

Defy 351

Chapter 351: Purple Queen

It was two hours to the gala event, and yet the students, especially the females, were running amok as if they were already an hour late. They had to look perfect, and two hours, in their definition, was simply not enough.

Violet and the girls were in the living room going over their dresses. Just like the other students on the day Griffin had announced the gala, they too had placed their orders, and now, the night had finally come.

Daisy had gone for a sleek, midnight black satin gown with a high neckline and delicate cap sleeves. The dress hugged her figure gently before flaring into a soft mermaid silhouette that brushed the floor. The back was then opened in a tasteful teardrop cut, adding a quiet sensuality to her otherwise modest style.

Ivy had chosen a rich sapphire blue gown made of satin and tulle. The dress featured an off-the-shoulder neckline with dramatic puff sleeves and a fitted corset bodice. The skirt was voluminous, with layers of structured tulle underneath, giving her that classic ballroom drama she lives for.

Lila herself had surprised everyone by going for a pale lavender gown with a halter neckline and a crisscross back that left her shoulders and upper back bare. Threadwork in the shape of tiny butterflies scattered down the bodice and trailed onto the flowing skirt, finalized with an unexpected slit on one side.

As for Violet, she had opted for a deep emerald green satin slip dress with thin spaghetti straps, a low open back, and a thigh-high slit on one side. The dress was meant to hug her body effortlessly, giving her a confident silhouette without trying too hard.

At the moment, they were arguing makeup options with Ivy, their "honorable makeup artist," when there was a knock on their door, and the girls halted at once.

"Are you expecting anybody?" Daisy asked Violet.

"I don't think so."

"I'll see who's at the door," Lila said with a tone of finality, her voice already hardening as if she were about to gut someone and not just answer it.

"I'll go too, just in case," Ivy said, running after Lila at once.

Daisy and Violet simply looked at each other and sighed. Hopefully, there would be no more drama, since the night was already set for the actual drama.

"So..." Daisy turned toward Violet, narrowing her eyes with that usual keen expression. "Are you and Lila good now?"

"Kind of," Violet answered honestly, "I haven't gotten all the answers I want, but she's given me something, and for now, that's enough."

But the way Violet said it with that determined glint in her eyes, made it very clear to Daisy that "for now" had an expiration date. Violet was not someone who let mysteries rest for long.

Right then, Lila and Ivy came back. Except Ivy, had a suspiciously huge box balanced in her arms with a grin that looked entirely too mischievous.

Violet's brows pulled together. "What is that?"

Ivy giggled. "What do you think it is, if not a gift for you?" She handed over a small note tucked into the ribbon and waved it teasingly in Violet's face.

Daisy leaned over her shoulder before Violet could even open it. "I know you already have plans," she read aloud, "but we were hoping you'd wear this instead."

Ivy squealed, clapping her hands. "Did you hear that? Not 'I' but 'we'. That means all your boyfriends planned this. All of them! You are one lucky bitch!"

Violet licked her lips, anxiety and excitement tangling together. The idea that her boys—her Cardinal Alphas—had picked something out for her together was a moment she wasn't forgetting anytime soon.

"Open it! Open it! Open it!" Ivy bounced.

Honestly, if this had been any other day, that level of excitement would've been all Lila. Ivy was more of the reserved, sarcastic type, but tonight, she was giving all kinds of high-energy cheerleader.

Under the living room's light, Violet pulled back the ribbon and opened the box. What she pulled out made everyone stop.

"Holy mother of God," Ivy breathed.

"Fuck me," Daisy whispered, stunned.

"Goddess me," even Lila muttered, eyes wide.

Violet could only gape. The dress was something else.

It was a flowing, deep royal purple gown that shifts slightly in color under the light, giving it a soft violet glow. The dress has a fitted corset-style bodice with a subtle V-shaped neckline, covered by a sheer mesh embroidered with silver details.

The sleeves are sheer and designed to fall off her shoulders, and flow down to her wrists with delicate flower and vine embroidery. While the skirt flared out in soft, layered waves

Inside the box was a pair of dangerously high amethyst-crystal heels, and resting beside it was a black velvet choker with a single moonstone pendant.

Violet held her breath. The dress was out of this world and she couldn't believe it.

Without warning, Ivy screamed so loud that the girls instinctively flinched and shut their ears, bracing like the roof might actually collapse. When they opened them again, Ivy was on her knees, dramatically grabbing Violet's legs like a woman begging for salvation.

"You have to teach me how you got the Cardinal Alphas, Vi!" she cried. "I want to have my own handsome, rich, possessive harem too!"

The sheer sincerity in her voice paired with the full-blown dramatics left Violet utterly dumbfounded. Lila just blinked. Was this how she used to act in the past? Daisy facepalmed.

"Ivy..." Violet began, completely lost for words, "it's really not that deep."

"It is!" Ivy wailed. "I want a harem that looks like sin and fights like war!"

Before Violet could even attempt a response, her phone vibrated with a soft beep. Grateful for the distraction, she pulled it out and checked the message.

It was from Griffin.

Would you be our queen tonight?

Violet's breath caught. Just six words, but her heart raced.

Her fingers moved before her brain could stop them, a soft smile curling her lips as she typed back.

Definitely.

Chapter 352: The Gala Begins

The Parents' Week Gala was in full swing. It was no wonder the students took the event seriously, as if their lives depended on it, considering every parent there was dressed to the moon. Naturally, the children of aristocrats wouldn't want to fall behind. They wanted to impress, and dazzle — and oppress one another.

This was a big deal after all, especially with the event streaming live for the districts. Finally, the world would get a glimpse of what it meant to be part of the elite Lunar Academy.

Although nearly everyone was dressed to impress, it still wasn't hard to differentiate the parents of the aristocrats from the parents of scholarship students, not when they flaunted their flashy gold, jeweled cuffs, and diamond-clad fingers.

The ballroom itself was grand and luminous. High vaulted ceilings draped with stunning chandeliers rained down a soft, luxurious glow while velvet-draped tables were arranged around a wide open dance floor of polished obsidian. Waiters in perfect uniforms moved through the crowd with gleaming trays, offering sparkling drinks and dainty finger foods while the soft hum of live string music set the perfect backdrop.

Elsie Lancaster might have had a few hiccups the past few days, but it was obvious she had come to this gala well-prepared. As soon as she made her appearance, the media team, who had been given clearance into the ballroom, swarmed like moths to a flame. Countless camera flashes lit up her face as microphones hovered before her lips.

"Elsie Lancaster, you look stunning tonight!"

"Elsie Lancaster, mind telling us who designed your outfit?"

The media peppered her with questions. And true to their words, Elsie Lancaster did look stunning.

She wore a bold crimson fitted gown with spaghetti straps that showed off her graceful collarbones. The bodice hugged her waist tightly, highlighting her already enviable figure. The fabric was rich and sleek satin, the skirt flaring just below her hips into a long, straight fall that brushed the floor, with a modest slit on one side for ease of movement.

Elsie wore silver heels, and her signature silver hair was swept to one side in soft waves, tucked behind one ear to reveal a simple diamond earring. Her makeup was a classic red lips, dark liner around her icy blue eyes, and a shimmer over her cheekbones that caught the light just right. She looked perfect.

Being one who loved attention, Elsie answered the questions with a charming smile. "The dress I'm wearing was designed by House Serenelle, and same goes for my shoes."

But the questions didn't stop.

"Elsie, how's your relationship with the alphas? It's just a few months to graduation, who do you think will emerge as heir?"

"Who do you want to end up with?"

"I heard you're especially close to Roman. What if he doesn't win? Would you reject him?"

"Elsie, how's your relationship with Violet Purple? I heard your position has been threatened by the new girl?"

