Caroline screamed in terror. She spun to Henry. "Do something!"

"Ezra," Henry said sharply, expecting him to obey.

But Ezra was no longer in control. His wolf was. And now the creature demanded justice for his mate's honor. Ezra's grip around Elsie's neck only tightened, and she gasped, eyes wide with pain, realizing just how deep in trouble she was. This was why it was always warned to never get between mates. They would defend each other to the bitter end. Like now.

"Alpha Henry!" Caroline cried out again, panic rising as Elsie struggled desperately for breath.

At once, Henry rumbled an Alpha command. "Let go now, Ezra."

The power in his voice rolled over Ezra like a crushing wave, suppressing his wolf and forcing it into submission. Ezra's eyes cleared as he returned to himself and he released Elsie. She crumpled to the floor like a rag doll.

Gasping, Elsie scrambled backward, crawling frantically to a corner where she huddled, hacking and choking like someone on their last breath.

"Leave us. Now," Henry ordered coldly.

Caroline lifted her head, only to meet the hard look of disappointment on Henry's face. She opened her mouth, rushing to do damage control as always.

"Alpha Henry, I understand you are—"

"Leave. Now." Henry's voice was final, leaving no room for argument.

Caroline's lips clamped shut. With no other choice, she reached for her daughter and helped her up, quickly guiding her out.

Once the door closed, a heavy silence fell over the room. Henry's eyes moved from Ezra to Asher, finally settling on his son. Of course, Henry wasn't stupid. This had been perfectly timed, and it had all the marks of his cunning son's handiwork.

"What is going on here?" he demanded, his voice icy cold.

Ezra adjusted his jacket, straightened, and said, "Apologies for not coming earlier to pay my respects and introduce my mate properly. Nancy and I were caught up in the mating fever, and then we came here. Nonetheless, since we are here, I'll say my piece. Nancy is my mate, and while I am obliged to protect her, her daughter's well-being is also my responsibility. I don't fully understand what's going on here,

but if so much as a single hair on Violet's head is harmed, be assured I will come after whoever is responsible with the full fury of a spurned mate."

Ezra didn't mention Henry's name outright, but the warning landed squarely where it was aimed.

Henry's face darkened, his expression like thunder, and for a moment it looked like he might explode. But he held it in, his voice taut as he turned to Ezra. "I need to speak to my son. Alone."

Ezra didn't protest. He simply gave Asher one last long, concerned look, then turned and left.

And maybe Ezra's concern was justified, because the moment the door shut behind him, Asher Nightshade took a hard blow to the face.

"You fucking bastard!" Henry roared, his anger unleashed at last.

Asher's head snapped to the side from the force of the punch. But he took it all in stride, laughing, "Okay, maybe I deserved that one."

Unfortunately, that laugh only enraged Henry further. He lunged to punch again, but Asher dodged easily, grinning. "You're getting rusty, old man."

The next punch came fast, and this time, Henry didn't miss. But just as it was about to land, Asher locked eyes with his father and, used his compulsion. "Halt."

And just like that, Henry froze mid-swing.

Asher smiled that cruel smile of his, the one he wore whenever things were going exactly as he planned. He taunted, "How's that mental wall of yours holding up? Seems like you miss me so much, you're even slipping there."

Alpha Henry straightened, his expression like ice now. "Why don't you try again and find out."

Of course, after raising a son with mind control abilities, Henry had become a master of mental shielding.

But Asher only chuckled darkly. "Of course. How could I defeat the great, disciplined Alpha of the West Pack? Not when he's at full strength."

"Don't push me," Henry warned, his voice low and deadly, the game ending in an instant.

"Don't lay a hand on Violet," Asher shot back, his tone just as sharp.

Father and son locked eyes, the tension crackling between them like static. Neither looked away, until Asher finally did, casually wiping the blood from the corner of his mouth where the wound from the punch had already begun to heal.

"That's all for now, Father," he said mockingly. "If you don't mind."

And with that, he turned his back and walked out, unbothered, not even glancing back to see if Henry would strike again. That alone was the deepest insult because it meant Asher was no longer afraid of him. Not anymore.

