

Defy 371

Chapter 371: Help Jameson

"I've had enough fires for one day! So no! Whatever this is..." Jameson gestured to Roman, seated smugly on her desk, "I am not interested in it. You guys had the opportunity to contain this commotion but kept quiet. So yes, I do not need you!" She was ranting at this point.

But Roman, unbothered, raised a brow. "You don't need our help even if it would save your ass?"

She scoffed. "There's no saving my ass. The Alpha King's Beta is minutes away from calling me, and I'm sure as hell it's not about some briefing. King Elijah's already heard the news and the testimonies your parents gave will have filled his ears by now. He's going to fire me..." Jameson didn't even realize she was chewing on her nails now. "I've had the feeling for a while." She looked down, caught herself, and pulled her hand away.

Jameson was a mess. She looked like she had aged ten years in one day. Her hair was disheveled, her eyes bloodshot, her hands trembling. Roman nearly felt sorry for her.

"Nearly" being the word.

She had profited off this school for as long as he'd known her. She knew all the cracks and dysfunctions and kept silent. Now that everything was falling apart, she was suddenly a victim? Nah. Scratch that. Zero sympathy.

"You should listen to us," Griffin said, fingers drumming against the chair arm with that calm, calculating expression he must've inherited from his cardinal brother, Asher. "Even if you're fired, shouldn't you leave with your head held high? What better way to go than solving the mess you helped create? It'd look great on a résumé for whatever school's desperate enough to hire you next."

Jameson paused, then turned to Ashley. "How many minutes left till the Beta's call?"

"Fifteen minutes."

Jameson turned back to the Alphas. "You have ten minutes for this conversation."

"She said fifteen," Alaric pointed out.

"I need the extra five minutes to fully brace myself. That's four minutes left now by the way. So chop chop, talk turkey."

Griffin glanced around the room. "We need privacy."

Ashley frowned. "But who's going to answer the calls?"

True to her words, the phones were still going berserk.

"Alaric?" Roman called, a lazy smirk playing on his lips.

Electricity crackled in Alaric's blue eyes, and instantly all the phone lines sparked violently. They popped, shorted, and smoked while the staffers screamed in shock, some ducking instinctively.

"Finally. Some peace." Roman slumped against his chair like he'd done all the work. "I don't think I'll ever go into admin work. It's so depressing."

"Being an Alpha is admin work, dummy," Alaric replied with sass.

"At least I won't be stuck in the office all day like you, smart-ass," Roman shot back.

"Don't make me remind you two to behave," Griffin growled.

Jameson ignored the childish bickering and turned to her staff. "Leave us."

Ashley and the others didn't need to be told twice, they bolted, grateful to escape the room they'd been trapped in since last night.

As soon as the doors shut, Jameson turned sharply. "Speak."

"Ah-ah," Roman said, wagging a finger. "You do not use that tone with us. We're helping you, Jameson, not the other way around."

Jameson's hands balled into fists. How she would love to squeeze the life out of these animals. God, where was all this murderous energy coming from? She needed to calm down.

She forced a breath and smiled sweetly. "Help me out, would you?"

"Better," Roman said, then looked to Griffin and Alaric. "So how do we start this? Some great opening speech? Ease her into the plan gently? I mean, this is usually Asher's forte, and I'm not like that robot. I like to ease people in—"

"Dear God." Griffin face-palmed. Why did Asher leave them with this idiot?

"Create a fifth house," Alaric cut in, putting an end to Roman's rambling.

"And there! I was just getting to it." Roman threw his hands up in mock frustration.

"Excuse me?" Jameson's expression shifted fast. "Are you guys fucking with me right now?"

"No. Definitely not," Roman replied with a straight face. "If I was fucking you, you'd know. I mean, there'd be lots of screaming, moaning and all." He winked, "I'm that good at it."

Jameson gave him the what-the-fuck look, while both Griffin and Alaric glared daggers at him.

"Alright, that's not helping. I'll shut up now." Roman mimed zipping his lips and throwing away the key.

It suddenly dawned on Jameson, and she began to laugh. A long, shallow, bitter laugh.