Elsie had just been about to answer a few of the questions when she heard that one, and froze just like that. It was like an out-of-body experience. The buzzing, the voices, the cameras, all faded for a moment as her mind went blank. At that moment, Elsie was lost with her mouth wide open, looking like a fish out of water.

Thankfully, Caroline appeared at that moment and placed both hands on her daughter's shoulders, snapping her back to reality.

"I think that would be all for now!" Caroline smiled sweetly to the reporters and swiftly began to steer Elsie away.

"Just one question!"

"One more question, Elsie!"

The reporters rushed forward, but security moved in fast, blocking their path as Caroline whisked Elsie off.

"Are you stupid?" Caroline hissed under her breath as they walked. "How could you zone out like that? That was your chance to shine and take over this entire occasion."

But Elsie wasn't listening. Her eyes scanned the ballroom restlessly.

"What is it?" her mother asked, annoyed.

"Violet Purple. Is she here yet?"

At the mention of that name, Caroline's face twisted instantly. She sneered. "Are you kidding me right now?" She lowered her voice. "I'm already running out of patience with you, Elsie. Don't provoke me further."

Then her eyes narrowed as she looked ahead. "There's Irene."

Elsie followed her gaze and noticed the woman in red. Not just that, it was the same shade as her dress and her eyes widened. "She's in red. Is that why you told me to make a last-minute change?"

"For women, even the smallest thing can become the subject of conversation," Caroline told her seriously. "Our relationship with Irene is already on thin ice. Don't fuck up this opportunity. Now go." She gave her a little shove forward.

Elsie didn't even catch her breath before she was walking again, her feet moving on their own. Out of her peripheral vision, she noticed Grace, who was stunning in a blue outfit. After Caroline had caught them together, the only reason Grace was still allowed at school was because she had promised to stay away from her.

Grace smiled gently, but Elsie scowled in return. If she had stayed away from people like her, maybe she wouldn't be under such scrutiny from her mother now. Grace had served her purpose, now she could return to the dirt she crawled out from. Elsie needed her head in the game if she was going to defeat Violet Purple.

It was time for pleasure to end. It was time to take back control of her school.

So she ignored Grace and walked straight toward Irene Hale, who was speaking politely to another parent.

"Hello, Irene," Elsie greeted with a bright smile.

Irene, mid-laugh, turned toward her, and the transformation was immediate. The smile dropped from her face like a curtain and her eyes swept over Elsie with razor-sharp coldness.

The look she gave her made Elsie wish she had never walked over in the first place.

Damn it.

Chapter 353: Arrival Of A Queen

The parent Irene had been talking to noticed the tension between them and swiftly took her leave. With the woman gone, Irene faced Elsie with her hands clasped in front of her and asked politely, "How may I help you, Elsie Lancaster?"

Elsie did not know Irene much, but when someone called her by her full name like that, it couldn't be anything good.

"I—I... T-the thing is..." Elsie found herself stammering at Irene's intimidating stare. Unlike her, Zara was so easy to win over. The woman practically worshipped her. But not Irene. So far, sweet-talking was not Irene's style.

So she took the alternative her mother had offered and said at once, "Your dress is stunning, Irene. I love it. And it's so nice that we are both in red. The media might even think we are mother and daughter." She flattered her.

"Thank the gods we are not mother and daughter. Even my younger daughters know not to be as foolish as you," Irene callously said.

Elsie's face heated with shame, and her ego couldn't take such hit. But then, she needed Irene and so she swallowed her pride and apologized. "I'm so sorry, Irene. I honestly don't know what came over me these past few days. It must be the stress or something that made me lose my mind."

But Irene said to her with faux sweetness, "Still not taking consequences for your actions, aren't you such a delight, Elsie?"

Then she stepped closer, and Elsie instinctively took a step back, the woman towering over her.

Irene's voice was tightly controlled as she said, "I know girls like you. You think me stupid not to see through your plans?"

Elsie gulped, "No, that's not—"

"Shh." Irene pressed her finger against her lips, silencing her. She continued this time, her voice slower and intentional, "The only reason I have tolerated you so far was because of the prophecy your mother told me. But it's nice to know that prophecies have multiple interpretations."

Elsie Lancaster was stunned. What did she mean by that? It especially unsettled her seeing the cruel, satisfied smile on Irene's face as if she knew something that she didn't. Something that would not work in her favour.

Before Elsie could question what she meant by that, the light in the room suddenly dimmed. Everyone's attention was drawn at this point as the music shifted and the doors swung open.

Violet Purple made her appearance.

Impossible.

Elsie Lancaster had sworn she looked the best, but she was left in shock watching as Violet walked in like a goddess, her purple gown nearly luminous in the low light while the amethyst heels clicked on the floor with authority. It didn't help that the hall had gone silent, such that every step was heard.

Then, as if it were choreographed, the lights came back on just as her three roommates joined her on either side, looking like models on runways.

But what left the crowd gasping in disbelief was when the long-awaited cardinal alphas followed the girls from behind like sexy guardian angels.

"No way!" She heard whispers of disbelief all around her.

A cracking sound echoed when someone dropped their drink, and Elsie could understand their reaction considering she was close to suffering from an aneurysm herself. And it was all because of what the alphas were wearing.

Griffin was wearing a deep charcoal-black tux with rich burgundy undertones that subtly highlighted his red hair. The jacket was slightly fitted but allowed room for his broad build, with a sharp velvet lapel. He accented his suit with a royal purple pocket square and a dark purple boutonnière made of a wild violet and red flame lily. He looked rugged yet regal, like a knight guarding the queen.

And then talk about Asher Nightshade, who was wearing a sleek all-black suit, matte and sharply cut, with subtle violet embroidery along the cuffs and collar like hidden thorns. He had a black satin shirt underneath, with no tie. Just like Griffin, he accented his outfit with a single amethyst pin shaped like a crescent moon on his lapel, and a tiny sprig of dark plum lilac in his boutonnière. He wore gloves and, of course, black sunglasses no one dared ask him to remove. Overall, he looked like the mysterious, deadly beautiful assassin every queen always had.

Then there was Roman Draven. If there was anyone Elsie believed would never leave her, it was Roman Draven. But now, here he was at Violet's side, dressed in a deep forest green tuxedo jacket with subtle violet floral embroidery crawling up one sleeve. The trousers were black, slim-fitted, while his shirt was a muted lavender with a slight sheen. And just like the cardinal alphas before him, he had a vivid purple boutonnière with green vines wrapped around it.

The last, but obviously not the least, seeing he had jumped on the same train as the others, was Alaric Storm. He wore a classic midnight navy three-piece suit, the vest subtly embroidered with silver stars. Beneath was a white shirt with a soft violet tie. And yes, not to be outdone, he had attached a violet-and-silver boutonnière.

Their attire was intentional and obvious. The boys were doing this for Violet. They were all interested in her. How could they betray her like this? And to think they were doing this at the ball?

Elsie suddenly felt vulnerable and began to look around. And just as she thought, whispers were going all around her. They were talking about her and she could tell from their pitiful eyes.

Elsie Lancaster watched with seething hatred as the reporters surrounded Violet Purple while she was left behind.

Elsie had forgotten Irene was still with her, and she flinched when the woman leaned in to whisper, "And that is how a true queen moves. She has the support of her kings and doesn't move alone. Do have a splendid gala night, Elsie Lancaster."

And with that, Irene disappeared into the crowd, while Elsie was left there, tears biting at the corners of her eyes, her hands balled into fists.

If only she knew, this was the beginning of her miserable life.