The moment Asher left, Henry let out a thunderous roar, then tore through the office, destroying everything in sight, smashing anything he could get his hands on.

The kid thought he was grown? Fine. He'd teach him a lesson.

And as for Violet...

Chapter 327: A Boyfriend At A Time

Violet didn't get a chance for one-on-one time with Nancy. Not with so many people eager to meet her. Also, where were her boyfriends? She could not find any of them to introduce to her mother, except Griffin.

Right now, Violet and Nancy were seated under a canopy that Lila had set up for them. Where Lila had gotten the resources? No one had a clue. But Violet and the others had learned never to question Lila's ways. They would never understand them anyway.

It was Violet, her girls, Griffin, and Daisy's brother Jack who sat under the canopy. After yesterday's incident at the luncheon, Ivy's parents hadn't bothered to show up today. They didn't approve of the company their daughter was keeping and claimed they were embarrassed by her choices. Chances were, they had already gone back to their district and wouldn't bother with their daughter again.

Well, they could go to hell, as far as Violet was concerned. Parents who didn't care about their child's happiness didn't deserve to be called parents. Which was why she and the other girls were determined to make sure Ivy had a good time. Not that there was much to do, Ivy was too wrapped up in Jack to care about anything else.

Daisy's parents hadn't made it either, blaming the distance. But Violet knew, deep down, it was because they couldn't afford the trip. Daisy could have told them, and the group would have happily covered the travel expenses. But she didn't.

The fact that Daisy hadn't asked — knowing they would never refuse and would absolutely help — meant she didn't want their money. Violet respected that and let her be. After all, she wouldn't want anyone looking at her like she was dead weight either. She had her pride too.

At the same time, Violet wondered if Daisy knew Ivy was crushing on her brother. Honestly, it wasn't that hard to see. Not with the way Ivy's eyes lit up like Christmas had come early, and how she couldn't stop gawking at the guy. And during one of their playful jibes, when Jack had casually flexed his muscles? Yeah, Ivy had practically drooled.

So, yes, it was obvious. But knowing Daisy, the girl had a high IQ, not so much EQ. Stuff like this didn't exactly hit her radar quickly. And if Daisy had noticed, she wasn't saying anything.

Violet couldn't blame Ivy though. Jack was handsome, especially with that curly hair that kept falling into his eyes — beautiful brown eyes that Ivy clearly wanted an excuse to brush his hair away from.

The only downside to this was that Jack was a bit too old for Ivy. Six years older, to be exact. Not a huge gap, but still. Guys like Jack usually didn't go for younger girls like Ivy; they tended to see them as easy flings or too immature to take seriously.

Violet could only hope this little crush didn't end up causing drama between them. She wanted the best for Ivy's love life, but from what she'd seen, falling for your best friend's older brother rarely ended well.

And there was no telling if Jack even liked Ivy back. For all they knew, he probably had a girl waiting for him back home. The gods help them, because this had all the makings of a disaster.

"Here you are. Found you," someone said, snapping Violet out of her thoughts.

She looked up to see a handsome man approaching her mother with a smile, and from the way her mother immediately perked up, it wasn't hard to guess who it was.

Ezra King. Her mother's new mate.

Nancy hadn't stopped talking about him; she was practically rapping praises since she arrived.

Violet adjusted in her seat, preparing to stand and introduce herself to her new father—ugh, no, scratch that—her mother's new man. She had already opened her mouth to speak when Ezra leaned down and kissed her mother passionately, right there in front of everyone.

It was probably at that exact moment the reality of Nancy being Ezra's mate finally sank in. Her mother had found someone the heavens had destined for her, and they were bound together forever.

Fuck. It was heartwarming and sweet. And gross. Especially watching them devour each other's faces like that. Eww. Couldn't these old people get a room?

Violet quickly looked away, clearing her throat, and unintentionally breaking up the moment. Nancy and Ezra pulled apart at once, both grinning at each other with goofy smiles. It was an expression Violet noticed and memorized, because honestly, she had never seen Nancy look that happy before.

To be fair, as happy as Violet felt for her mom, there was also a small stab of jealousy. Nancy had always reserved that kind of attention and love for her, but now she was giving it all to this stranger. And yet... Nancy seemed truly content.