Chapter 354: Roman's Test

Fame was blinding. And Violet meant it literally. There were so many camera flashes in her face she had to squint. Yeah, she was definitely not turning up bangers in those pictures they just took. Not that that was her problem, considering the questions were coming in like heavy rain.

"Violet Purple, you look dazzling, look this way, please!"

"Violet Purple, who designed your clothes? How much do they cost?"

"Violet Purple! Is it true you've officially replaced Elsie Lancaster as the Queen Bee?"

"You're here with all four Cardinal Alphas, Violet, are you dating one, or all of them?"

"Rumors say you're living in the Rogue shack. Is this some sort of rebellion against the school system?"

Although Asher had prepared her for this moment, Violet was still stunned by how much these people knew about her.

"Take her, I'll handle this," Asher said to none of the alphas in particular. But Roman and Alaric were already at her side, each taking one of her arms, while Griffin looked after her roommates. As if sensing they were about to leave, the reporters' questions turned more heated and desperate.

"Violet, your mother is now with the West Pack. Does this mean you'll be aligning with them politically and giving up your rebellion?"

"Are you following in Irene Hale's footsteps? Two husband's, perhaps four in your case?"

"Elsie's been preparing for the Alpha Queen role her whole life. Do you think you're better than her? Is that why you snatched her men?"

"If Asher wins the Alpha heir title and marries Elsie Lancaster, what will that make you? The concubine?"

"Are you just a passing scandal, or do you see yourself as a long-term choice for one or more of the cardinal alphas?"

"How do you respond to claims that you've manipulated your way into the spotlight using the Alphas?"

To be honest, Violet was a bit flustered. Was this what people thought of her? That she was using the Alphas like some gold digger?

She took a controlled deep breath, refusing to let it rattle her. People would always talk. Moreover, this was to be expected while dating not just one, but four of the most powerful werewolves to ever live. Now that she thought about it, it did sound a little "greedy." Well, that wasn't her fault. Her men chose her. People would just have to live with it.

Everyone was staring, and Violet realized she was still clinging to Alaric and Roman's arms like they were hers. And indeed they were. So she walked with more sway in her hips and her chin lifted high.

Let them stare. Let them talk. She didn't care. Tonight, all that mattered were three things: the party, her men, and her revenge.

Ivy and Daisy disappeared to do their thing, but not without dragging Lila along. The girls knew Lila would hover around Violet like a buzzing fly and intentionally pulled the Fae guardian away to give Violet her moment with her boyfriends.

Griffin left too. He needed to find his parents, unlike Roman and Alaric, who remained at her side, unmoving. It was a bit concerning though, considering their own families were probably somewhere in this ballroom. But then again, who was she to judge, with her complicated relationship with Nancy? She didn't even know if the woman was still here or had left after that argument yesterday.

"Here, have this." Roman handed her a glass of wine.

Violet raised a brow. "Roman," she said with dramatic emphasis, "are you trying to get me drunk? Perhaps a ploy to get into my pants, is it, sire?"

Roman replied, "I don't need to get you drunk to do that. Just say the word, and I'll happily get into your pants any day, any time, anywhere." He added a smug wink.

Violet's heart skipped a beat as an illicit thought slipped into her head. Like those historical movies, she imagined Roman taking her hand and leading her to a secret garden for a bit of kissing—scratch that, lots of kissing. Maybe his hand would slide beneath her gown, past the voluminous layers, tracing the smoothness of her thighs and venturing higher to her—

Her imagination screeched to a halt when Alaric interjected, "Definitely not here." He was silently scolding Roman for that last comment.

She turned to him just as Alaric threw his head back and downed his wine in a single gulp. It wasn't the alcohol tolerance that caught her attention, rather it was the way Alaric's Adam's apple bobbed as he drank.

And suddenly, her imagination changed. It was no longer Roman in the garden. It was Alaric. They were seated on a bench, and she straddled him, tracing that same Adam's apple with her lips and teeth, drawing a sinful groan from his throat as she rocked against him.

"Violet? Earth to Violet?" Alaric snapped his fingers in her face, rousing her back.

He looked genuinely concerned. "Are you okay? You looked lost there."

"Oh, she was definitely lost," Roman said, watching her from over the rim of his glass.

Violet shot him a glare. Sometimes, like now, she wondered how she got involved with him. But then again, that was the cross she had to bear.

Flustered and thirsty—for water, yes—she took a sip. Violet wasn't new to drinking, not with Nancy around. But this one hit fast, and she shuddered.

"Damn, this is strong."

"Yeah, that's because it's made for wolves, and whatever supernatural creatures are out there," Roman said. "How do you feel? Not dizzy or anything, right?"

"No, I don't—" Violet began but then paused mid-sentence. She looked up and met Roman's gaze. He was watching her intently, and she realized what just happened. It was a test. A confirmation.

Just like Asher, Roman was interested in what she really was.

Before she could comment, Alaric leaned in and murmured, "Trouble approaching."

Violet turned, and yep, trouble was heading straight for her. Elsie Lancaster marched forward with a stride so sharp it could split tiles.

The people nearby quieted, clearly expecting drama. Elsie stopped right in front of her with a polite smile that didn't reach her eyes.

"Hello Violet." Her gaze swept Violet from head to toe. "You look... stunning. Almost like you belong here."

Chapter 355: Three... Four Flavors

Violet blinked slowly at that comment. Until now, she hadn't realized how pitiful Elsie's life was, how badly she needed to belittle someone else just to feel important. Nice try, though. But her efforts felt like the desperate flailing of an animal at the brink of death.

So, with a smirk at the corners of her mouth, she faced Elsie, her eyes glinting under the ballroom lights.

"Almost? Sweetheart, I walked in and the room adjusted to me." Violet continued, her voice dripping with mock sweetness. "You tried your best, but next time, maybe let your dress do the talking, and not your desperation."

"Burn!" Roman intentionally coughed under his breath.

The gesture drew Elsie's attention toward him, and her hurt expression said it all. She felt betrayed by him of all people.

When Elsie turned to Violet, her face was pure venom. She said through gritted teeth, "You think you've won, but rejoice not. You're only a replacement. There have always been others before you. Lucille tried, and look how she wandered off. And you're not even half as crazy as her."

Violet narrowed her eyes as Elsie continued raving. "What do the boys tell you? That they'll protect you? Do they whisper those sweet promises as they fuck you? Oh, how naive you are. You're not even a werewolf. You don't know our ways. You have no idea what you're getting into. Enjoy what little semblance of power you think you have because outside these walls, you're nothing but a speck of dust I'll crush."

But even with all the threat pouring in, all Violet said was, "How do you crush dust? Does that even make sense?" she asked with a straight face.

Her nonchalant attitude and sassy mouth clearly got to Elsie. The other girl looked like she might murder Violet then and there. Roman quickly interfered, "Alright, that's enough." He pulled Violet to his side protectively.

Elsie saw the gesture, and then she laughed. A long hallow that spoke of her loss. For a moment it looked like she had finally lost her mind.

Of course, there were students around who had seen everything, and obvious supporters of Elsie as they began whispering:

"Poor Elsie. I feel so sorry for her."

"She must feel horrible."

"I said it from the start, Violet was up to no good. She intentionally targeted the Cardinal Alphas. What a bitch."

"This is why you don't allow children like her. She's definitely following in her mother's steps."

"What mother's step?" a voice suddenly said, and Violet's eyes widened as she recognized it.

She turned, and her breath caught, not from the excitement of seeing Nancy, but fear. Fear of something worse.

Nancy's heels were clicking like gunshots on the floor, her expression stormy, and her aura loud as she approached Amanda Rayes. Of course. Violet rolled her eyes internally. It just had to be Amanda who whined her mouth.

Nancy didn't even look at Violet. Her full attention was on Amanda now, who, to her credit, looked like she was just realizing she'd poked mama bear with a lipstick-covered twig.

"What mother were you talking about?" Nancy asked, her voice dangerously low. It was the kind of low that made everyone close by to shut up. "Say it again. I want to hear it clearly this time."

Amanda's bravado evaporated instantly. "I—it's not—I didn't mean it like—"

Nancy cut in like a blade. "You didn't mean it like what? Like dragging my daughter's name through the mud to score cheap clout? Like running your mouth without a brain to back it up?"

Amanda stammered. "I-I mean, I was just—"

Nancy stepped closer. "Just what? Gossiping like a lonely little rodent because no one's ever said you had potential? Or are you still mad Violet turned out better than you ever will? You want to compare future? Fine, let's do it, because clearly you don't have one."

"Dear lord," a woman nearby gasped, clutching her chest.

Amanda was trembling now, but Nancy was just warming up.

"I don't play those slick, underhanded games you rich people love. I fight out loud and dirty, honey. You come for my daughter again, and I swear, I will dig into every dirty little skeleton hiding in your designer closet, and I'll host a fashion show on them. Don't test me, sweetheart, I'm saved, not soft."

And that was it.

Amanda burst into tear. Really ugly, choking sobs, and turned around, stumbling through the crowd as she ran for the door.

The entire ballroom was silent that one could practically hear people blinking.

"Damn. Your mother's scary." Alarc muttered under his breath.

But Violet smiled proudly. And that people, is why you don't get on Nancy's bad side. Period.

Meanwhile while all this was happening, Elsie had quietly retreated having seen what happened. She was not about to become Amanda Version Two.

Almost as if she hadn't ripped into that kid just seconds ago, Nancy turned to her daughter with a smile.

Violet didn't even hesitate, she just ran into her mother's arms, hugging her firmly.

"I'm so sorry for yesterday. "

"Shh, it's alright. You're a grown woman and can make your own decision."

While mother and daughter enjoyed their moment, Roman whispered to Alaric, "Our mother-in-law is not going to be an easy woman. I know I'm not perfect, so remind me never to piss her off."

"Sure, go ahead, you fool." Asher, who had appeared like a ghost, said from behind, nearly startling the life out of them.

"Jesus Christ, Asher!"

"Dude, get a bell around your neck!" Roman exclaimed.

Asher simply looked at Roman and ignored him, his attention on his mother-in-law. He went over to Nancy. "It's nice to see you, mother."

"Hello, Nancy," Roman and Alaric waved at the same time. They obviously didn't have Asher's balls to refer to her as mother. Yet.

Nancy acknowledged their greeting with a nod of her head just as Asher noticed. "Ezra's not with you."

Nancy told him, "He got called away, said there was a little issue."

At that statement, Asher's brows lifted. Issue indeed? He could already smell his father's antics.

"Perhaps, if you don't mind, I'd like to have a small conversation with you," he added. "In private."

Violet looked at Asher suspiciously, and he noticed it. He leaned down without even thinking and kissed her on the forehead, saying, "Don't worry, I'm on my best behavior."

Unknown to them, some of the students who had seen the scene gaped like fools. Asher was never known to be affectionate and gentle, but just now... they were simply speechless.

Nancy looked at Violet, and when she shrugged, she told him, "Alright. Let's talk."

But just as they were about to leave, Nancy said to Asher, "Just a minute."

Then she went to Violet and whispered to her while eyeing her two other boyfriends, "Just so you know, there are some dark spots outside in case you need a little release."

"Oh God, no." Violet groaned as soon as she said those words.

But Nancy was obviously not done. She continued, "In case you want a neat work, use the mouth. They usually leave zero evidence. Only, well, in your case, an aching jaw."

"Nancy!" Violet felt like crying at this point.

Nancy smirked, patted Violet on the cheek, and added, "Don't act shy now, sweetheart. You've got three flavors waiting, don't let them melt."

Then, with the confidence of a woman who feared absolutely nothing, she turned on her heels and walked away with Asher.

Chapter 356: The Rhythm of Her Men

Asher and Nancy headed to the outside of the building where they found a bench and sat down. There was an awkward silence between them. Nancy had no idea what the boy wanted to talk about, and to be honest, her heart was already racing in anticipation of bad news.

Asher Nightshade opened his mouth to speak, but the words got stuck on his lips, so his mouth simply moved with no sound coming out.

"Is something bad going to happen to Ezra?" Nancy asked, sensing that must be the issue.

"What?" Asher was stunned, then his gaze lowered to her hands on her lap and noticed the way she nervously fidgeted with them. Of course, Nancy wasn't stupid; she knew Henry had a hand in calling Ezra away.

"No. Nothing bad will happen to Ezra."

"Asher?" Nancy dared him not to lie to her.

He told her, "Henry might be an animal, but he's not stupid. Ezra is one of the best alphas he has around. My father's pride is hurt and the best way he knows how to deal with that is by oppressing others. He'll probably punish him, but that would be all. He won't go too far, especially with the other Alphas closely invested in this matter recently. Ezra is a tough guy. He can take whatever Henry has in store for him."

"That's nice to know." Nancy breathed, a bit of worry still in her voice.

"Don't worry, Henry won't murder your mate. Trust me."

"Thank you." Nancy smiled at the kid.

Asher was honestly stunned by that affectionate look, and it gave him the courage to say, "Actually, the real reason I wanted to see you was to apologize about yesterday's incident."

"Oh." Was all Nancy could say. Asher Nightshade didn't strike her as someone who rendered apologies.

"I understand you're trying to protect your daughter and I respect that. My mother was usually the one who did that for me, but she's gone. So yes, Violet was lucky to have someone who could at least stand up for her."

Nancy didn't know why, but her heart tugged at that statement. No kid deserved the kind of monster he had for a father.

"And that's why I'm also here to promise you..." Asher stood and then dropped to his knees before Nancy, startling her.

"What are you doing?" Nancy was bewildered.

But Asher ignored her, saying with determination, "I'll protect your daughter, Violet. I swear it. No harm will come to her, not as long as I live. So you have nothing to worry about. Your daughter is safe with me." He rephrased, "With us."

Nancy looked at him blankly before a smile crossed her lips "And I believe you." She let out a relieved sigh. "I've always worried about Violet, but it seems I don't have to do so anymore. She has such amazing boyfriends, especially one who would put his life on the line for her." Her smile turned sad as she added, "It's such a disappointment your father doesn't see just how special you are. But I believe Violet does, and I pray you both stay together for as long as forever. Yes, you have my blessing, Asher Nightshade."

Asher beamed. "Thank you, Nancy."

"I take it that is all, as I return back to the party. After all, this is the last time I might be seeing my daughter until the semester ends."

Nancy was already on her feet when Asher told her, "I think there's something else you need to know...."

"...So sit back and enjoy the party." Principal Jameson finished her opening speech, followed by loud applause.

"This is beginning to get boring," Violet commented with a sigh.

"Only because you're in a hurry to expose the kinky secrets in our wardrobe." It was both a joke and a sassy retort from yours truly.

"Behave yourself, Roman," Griffin scolded him.

Yes, Griffin was back, and the good thing was that Irene was no longer mad at them. Although Violet had already suspected that after the woman helped them yesterday, it was nice to get confirmation from Griffin.

Right now, all four of them were seated, the only empty seat beside them obviously belonging to Asher. Although she trusted him, Violet couldn't help but wonder what he was secretly discussing with her mother.

"I think you're bored because you don't want to have fun," Alaric said, suddenly standing in front of her.

"What?"

But Alaric didn't answer. Instead, he bowed like a prince and stretched out his hand. "Would you have this dance with me, Violet Purple?"