"Grow up, Violet," she scolded herself inwardly.

"Violet, this is Ezra," Nancy said at last, making the introduction. "Ezra, this is Violet, my daughter."

"Nice to meet you, Violet. I'm Ezra King, Alpha of the Midnight Pack." He held out his hand.

Violet, now on her feet, shook his hand. "I'm Violet Purple, and I don't really have a title yet unless you count the moniker 'The Rogue Queen.' "

Ezra looked completely baffled.

"Long story," Violet added quickly.

Ezra nodded, even though it was clear he didn't get it, and let go of her hand.

"And these are my friends..." Violet went on, introducing everyone under the canopy.

As the introductions went on, Violet quietly studied Ezra. One thing she'd noticed about the men Nancy had dated in the past was that they always had that lusty look. But Ezra didn't look at her the wrong way. Or at her friends. Not even once. And that alone earned him points in Violet's book.

Although she'd still keep an eye on him. Nancy looked genuinely happy for once, and if this man ever hurt her, Violet was pretty sure she'd be committing her first murder. Nancy might not have been her biological mother, but she was the closest thing she had to a real mother figure.

"I know this isn't the ideal time to meet or to talk about this. And I know you're a bit old to have someone stepping into the role of a father," Ezra said, scratching his head awkwardly, "but I want you to know, Violet, you can count on me. I'll take care of you."

But Violet shook her head. "You don't need to take care of me. Just take care of Nancy. That's all I ask."

"I know, and that's my promise to you. But Nancy is my mate. Whatever concerns her, concerns me. If Nancy's worried about you, I'll be worried too."

"In that case, no need to worry," Violet replied. "I'm well protected here." She glanced at Griffin with a fond smile. And then, as if she felt it before she even saw it, Violet looked up and spotted Asher striding toward her like some angel descended to earth. "...By them."

Nancy and Ezra followed her gaze and saw Asher approaching.

As soon as he was close enough, Violet started to say, "Mom, meet Asher, he's—" but she didn't get to finish.

Without warning, Asher cupped her face in his palms and kissed her with raw, possessive passion.

Violet hadn't felt this kind of intensity from Asher since the night she discovered his secret. It was explosive, the kind of kiss that said he wanted to own her. Her mind was still spinning even after they pulled apart. She looked up at him, breathless, and saw his eyes burning with fire.

"You're mine now, Violet Purple. Forever," he declared.

Violet smiled like a fool.

It was only then that Violet remembered that she had company. She turned to look at Nancy, who was utterly dumbstruck.

And that's when it hit Violet, she'd only introduced Griffin to her as her boyfriend.

Fuck.

She had planned to ease into things. One boyfriend at a time.

Oh well. Guess she'd just roll with it.

Chapter 328: Not Normal People

Knock, knock.

"Come in," Zara's voice called from inside.

Alaric Storm turned the knob and stepped in.

It wasn't hard to spot Zara Storm. She was seated by the window, a cigarette in hand, deep in conversation with someone on the other end of her call. Her eyes lit up when she saw him, and she smiled, quickly stubbing out the cigarette and pulling the phone away from her mouth to whisper, "Just a minute. I'll be done soon, son."

Alaric knew how that went. A minute would probably turn into an hour. He didn't bother waiting. Instead, he left to look for his father.

He glanced around the room his parents had been given for their brief stay today, and it had been completely transformed. What was supposed to be a guest room looked more like a home office. Scratch that. Their "real" home, which was basically their office. If you knew his parents, you'd get it.

Papers and documents were strewn everywhere. Prototypes and design sheets cluttered every surface. Alaric's frown deepened. They brought work to Parents' Week?

He shouldn't have been surprised. This was who they were. He'd always known that. And yet, for some reason, today it pissed him off. Was it too much to ask for one day? One day when they put everything else aside and focused on him? Wasn't he worth that?

Maybe it was his own fault. He'd set them up in a fully functional room, complete with all the equipment they needed to keep working. Deep down, he'd always known this was exactly how it would turn out, even if he hadn't wanted to admit it.

It didn't take long to find Alpha Caspian. His father was in the adjoining room, a phone wedged between his ear and his shoulder, holding a report up to the light as he scrutinized it.

"Alaric! You're here!" Caspian called out happily, moving to hug him only to realize both his hands were full.

"Oops, sorry about that," he apologized awkwardly, fumbling to set something down but hesitating, clearly torn between the phone and the report in his hands. He chose the report, but since he was still on the call, he got distracted and started stuttering his replies. The report must have been important too, because he hesitated, glancing around, clearly unsure where to put it.

Alaric didn't bother responding. He just shook his head in exasperation, his eyes scanning the room and noticing all the new setups that hadn't been there before.

"You shouldn't have bothered coming if you were this busy," he said bitterly.

Caspian immediately picked up on the sharp edge in his tone and the way Alaric's eyes lingered on the work-filled room. He ended the call at once.

Caspian approached him tentatively. "The match isn't happening until this evening, and your mother and I thought we'd get a little work done in the meantime," he explained, sounding guilty.

"Yeah. Obviously." Alaric's voice dripped with sarcasm.

Caspian blinked, caught off guard by the anger simmering in his son's tone. "Alaric, what's wrong? Do you want to talk? I swear, just say the word and your mother will drop everything and give you her full attention."

Alaric wanted to snap—grudgingly—that it wasn't worth bothering, but then Violet was important. This was a conversation he actually needed to have, and for once, he wanted his parents to know about her. So, with clear reluctance, he gave in.

"Yes. We need to talk."

Caspian's nod was tight, his whole posture shifting. Nothing terrified him more than when Alaric said he "needed to talk." He stiffened, then lifted his head and bellowed toward the other room, "Honey, it's code red!"

"Oh God," Alaric groaned, dragging a hand down his face as the familiar dread hit him. They still used that ridiculous system to classify his problems. What was he? Ten?

"What? Code red?" Zara shouted from the other room, her hurried footsteps echoing as she rushed over. "Dear God. Who did he nearly electrocute to death this time?"

Alaric glared at her as she arrived. "I didn't electrocute anybody, okay? I just want to talk with my parents..." He sighed heavily. "...Like normal people do."

Caspian and Zara exchanged a long, pointed look.

"This is serious," Zara said, her voice taking on that mock-gravity tone.

She eased herself onto the elevated stool and gestured. "Alright, honey, talk. We are all ears."

"Yes, talk. We are here for you," Caspian added, smiling dotingly at his wife, one hand massaging her back as he stood beside her.

"Thank God," Alaric muttered, genuinely relieved. He took a deep breath and started, "It's about Elsie. The thing is—"

His mother's phone rang, cutting him off.

Zara immediately declined the call. "Don't worry. Go on. This is a me-and-you moment. Nothing's coming between us."

To be fair, Alaric's heart fluttered a little. For once, his mother was putting him first, above work.

He opened his mouth again. "Elsie and I are no longer—"

The phone rang again.

"Holy shit!" Zara jumped to her feet, only to quickly apologize. "Fuck! Sorry for the language, but it's the president!" She gave him a helpless look. "Alaric, darling, I love you, but I have to take this."

He shouldn't have rejoiced so soon.

Alaric sighed. "Fine. Go."

"Thank you, sweetheart." Zara blew him an air kiss as she answered, already walking away. "Hello, Mr. President..."

And then it was just Alaric and Caspian. The silence between them felt... awkward, to say the least.

"I might not be as good at offering solutions as your mother," Caspian said, puffing out his chest a little, "but you can talk to me, son."

Right on cue, his phone started ringing.

"Ah, shit, it's your brother, Ace. God knows what mess he's in now." Caspian glanced up at Alaric, as if asking permission.

He didn't need to ask. Alaric just waved him off with a resigned look.

"You're the best son," Caspian said quickly, picking up the call. His next words were already spirited and animated as he dove into whatever new drama Ace had stirred up.

It wasn't long before Zara came running back into the room, shouting, "Alaric, darling!"

Before Alaric could ask what was going on, she had already launched herself into his arms, pressing a long, smacking kiss on his cheek that left him completely flustered.