"What?" Violet let out a bashful laugh. "No way. I'm a horrible dancer."

"Says the one who did that cheerleading dance," said Roman. And without caring for his reputation, he stood and twerked his hips exaggeratedly. "Something like that, eh?"

"I definitely did not dance like that!" Violet was dying from laughter. "Alright, alright," she said, "I'll do the dancing, but only if Griffin comes along too."

"Hell no," Griffin refused.

"Scared of a little rhythm, big boy?" Violet purred, dragging her fingers slowly up his arm. "It's just a dance."

"I see what you're doing, Violet. But fine, game on," Griffin said, his eyes shining with determination.

"Hell yes! Bring it on, people." Roman punched the air in celebration, already whipping out his phone to record the scene.

Alaric led Violet to the dance floor, with Griffin following. There were already people dancing, but their arrival still drew attention. Not that any of them cared.

As if the music had been waiting for their arrival, a new beat dropped. It was a fast, infectious beat and a choreography that every student at Lunaris seemed to know. Violet, not one to be left out, began to confidently dance between her two ridiculously attractive boyfriends.

To be honest, Violet didn't expect much. In Alaric's and Griffin's case, she figured she'd be dragging two stiff alphas around the floor. But that was until Alaric started moving.

Holy creator of the universe. Who in the world was this? Violet blinked.

Her quiet nerd Alaric Storm was nailing every step like he was born on stage. His footwork was clean, and nice. If she wasn't careful, she'd think he had actually practiced in secret a hundred times for this moment.

And then talk about Griffin. He was not as smooth as Alaric, but he had rhythm, just not the type meant for this light, graceful movement. But damn, he danced like a Greek god who could break the floor if he wanted to.

Violet laughed. Yes, she was having fun with her arms raised, hips swaying, sandwiched between both of them like she was in her own private music video. The three of them moved in sync, their steps matching beat for beat, turning, spinning, foot-tapping and gliding like a perfect trio.

At one point, the crowd around them started cheering. Someone even howled. She could feel the many phone cameras on them but Violet couldn't even bother to care. She was breathless, grinning, her body electric in that moment.

And then, there was the final count. Three. Two. One.

The music cut on a sharp beat, and all three of them struck their final poses just in time with Violet at the center, with Griffin and Alaric on either side, their heads turned toward her.

At once, applause thundered across the ballroom.

"Not bad," Violet told Griffin with a grin, patting his chest playfully as she caught her breath.

"Not bad?" Griffin echoed, clearly offended. "That was historic."

From the corner of her eye, Violet caught sight of Irene Hale. The woman simply lifted her glass to her in a silent toast before retreating into the crowd.

That was when the lights dimmed and the energy in the room shifted. The beat was dropped, replaced by a haunting violin-piano blend.

It was time for the slow dance.

Violet was still trying to catch her breath from all the movement when a familiar hand wrapped around her waist.

"My turn now," Roman said, unapologetically sliding in and taking her from the others. "She's mine now." He declared.

Of course it was. That fox must have intentionally waited for this moment when he could dance with her alone.

Violet didn't argue and simply fell into the rhythm with him, letting herself be swayed side to side in time with the romantic melody. Roman's hand rested comfortably on the small of her back, the other holding hers.

They moved as if they were the only ones in the room.

"Roman," Violet called quietly, feeling the heat of his gaze on her cleavage.

"Mmm?" he hummed, clearly enjoying the closeness.

"Eyes where I can see them?" she said with a teasing lift of her brow.

Roman grinned, his green eyes twinkling with mischief. "Umm, I think my eyes like it better here," he whispered without shame.

"You are unbelievable." Violet laughed, trying to push the heat away with humor, but it stuck to her skin like perfume.

Then, without warning, Roman dipped her and he was not gentle at all.

It was sudden, and so intimate that Violet gasped out loud, her back arched, hair brushing toward the floor. Roman's arm supported her lower back, while the other locked around her waist, holding her like she was something precious and breakable.

Her hands clutched at his jacket. They were breathless, with their faces so close now their lips almost brushed. His green eyes burned into hers, a thousand unspoken things swirling inside them. Violet felt her pulse hammering in her throat, her chest rising and falling in time with his.

For one second, she thought he'd kiss her. She wanted him to. God, she almost tilted her chin up and let it happen.

But Roman, the ever-flirtatious Fox, was already pulling her back up before she could decide. It was smooth and effortless as if the last ten seconds hadn't just stolen the breath from her lungs.

Their bodies were still pressed together and Roman was grinning, eyes full of mischief. He knew what he just did.

Violet looked at him, "You are one of a kind, do you know that?" She meant that sarcastically.

"Of course. I know." He shamelessly admitted it.

Violet felt Roman's hand trailing down to the dip just above her hip. His touch wasn't rushed, rather it was the kind of contact that made her entire body aware of itself. He was intentionally seducing her.

And she let him.

Their hips brushed once, then again, before he subtly guided her into a slower spin. Her back was to his chest now, his hand firmly on her stomach, holding her in place as their bodies moved in perfect sync to the music. She could feel every breath he took, every muscle in his body pressed against her.

"Roman..." she called his name.

His mouth hovered near her ear as he murmured, "Tell me to stop, Vi."

But she didn't.

Instead, Violet let herself sink into the rhythm of the music and the sweet pressure blooming low in her stomach. Although Roman's hands stayed put, the way he held her, possessive and gentle, screamed want.

And when he turned her back to face him, their lips were so close she could feel his breath on hers.

Fuck this. She was doing this.

But her lips had only brushed across his when Elsie's voice echoed in the hall.

"Hello everyone, welcome once more to another year of a successful parents week festival.... "

Violet froze at once.

It was time.

Chapter 357: Time To Tango

Griffin was in charge of the program's order, so Violet knew exactly when Elsie Lancaster would be hosting the memory reel. Everyone was seated now, even Asher had found his way back just in time with Nancy. Her mother joined her friends at a table just beside theirs.

Violet subtly questioned Daisy with her eyes if everything was ready and the girl nodded in affirmation.

Good. It was time to tango.

Let the fun begin.

The lights dimmed slightly and a soft spotlight bathed the stage in front till

Elsie's red gown practically shimmered. She was the picture of elegance and control.

"I can't tell you how much of an honor it is to have you all here tonight and to be the one given the privilege of showcasing our elegant institution, Lunar Academy," Elsie continued after everyone had settled down, her voice soft and sweet, oozing grace and polish. It was the kind of tone that charmed parents and masked poison.

She continued. "Lunar Academy is more than a school. It is history. It is legacy. A stronghold that stood tall during the darkest of times. A safe haven for werewolves during the great war. And it was from those ashes that we rose united."

There were murmurs of agreement across the room. Elsie Lancaster was playing to her audience. She always did. Violet had to give her that for a talent.

"And then came the time of the late Alpha King Angus..." Elsie's tone softened, almost reverent. "Who, in his wisdom and unmatched vision for unity, birthed the humans into the system. Humans who never thought they would share the same system of education with werewolves. Goddess bless his soul."

At that moment, heads turned subtly in the direction of Michah, who sat in a quiet corner of the hall. The soft buzz of conversation dipped as people were reminded, once again that he carried royal blood.

Elsie pressed on.

"It was because of his vision that the Conscription began. Welcoming not just humans of high blood but also those from the outskirts. Those who had never dreamed of a place like this. Humans from less privileged districts."

Although Elsie didn't outright insult anyone, the disdain and polished arrogance in her tone rang clear. Especially as her eyes locked deliberately with Violet's.

Violet didn't flinch. She just smirked, cocking her head slightly, like a queen watching a jester dance.

Let the girl play. It won't be long now.