She said excitedly, "Remember that Thermal Cloak Suit you came up with? The one that completely masks the wearer's scent and body heat, making them nearly invisible to a werewolf's senses? The president loved the prototype we sent. He's already asking us to start full development! You are a genius!" She kissed him again, practically glowing.

"Oh." That was all Alaric managed, overwhelmed by both the news and his mother's sudden outburst of affection.

"That's good news I guess," Alaric added, torn between feeling proud and frustrated. He had no idea whether to stay mad at them for not listening earlier or just be happy for their success. This clearly seemed more important than his love life.

"Yes!" Caspian chimed in, beaming. "Did you hear that, Ace? The gods blessed your brother with both your mother's and my brains."

Alaric frowned. He hated when his father made those comparisons. It only fueled the rivalry between him and Ace.

Then, as if suddenly remembering her son actually had concerns, Zara said quickly, "Ah, right! You were talking about something—Elsie, wasn't it? Don't worry about that girl. You've got brains and money. Who in their right mind wouldn't want my boy?" She rubbed her forehead affectionately against his, full of motherly pride.

She straightened and added confidently, "Elsie Lancaster is our kin and a pureblooded she-wolf. She knows what's right and won't forget her duties. As for the match with your father, well, you know it's just a drill. Don't stress. He'll go easy on you." She patted his chest like she was wrapping things up. "That's all."

She stepped back and smiled. "Now, your father and I have work to finish before the match starts. Unless, of course, you don't mind helping out?"

"I'll pass," Alaric muttered.

Chapter 329: The Third One

Everyone was in high spirits. It was just one hour until the highly anticipated match between the cardinal alphas and their parents. At this point, nearly all the girls were busy dressing up and doing their makeup for the event.

But for Nancy and Violet, this was a rare window of opportunity to talk. Waiting until after the match wasn't an option since there was no guarantee they'd get a moment alone, especially with the students sure to be in full party mode afterward.

Violet took her mother to her room, which had finally been repaired—thanks to Lila—while the girls stayed behind to entertain Alpha Ezra.

She'd told herself she was ready for this moment. But when Violet and Nancy sat down, the room fell into an awkward silence.

"I'm sorry—"

"I'm sorry—"

They both spoke at once.

"I'll go first," Nancy said quickly.

"No, let me." Violet shook her head. "I need to apologize first, Nancy. I'm sorry about last time. For being angry at you and—"

"You had every right to be angry, Violet," Nancy cut in gently. "I should have called you beforehand, but well, Ezra and I got a little carried away with the mating fever..." She trailed off, her cheeks turning pink.

Violet had to blink hard, almost in disbelief. Was Nancy blushing? Nancy, of all people? She must have stepped into an alternate universe.

Her curiosity got the better of her. Violet tilted her head and said pointedly, "Mating fever, huh?"

"Yes, Mating fever," Nancy answered, this time with a smug little smile.

Violet leaned in, waggling her brows. "You know, they taught us about mating fever this semester. What's it really like? A mad urge to couple, or what?"

"More than that," Nancy said, leaning in too, answering her curiosity without a hint of shame. "Honestly, they should've called it 'fucking frenzy.' Can you believe Ezra and I went at it for two days straight with no food, and barely any sleep, just breaks in between." Nancy licked her lips like she was savoring the memory. "I swear, there's no position that man didn't have me in. Best feeling ever," she sighed, blissfully.

Ah, yes, Violet thought. That's the Nancy I know

. She had only asked for a "little" detail, but Nancy, true to form, had handed her a full-blown, graphic explanation that Violet knew was going to haunt her imagination forever. Thanks so much, Nancy.

Maybe feeling mischievous, Violet told her with a wicked smile. "I also remember the teacher saying that for mated pairs, fertilization always happens during mating fever."

She watched Nancy's face closely. If there was one thing Nancy had always dreaded, it was pregnancy. Nancy had said many times that Violet was the only "pest" she'd ever willingly put up with. She couldn't imagine having more little life-suckers drain the youth out of her. Motherhood? That was not her vibe.

But then Nancy surprised her when she said, "I don't mind."