Elsie's voice rose slightly again, drawing the room's attention back. "This short video presentation will show us how far Lunar Academy has come. How much it has contributed to the unification of werewolves and humans, not just here in the United Dorminia, but perhaps, around the world?"

She turned to the large screen behind her with a bright smile and a graceful step to the side.

The lights dimmed.

And the reel began to play.

Violet's hand found another glass of wine and sipped slowly.

It was about to go down.

At first, the ballroom was quiet with anticipation, the video opening with a soft royal tune that made everyone sit straighter. Elsie's syrupy sweet voice flowed through the speakers, playing over the visuals.

"For over a century, Lunar Academy has stood proud. A sanctuary, a beacon of excellence even before it earned its title..."

The camera panned through the front gates, then the grand courtyard, then soared in an aerial view that made the school look like a palace in the clouds. Students, parents, staff, and reporters watched like it was a campaign ad.

Then a sharp glitch rippled through the screen, the music cracked and all fell silent.

There were low murmurs around the room as all presumed it was a technical fault.

Suddenly, the blackened screen came alive with the words in bold, jagged, blood-red font :

HOW WELL DO YOU KNOW LUNARIS ACADEMY?

Elsie stiffened. What the fuck? This was not what she prepared.

Before anyone could speak, the video slammed into motion again and the upbeat royal fanfare was replaced with deep, cinematic drums. The next frame was grainy but everyone saw Asher Nightshade, in his gym wear, as he snapped Clayton's arm without mercy.

The footage froze on Clayton's twisted face and the words, "NO RESTRAINT" flashed across the screen in red, stamped font.

At this point, the murmurs had picked up.

The next scene rolled with no mercy and it was of Griffin mid-shift into his beast form, roaring and lunging at Roman and Asher as students screamed in the background.

UNCONTROLLABLE

There were more gasps now. Someone dropped their glass. Parents were now fully alert.

"What is going on?" Elsie hissed under her breath. She had no idea where this chaos was coming from and why.

But it didn't stop there.

The next scene was of Roman Draven, naked and rubbing himself against a tree.

Someone clearly choked on their wine.

"WILD PASSION" slammed across the screen.

The video cut again and this time, it was Violet. It was the popular video of her

Pinned between Griffin and Alaric, their lips locked and hands tangled in passion.

IS THIS LOVE OR LUST?

Lightning danced on the screen. Alaric Storm stood on a hill, arms spread wide as thunder boomed overhead. The sky opened and rain poured down on scrambling students in the field.

Another clip rolled and it was Griffin again. This time, it was him throttling Violet on her first day.

TOO MUCH POWER?

The reporters pushed forward to the stage with their cameras like hounds after blood. The media zone was forgotten, this was the real news, and none of them wanted to be left behind.

"Someone shut that down!" Principal Jameson barked, her heart pounding loudly in her ears.

The tech crew scrambled. One yanked the plug from the control unit. Nothing. The video kept playing even though the wires were dead.

"We pulled everything. It's not from us," one of them said, pale-faced.

"What?" Jameson was bewildered.

Of course, that was because it wasn't technical but magical. Violet Purple had foreseen this part happening and had employed Lila's help.

The screen kept rolling and this time clips flashed by in rapid fire showing close up images of the Luna board, the human elites on it and some videos of them bullying the scholarship students.

THE RANKING SYSTEM AND THE ELITES. IS THE CONSCRIPTION A FAUX?

The murmurs had become a full-on buzz.

"This is a misunderstanding," Jameson said through a tight smile.

And then came the final blow.

AND WHAT ABOUT ITS QUEEN BEE?

Elsie's blood ran cold, an ominous feeling curling in the pit of her belly.

The screen flickered again and there she was on all four, naked.

Oh God, no.

Grace stood behind her in an Asher mask, leather whip in hand and began to hit her on the bottom while her lascivious moans echoed across the hall.

Chapter 358: Gay For Grace

"Yes, again! Asher! Please break me! Use me for your satisfaction!" Elsie's wanton moan carried over the hall as Grace flogged her over and over, clearly enjoying the power play.

It was safe to say that everyone in the ballroom was shocked. Zara Storm especially, seeing the way the phone slipped from her hand.

She had arrived late to the party with her husband Caspian just a few minutes ago and had been lucky enough—in her opinion—to catch Alaric dancing with that girl.

As soon as Alaric was done dancing and was about to return to his seat, she swiftly grabbed his arm and led him to the corner where they had a quiet conversation.

"What the fuck is going on here?! You're supposed to be with Elsie, not that purple-head girl!" she whisper-yelled.

But Alaric's face twisted. "Oh, suddenly you're interested in what's going on in my life?"

"What?" Zara didn't like that sneer on his face.

"Over the weeks I've tried to speak to you as my mother, but you were busy as usual. And I thought, perhaps, she'd have time for me during Parents Week. But then you and Dad brought work into a social event? And now what? You want to know about the girl I'm dating—here, in a hall full of hundreds of people?" Alaric said with disbelief.

Zara's throat tightened as she realized just how right he was. "Fine, Alaric dear, I'm sorry. I should have listened to you more, but you have to tell me you're not seriously involved with that girl."

For a moment, her favorite son looked like he was about to explain himself, only for his expression to suddenly harden. "You know what? Fuck you." He meant that with the gesture as well.

Zara was completely bewildered. If any of her sons could ever behave like that, it was Ace, not Alaric. What in the world had that purple-head done to her son?

After that unpleasant encounter with her son, the night apparently decided to take a darker turn, and here she was, watching an unfiltered video of her supposed daughter-in-law getting her kinky fetish fulfilled.

Zara and Caspian looked at each other, stunned. What the hell was going on here? They actually thought Elsie was into their son? And why the fuck was she getting wild with a girl? By chance, was she...?

But then, no one could be more in despair than Caroline Lancaster, who ran over to the tech team, yelling, "Stop that video! Shut that video right now!"

But a member of the tech team shrugged, lifting up the main cable he had already unplugged and yet nothing stopped.

"No, no, no..." Caroline let out a desperate groan, dragging her hand through her hair. What the hell was she going to do?

But it only got worse from there as the video got to the part where Elsie spread her legs and Grace went down on her.

The gasps and shouts in the hall were louder. More than one wine glass shattered. Someone fainted on the spot while a parent stood up, dragging their child away.

But that was not all. The students had their phones out, recording the shocking clip with varying expressions on their faces. Some were pleased and laughed, mostly students bullied by Elsie in the past or who were simply jealous of her and couldn't wait to see her fall. While the others were just compulsive recorders. This was hot news after all. Seriously, with Grace of all people? None of them wanted to be left out of the gossip.

Principal Jameson, as usual, tried to restore order by saying, "Please put down your cameras. No recording, please. This is a sensitive matter."

But no one listened. The students giggled as they excitedly recorded the scene.

Elsie Lancaster, in question, was frozen on the spot, staring at the screen and watching her life fall into pieces.

The video had lasted longer than any other piece on the reel, so everyone at this point was left with anticipation when the screen suddenly went black again and the red font appeared once more in bold letters:

DO THEIR PARENTS SUPPORT THEM?

The video opened once more and this time it was another scene of Elsie on her back, eyes closed in pleasure while Grace diligently ate her out like a woman possessed.

"Oh God, you're so good at this. Go faster," she moaned, her moans echoing shamelessly.

"Goddess me!" exclaimed one of the students recording. "I swear, Elsie's gay for Grace."

Then a familiar face appeared in the video. "What the hell is going on here?"

"Shit!" Caroline cursed when hundreds of eyes pinned her on the spot.

"She knew?" she heard someone exclaim from the crowd.