"What?!" Violet nearly shouted, her jaw practically hitting the floor.

Nancy looked a little nervous but pressed on. "Ezra wants more kids."

"More kids?" Violet repeated, wide-eyed.

"He has a son from his late wife. The boy's been so lonely and giving him a sibling seems like the right thing to do. His name's Axel and he's a nice kid. Trust me when I say you'd love him when you visit for the holidays."

For a moment, Violet just stared, utterly speechless.

"Violet?" Nancy's smile wavered, concern flashing in her eyes. She waved a hand in front of her daughter's face. "Are you okay?"

Violet blinked, her voice low with disbelief. "Who are you and what have you done with Nancy?"

Realizing what just happened, Nancy burst into laughter and gave Violet a playful shove. "Oh my God, stop! You're ridiculous!" She laughed hard, and Violet joined in, the two of them cracking up together in that light, rare moment of pure fun.

But as the laughter faded, a quiet seriousness settled over them like a fog.

Nancy fiddled with her hands, guilt clouding her expression. She finally spoke with a soft voice. "I was a terrible mother to you, Violet."

"You did your best," Violet replied honestly.

"I could have done better."

"You took me in when no one else would. You gave me a roof, food, everything I needed to grow." She shrugged. "That counts for something."

Nancy's eyes dropped. "I still should have done better."

"Then do better for your next kid. That is if you want to have one." She locked eyes with Nancy, her tone firm. "I don't care if Ezra's an Alpha or your mate. Have a baby because you want to and not because you feel like it's your duty."

"I do want to have this kid, Violet," Nancy said with conviction. "I've been doing a lot of self-reflection lately, and I realized my life so far had no real meaning. The fact that a good man like Ezra is giving me a second chance, despite the kind of life I've lived, that has to count for something, right? I want to know what motherhood really feels like. I can't run from it forever. So yes, I want this child."

"Then have it," Violet said simply. "It's not too late for me to be a big sister."

A huge smile tugged at the corners of Nancy's lips. "Thank you, Violet."

"Thank you, Nancy," Violet answered back with a small smile.

Nancy couldn't help herself. She pulled Violet into a tight hug, sniffling as her eyes watered. "I'm so sorry for all the good times we missed."

"I told you already, it's alright. Please don't cry." Violet patted her awkwardly. "If both of us start, there'll be no one left to comfort us."

Nancy snorted a laugh, pulling away to wipe at her tears. "Right. No crying. No negative energy in this room."

It was clear Nancy was back to herself when the very next words out of her mouth were: "So, four boyfriends, huh?"

Violet rolled her eyes. "It sort of happened."

Nancy arched a brow. "Violet Purple. Four cardinal alphas do not just 'sort of happen.'" She said her full name with heavy emphasis.

"And to think I was worried you were going to die a virgin." Nancy huffed, blowing out a breath of exasperation. "I didn't know you were—wait a second. Have you guys fucked? Oh my God," she gasped dramatically, eyes wide. "Violet Purple, you had an orgy?!"

God help her. Violet did not want to have this conversation.

Nancy looked scandalized, clutching her chest. "Dear Lord. To think this is all my fault. I taught her everything I knew and she took it a hundred steps further."

Then, as if something occurred to her, Nancy's eyes went wide again. "Please tell me you're on the pill or something. Violet Purple, I cannot be a mother and a grandmother at the same time! What would my kid even call your kid? Brother? Sister?"

"Oh my God, Nancy! You are exaggerating! I haven't even had sex yet!" She yelled back.

Nancy blinked. "Okay, wait—what? Why?" She suddenly frowned, her tone shifting into curiosity. "What's wrong? Are the boys not capable? Or..." She leaned in with a dark grin. "Are they too big for you? Can't get it in? Don't worry, it can be a lot at first. But you'll get used to it. There's always lube. Or—wait, should we find a witch to magically reduce the size? Ezra told me those things are possible." Nancy looked genuinely excited as she started listing out possible solutions.

That was it. Violet had hit her limit.

"Mom!" she snapped, her face burning. "I think it's time for you to leave." She jumped up from her bed. She was done. So done.

"What? Fine." Nancy got to her feet, smirking. "We'll finish this conversation later."