"No, no, no, I tried to stop her," Caroline began to desperately explain, "You'll see it in the video!" She pointed at the screen, confident the scene of her trying to slap Elsie would show.

But that was it. The words, "Thank you for watching," flashed right before the screen turned off entirely.

That was it. It was over.

"No, no, no, that's not it! I swear I never supported her! The video should have shown it!" Caroline said to them, but their disappointed looks said it all.

Then suddenly, there was a scream and everyone quickly turned to see Elsie Lancaster attacking Violet Purple.

"You stupid bitch! I know this is all your doing! You secretly videoed me, didn't you? This is your ploy to destroy me! Say it!"

After the video ended, Elsie had rushed toward Violet before any of the boys could stop her and pounced on her, bringing them both to the ground.

"I'm going to kill you today!" She began to throttle her.

"Get off my daughter!" Nancy came to Violet's aid, but Elsie Lancaster, with one hand, pushed her away with her werewolf strength.

The crowd gasped as Nancy landed on a table, the contents pouring all over her.

"Mom!" Violet screamed in terror, and the next moment, she struck Elsie in the face with her head and there was the sickening crunch of her nose breaking.

"You stupid bitch!" Elsie cried out in pain. But things got out of hand when her nails elongated into claws and from the crazy look in her eyes, it was clear she was about to maim Violet.

But Asher grabbed her by the neck and flung her away like a rag doll. Elsie landed gracefully thanks to her wolf gift.

Then she snarled defiantly, releasing a challenging howl. The humans in the crowd shifted back with unease. Some of the parents showed fear on their faces as they wondered if this was what their children went through in this school.

It didn't help matters when Elsie's bones began to break and the crowd gasped, stepping back as they realized she was about to shift. And with that look in her eyes, it was about to get deadly.

But before she could finish the transformation, Leon Draven appeared out of nowhere and grabbed Elsie by the throat, using his Alpha command. "Halt the shift now!"

Elsie whimpered. It was painful already transforming, stopping it halfway was even more torturous. But the Alpha command had already taken hold of her and she screamed as she willed her body parts that had turned to wolf to change back.

Then Leon dropped her like dirt and turned to announce to everyone, "This party is over."

But that wasn't for the reporters, who were having a field day, their cameras flashing more frantic than ever. Some of them rushed to interview Elsie Lancaster who was already being taken away.

Chapter 359: Her Big Teddy

Nancy was fine, thankfully. Else today would have been Elsie Lancaster's last day on earth. Her mother had suffered a few bruises and aches from the impact, and the last time she saw her, Adele was already patching her up.

"Next time, I'm not agreeing to that reckless plan," Asher grumbled. "You should've just let me tear her apart."

And yes, Asher was talking about how they'd let Elsie get close enough to harm her.

It had all been Violet's plan from the start. She had a feeling Elsie would explode after that reveal and try to attack her. And she did. Thanks to that spectacular display, everyone would finally see Elsie for the crazy wolf she truly was.

"But it did work out, didn't it?" Violet nudged him gently, trying to soothe him, knowing he was still angry.

However, Asher didn't respond. That tight frown was still on his face, and Violet decided to make it her mission to change that. So she stepped in front of him and began to bother him like a buzzing fly.

"Say it. It worked out, didn't it? Huh? Huh?" she poked at different spots on his stomach, but apparently, Asher was impervious to tickle attacks. God, was this guy a robot or what?

Still, Violet kept jabbing at random places, determined to get even the tiniest chuckle out of him.

"Stop it, Violet."

Of course, she didn't. She kept poking, grinning mischievously. Asher must've had enough, because he made a grab for her, but she saw it coming and swiftly dodged him, giggling.

"Come here," Asher ordered.

Violet shook her head, stepping back with a playful grin, eyes studying his movements. "Come and get me."

Asher lunged, and she jumped out of the way, only to step on a small stone she hadn't seen. She tripped and would've hit the ground if Asher hadn't caught her in time.

"Well..." Violet panted, "thank you."

Asher scowled. Why was she always so reckless? But then his gaze flicked to her lips, red and slightly parted, and the air between them shifted.

Violet tilted her head, inviting. She was ready for anything.

But instead of kissing her, Asher straightened up and pulled her to her feet. "The others are waiting. Come on, let's go." He took her hand and led her away.

Violet was a little disappointed, but smiled to herself. They had the whole night ahead. There'd be plenty of time for that.

Asher arrived at the cobblestone road where the boys were already waiting. Roman was perched lazily on the hood of his green car, legs crossed like he owned the world. The moment he spotted them, a slow grin lit up his face. Without a word, he tossed the car key in the air, and Asher caught it clean without even flinching.

"Hello, Beautiful," Roman purred, already pushing off the car and striding towards Violet.

He tilted her chin up with two fingers and pressed his mouth to hers. It was a brief, but filthy kiss with all tongue and heat, and no room for patience or softness. His tongue swept past her lips, coaxing a muffled gasp from her as he tasted her like he was claiming something no one else could have. When Roman pulled away, a thread of saliva briefly connected their mouths before it snapped.

Violet blinked, lips parted, her eyes now smoldering with molten heat. Roman smirked at that and leaned in close to whisper against her ear.

"Come back pregnant."

"What? Seriously?" she deadpanned.

"Just a goodbye speech." Roman shrugged with a cocky, unapologetic grin.

The fire Violet had lit was beginning to catch, and starting tomorrow, it would rage. Asher knew the storm she had created wouldn't die down anytime soon. It was why he planned to take her away. Just two or three days outside the academy, depending on how bad things got.

They were using Roman's car since Asher didn't own one, not because he couldn't afford it, but because motorcycles were more his thing. They'd be staying at one of his properties in Aster City. Somewhere where no one would bother them.

Before Violet could say another word, Alaric showed up and unceremoniously shoved Roman aside with one hand. His expression was unbothered as he stepped up and cupped her face in his hands.

He kissed her. Hard.

Not the kind of kiss meant to tease or flirt, but the kind that said: you're mine and I'm not letting go. His mouth slanted over hers with firm, deliberate pressure, his hands wandering her body. A kiss that bruised and branded.

By the time they pulled apart, Violet was breathless, her chest rising and falling, her lips swollen and her thoughts scattered all around the place.

Alaric pressed his forehead gently to hers and murmured, "I'm going to miss you."

"It's just two days," Violet whispered, brushing her nose against his with affection.

"It's two days without you."

Damn. Be still, her poor heart. She practically melted on the spot.

From the side, Roman yawned dramatically. "So corny."

Violet turned just enough to throw him a glare, before placing a small peck on his lips. Roman might be annoying sometimes but the truth remained that she loved all of their individual traits — every maddening, sweet, possessive piece of it. That was what made them special and drew her to them in the first place.

It was Griffin's turn now and he stepped forward, arms already open, and pulled Violet into a tight, warm hug. It was the kind of hug that made you feel safe. The kind that wrapped around your soul. But Violet was having none of it.

She felt him trying to be considerate, probably because the other two minxes had already kissed her silly. But they were going to be apart for two whole days, and if not him, she needed to recharge with one final kiss.

So she pulled back, looked him in the eye and said, "Yeah, not happening. I want my kiss."

Griffin blinked, caught off guard, but before he could brace himself, Violet had already hopped into his arms. He caught her instinctively, hands gripping her thighs just as she slammed her lips against his.

She kissed him hard, her hips grinding into him with enough heat to make his grip tighten. Her hands tangled in his hair, tugging slightly as their mouths moved in sync—needy, breathless, and completely wrapped in each other. Griffin's hands found her ass, squeezing with appreciation.

By the time they pulled back, both of them were breathless, grinning.

"Stay safe," he murmured, still holding her.

"You too, my big teddy," Violet whispered, breathlessly.