Like hell we will, Violet thought darkly. There was no way she was letting this woman keep planting these wild, terrifying thoughts in her head.

Nancy wiped at her face and sighed. "But I can't leave like this, Ezra will freak out if he sees the dried tears on my face. Where's your bathroom?"

"Over there." Violet pointed stiffly, gritting her teeth.

"Thank you, daughter," Nancy sing-songed, clearly relishing Violet's misery, grinning all the way as she disappeared into the bathroom.

Violet collapsed against the bed with a long, exhausted sigh. Dear God. She buried her face in the mattress, completely drained. But after a moment, a small smile tugged at her lips.

If Nancy was happy then fine. She could live with that. She was just about to let herself relax when she heard a hissing sound.

Violet's eyes snapped open. Her head shot up, her heart sinking the second she spotted the source of the sound.

Oh no.

There he was.

Roman was creeping in through his usual little hole in the corner of her room, in his favorite snake form.

"Roman, no!" Violet hissed, scrambling off the bed. "Go back! Go back!"

She rushed toward him, waving her arms frantically to shoo him away. Oh God, please, Nancy's still here! This was not the way for them to meet!

But fate obviously had other plans.

"Violet!" Nancy's voice rang out from the bathroom, getting closer. "Why is your bathroom so—" She stepped into the room and froze mid-sentence, eyes widening. "Snake!"

Before Violet could utter a single word, Nancy grabbed her slipper with lightning speed, letting out a war cry. "Not on my watch, Satan!"

"No, wait—" Violet tried, reaching out helplessly but it was too late.

Nancy was already in full attack mode, charging after Roman, who hissed in panic and darted across the floor, desperately trying to escape her furious swings.

"Get back here, you little devil!" Nancy shrieked, aiming deadly blows as Roman slithered for his life.

With no other choice, Roman bolted to the corner, and transformed mid-slither. In a flash, he was fully human again, stark naked, red-faced, and sporting slipper marks all over his skin.

Nancy froze mid-swing, her eyes wide as saucers. She stared at the half-naked man now crouched in the corner, chest heaving from the chase.

"What the fuck?!" Nancy screamed, stumbling back, one hand flying to her chest.

"Nancy, wait!" Violet cried, rushing forward. "Calm down! Don't be scared! This is Roman. He's my... uh... my third boyfriend."

Nancy just stared at her, stunned into silence. Her brain visibly short-circuited.

"What the fuck, Violet!" she finally choked out, looking between Violet and Roman, eyes wild.

And just like that, Nancy's eyes rolled back, and she fainted right away. Thankfully, Roman moved and caught her halfway to the floor.

Roman, still breathless and looking wildly disheveled, muttered to his unconscious mother-in-law in his arms. "Nice to meet you, I guess?"

Violet groaned, slapping a hand to her forehead. "Oh, for fuck's sake."

Chapter 330: Dirty Thoughts

It was worth noting—seriously worth noting—that Roman Draven was lucky to be alive.

After that completely unexpected and frankly absurd twist from the universe, Ezra King had stormed into the room only to find his mate, Nancy, in the arms of a very naked Roman.

It had taken exactly one punch to Roman's face, a breathless, rushed explanation from Violet, the girls physically holding Ezra back from finishing what he started, and a lot of desperate pleading to keep Roman from being turned into wolf chow.

As it turned out, Roman had only intended to sneak in for a quick kiss, like he usually did, before the match. Instead, he left with a fat lip and a bruised face.

Well, at least his lips were tingling. Just not in the way he'd planned.

And thanks to that incident, Nancy was practically milking every detail she could about the cardinal alphas from her.

"So that's the fourth one, Alaric Storm?" Nancy asked, pointing at Alaric at a corner of the room talking to commander Malakai.

"Yes, that's him." Violet concurred with a sigh. She was so tired of talking.

The indoor combat training room had been repurposed for the event, and Violet had to hand it to Griffin for his quick thinking. The seating was arranged strategically, with parents given top priority. Any student who couldn't find a seat had two choices: stand, or get creative, like squeezing in with a friend or sharing a lap.

The best part about having the organizer of the event, and a cardinal alpha, no less, as a boyfriend was that Violet and her loved ones had front-row seats to the match. Griffin had even set up a barrier to make sure no one crossed into the fighting zone and got hurt.

From what Violet had learned from Griffin, this match was just a drill. Whether or not the cardinal alphas were stronger than their parents, they could not defeat them, at least, not publicly. Parents or not, these were still the leaders of their respective packs, and even a playful event like this could be taken seriously in the werewolf world.

The cardinal alphas wouldn't officially rule or take over leadership until after graduation. If they were to defeat their parents in front of everyone, it could send the wrong message that they were ready to lead now. Wolves were creatures of hierarchy, hardwired to follow the strongest. A public victory could trigger unrest or challenge the existing order.

So, even if the boys could win, they had to intentionally hold back. Their job was to entertain the crowd with a good show, showcasing Lunaris's flagship education, and nothing more.

Alpha Irene and Griffin's fight was up first, and Violet was already on the edge of her seat. Even though Irene still wasn't speaking to her or Griffin, that didn't lessen Violet's respect for the woman. In fact, she was most excited to see her in action.

Yeah, this was going to be good.

Commander Malakai stepped up onto the middle of the arena, his voice ringing out through the speakers, loud and clear.

"For those new to the event," he began, "this match is a demonstration only. There will be no bloodshed, no weapons, and no brutal attacks permitted. However—" his eyes swept across the crowd with a knowing look,—"it will still be violent, so viewer discretion is advised."

The audience made both of students and parents murmured with excitement.

"The rules are simple," Malakai continued. "The match ends when one contender taps out or clearly concedes. That's it. May the best Alpha win."

With that, he stepped aside, but instead of exiting quietly, his voice amped up with the flair of a wrestling announcer. "Now stepping into the arena, the Alpha of the East, the iron-fisted legend herself, Alpha Irene!"

Everyone cheered as Irene strode into the arena, and Violet swore she heard Nancy whistle appreciatively beside her.

"I swear, I want to be like that woman when I grow up," Nancy joked, her eyes shining with pride.

Violet couldn't help but burst into laughter, because honestly? Same.

Irene had changed into a stunning red jumpsuit, custom-fitted and sleek as hell. The fabric hugged her curves perfectly, high-necked and long-sleeved with sharp, angular lines down her waist and legs that gave her an even fiercer silhouette. Black combat boots and fingerless gloves completed the look, making her look every bit the warrior Alpha.

And clearly, Violet wasn't the only one impressed because from the other side of the arena, Arion shot to his feet, puffing out his chest as he announced to anyone within earshot, "That's my woman right there!"

It was a sweet gesture, one that had Violet smiling, but she knew deep down that Griffin would be dying of secondhand embarrassment at his father's theatrics where he was.

Before the cheering even died down, Commander Malakai's voice rose again, hyping the crowd to the next level. "And now, the reigning champion of Lunaris Academy! The beast himself, Griffin Hale!"

The arena exploded with noise. Nearly every student was on their feet, screaming and chanting "The Beast", showing just how beloved Griffin was.

"Hot damn, Violet," Nancy said, eyes locked on the arena. "You are one lucky girl."

Violet felt her cheeks flush immediately, and when she looked, she knew exactly why Nancy had said it.

While Irene had given them a show in that knockout jumpsuit, Griffin had taken the opposite approach. He strode into the arena shirtless, wearing nothing but a pair of loose black pants that hung low on his hips, leaving the rest of his glorious body completely exposed.

Every perfectly sculpted muscle was on full display: his broad chest, powerful arms, and those deep, chiseled eight-pack abs that looked like they'd been carved out of marble by the gods themselves. Griffin's tanned skin gleamed under the lights, taut and flawless, the movement of his body a perfect display of strength.

Violet swallowed hard, her mind doing dangerous things. One of these days, she swore, she was going to drag her tongue over every inch of those abs, nice and slow. Hell—what was she even thinking?!

She shook her head quickly, face burning as she forced the thought out of her mind.

Focus, Violet! Focus on the match and not on the dirty thoughts she planned to do to one of her boyfriends.