Griffin blinked. "Big teddy?"

Violet smirked. "Yeah, it fits."

Roman, who'd been watching from the sidelines with way too much interest, let out an exaggerated groan.

"Fuck, that was sexy. Sign me up first when there's room for a threesome."

Chapter 360: Asher's Dilemma

Violet was going to miss her roommates, but this was for the best. All eyes were on them now, and drawing attention to her exit would only alert the wrong people—people like Principal Jameson, who was out for blood and desperate to catch whoever was behind the scandal.

If anyone asked about Violet, the boys were prepped to reply, "Asher took her."

And of course, no one questioned Asher Nightshade's methods. Jameson might try, but he'd deal with it. Caroline had also whisked Elsie away somewhere, likely hoping to shield her until the heat died down. That was probably her grand plan.

As if.

Elsie's reputation was ruined, no sugarcoating it. And Irene had already promised Griffin she'd use this moment to finally get Elsie off their backs for good. If it worked, they could all be with her openly, without any looming backlash.

So no, Asher wasn't about to let her be served up as a scapegoat. If anyone had questions for her, they'd have to go through him first.

As for her roommates, Griffin, Roman, and Alaric would handle things while she was gone. She trusted them.

It was late when they left and Violet appreciated the city view. At one point, she stuck out her hand through the window, relishing the cool night breeze against her skin. Asher drove carefully through a silent road, away from the city buzz, until they reached a quiet area marked by a bold sign at the gate that read "KEEP OFF."

The house sat on private land surrounded by dense woods, tall trees rising like shadows in the dark. There were no streetlights in sight, only the eerie rustling of leaves that made the place look haunted. If it wasn't the fact that Violet had come to trust Asher with her life, there was no way in hell she'd follow a guy like him into a secluded place like this.

The house was a modern bungalow, simple but elegant, with glass windows and clean lines. The environment was calm, even peaceful, but the quiet somehow made it feel more intense. Once inside, Asher gave her a quick rundown like a host welcoming a guest.

"The kitchen's fully stocked. There's a fridge, drinks, pantry items, everything you'll need," he said, moving towards the hallway. "There are two bedrooms, the master and the guest room. Both have attached bathrooms. Your things have been set up in the guest room."

Wait a minute.....

"Whoa, my guest room?" Violet blinked. "I thought we'd be staying together...."

She trailed off, suddenly feeling stupid. Although they hadn't explicitly discussed it, she had assumed. After everything they'd gone through, Violet expected tonight to be the night.

Asher looked at her. There was a pause, and then, like he'd caught her meaning, he said, "It's been a long day, Violet. You need rest. Maybe something to eat? I can make you—"

"No, I'm good." Her voice came out sharp.

"Okay." Asher nodded, sensing the tension. Then he leaned forward and kissed her lightly on the forehead. "Goodnight."

Violet stood there, dumbfounded, as he turned and walked to the other room.

What just happened? Was it her imagination or was Asher avoiding her?

Irritated and confused, Violet stomped toward her "guest room" and slammed the door so hard that it echoed through the house like a punctuation mark to her frustration.

The room was neat, cozy, but clearly masculine with its dark wood panels.

Still, it was okay. Opening the wardrobe, she found it filled with clothes in her size, some casual, some more daring. Even in her frustration, she couldn't help but be impressed.

Violet peeled out of her heavy dress and went into the bathroom for a long, hot shower. But even as the water flowed down her skin, her mind wasn't at ease.

By chance, had Asher lost interest in her now that he was finally free of Elsie? Was that it? Had she served her purpose?

No, that couldn't be. Not Asher. He wouldn't go through all of that just to walk away now. Nancy trusted him. And Nancy didn't hand out trust like candy.

There was more going on. She could feel it in her bones. And she does not give up.

After drying herself off, Violet moved back to the wardrobe and began searching through it. There had to be something in there that would help in the plan she had in mind.

And then she found it. A sheer, barely-there purple nightgown that clung to the hanger like it was waiting for her. It was soft, sensual, and so see-through that it made her blush.

Oh, she was definitely wearing this.

Without hesitation, Violet put it on and the nightgown stopped just below her ass, thin straps at the shoulders, with lace tracing down the sides.

Violet didn't know if Asher had picked this out himself or delegated it to his equally mischievous pack member, but whoever it was? Bless them. Because now, she had a mission.

With all the grace of a woman on a warpath, Violet stepped out of the room.

She found Asher's room and stood there for a minute, taking a deep breath to psych herself up. "Alright, let's do this," she muttered, gripping the handle and pushing the door open.

Just like hers, his room was tidy to a fault, so like Asher. It had the same dark wood panels and that musky scent that was undeniably him. But there was no sign of Asher.

She didn't have to wonder long because

the door behind her opened, and he stepped in.

"Violet?" His voice held surprise. "What are you doing here...?" His words trailed off the second his gaze landed on her.

His eyes slowly raked over her sheer nightgown, heated and intense, until they stopped at the hardened peaks of her nipples pushing through the fabric. Violet's breath caught.

At the same time, she took in the sight of him—his bare chest, etched with old scars that screamed of Henry's cruelty. But instead of diminishing his appeal, they only deepened it. This man had survived hell and still stood. If that wasn't sexy, Violet had no idea what else was. She was so into him.

Asher's body tapered from those strong shoulders to a lean waist. A towel hung dangerously low on his hips, hiding what she already knew—and tasted. And she wanted more of.

When Violet finally met his eyes again, they were pure molten heat. She was sure hers matched.

Violet couldn't tell but something magnetic pulled them together and they met halfway, reaching, grabbing, mouths crashing together like they'd been starved for each other for centuries.

The kiss was hard, desperate and raw. Asher growled low in his throat, his fingers fisting her hair, his tongue taking control of hers like he had every right.

Oh he sure did.

One of his hands cupped her ass and he let out another growl the moment he realized she wasn't wearing anything underneath.

Surprise. Surprise.

Asher squeezed her ass, rough and possessive. God, this was everything she dreamed of and wanted.

So Violet didn't hold back either. She kissed him like she needed air, sucked his bottom lip while he sucked her top, grounding her hips against his. He was hard and so ready for her.

She then broke away only to yank the nightgown over her head. Her breasts bounced with the movement and Asher made a low, guttural sound that made her smirk.

He looked at her like a predator staring down a meal he was ready to devour and Violet liked that. Maybe all that hesitation earlier had just been her over thinking because the look in Asher's eyes was pure deadly lust.

Violet climbed onto his bed, leaned back on her elbows, and spread her legs just a little, inviting him wordlessly.

And like a kid chasing candy, Asher came.

He crawled onto the bed, his pupils blown so wide his eyes looked almost black. The tension was thick and her heart raced. His animal was so close, Violet could feel it. So she trembled, not in fear, but in anticipation of what was to come.

Asher Nightshade was going to gobble her up.

He didn't kiss her lips but her jaw instead, lowering to her throat. His teeth grazed her collarbone, making her shiver. Her back arched, hands tangling in his silky black hair.

God, this felt too good.

She tilted her head to give him more access, and her hands trailed down his chest. She reached the towel and was just about to tug it away when he caught her wrist.

Their eyes met and in that moment, something changed. The fire dimmed slightly in Asher's slitted gaze, and before she could blink, he was off her.

Violet sat up, stunned. What just happened?

She stared at him, furious, as he paced like a caged animal.

"Asher?" she called, unsure.

"No. Don't, Violet. I can't do this." He sounded wrecked, raking his hand through his hair like it was the only thing keeping him grounded.

"Can't do what?" Violet asked, though she already knew.

He looked at her, guilt in his eyes. "I'm sorry, Violet... I can't sleep with you."