"I should've known," she rasped. "This was all your doing."

"I don't know what you're talking about," Roman replied, far too quickly.

"You mean 'we', right?" Alaric said dryly to Roman. "We don't know what you're talking about."

"Every man for himself, brother," Roman muttered.

Alaric groaned inwardly. He didn't think he'd say this, but they truly couldn't survive as a unit without Asher.

Jameson went on. "I should've known Asher's obsession with that girl would bite me in the ass one day. Now he wants to create a fifth house for Violet Purple to rule with him. What kind of obsession is that?"

"I'd call it love," Roman said with a wink.

Jameson shook her head and turned to Griffin. "I thought you were the sensible one. But now, they've dragged you down too."

Griffin didn't flinch. "Don't paint yourself as the saint here, Jameson. You knew how rotten this place was."

"And you three weren't the harbingers?"

Alaric replied coldly, "We never said we weren't. But we're making an effort to bring change. Unlike you, who intended to keep profiting off the rot."

"And you think creating a fifth house for your girlfriend is the answer?"

"Violet represents the humans, and they listen to her. They trust her. And we—" Roman shrugged, "we like her. That's a bonus. Together, we can make actual rules. Real decisions. Not symbolic crap, but things that matter, housing, resources, safety, equity."

Jameson snorted. "And now you want to share power? Really? Alphas?"

As alphas, they were hardwired to be at the top and sharing their authority was just not in their nature.

Roman leaned back. "What's a king without a queen... or in our case, kings?" He flashed a devilish grin.

Griffin stepped in. "We're using our power to legitimize change. Because if we don't, this place is going to implode. You saw it already. The protests are right outside your office."

Alaric added, "We stopped a fight from breaking out this morning when an elite shoved a scholarship girl for stepping on her floor in the Silver Court. It was about to get ugly. Jameson, if something doesn't change, this won't just be protests. It'll be war."

Jameson looked genuinely thoughtful now. "So you're saying I give them a voice before they steal one."

"Exactly," Roman said. "Do this right, and Lunaris doesn't fall apart, instead, it evolves. We show the packs and the humans that the future is collaboration, not domination. And if we back it, they'll listen."

For a moment, it looked like Jameson was buying in. But then she said it. "It's a nice idea. But I'm sorry, that cannot happen."

"What?!" the three of them shouted in unison.

Jameson remained calm. "Within this school, yes, you wield power. But outside these walls? Your parents, and the Alpha King are the ones who make the decisions. They'll never accept a fifth house, and definitely not one run by a human. It's not going to happen."

Chapter 372: The Goddess' Luck

Jameson went on, "Violet technically has no authority, no support, she's no legacy, and her mother is a—" The woman caught herself at the last second, realizing exactly what she was about to say.

Except it was too late.

She felt the subtle shift in the air as the Alphas tensed, their expressions tightening at once.

In that instant, Jameson understood she was alone, and as good as dead meat if these boys decided to make a move. They'd kill her before she could even scream.

"You mean to say..." Roman's voice had lost all its usual playfulness, replaced with a cold and unsettling aura, "Her mother's the wife of an Alpha, right?"

That was not what Jameson meant, but one look into Roman's eyes which was no longer mischievous but dead, viper-green and dangerous, she realized he was giving her a chance. A single lifeline, which was to say the right thing, or suffer the consequences.

Jameson chose the right one.

"Yes, you're right. Her mother's a new Luna. A human Luna, at that. Violet doesn't have the footing to lead a fifth house. That would be like ripping Lunaris' roots straight out of the ground. And—" she rushed on, "—giving Violet that kind of power could undermine your authority. Your parents might begin to question your ability to rule if you can't suppress a small threat like her." Jameson finished with a nervous, thin and brittle laugh.

"Violet is not a threat to us. And what parents are we talking about here?" Griffin folded his arms across his chest, his muscles bulging at the gesture. "My mother is in support of this."

"Oh." Jameson blinked, caught off guard. "Is that so?"

"She's backing the creation of the Sanctuary Accords and plans to push the proposal once you submit it to the Alpha King," he informed her.

"And you've already given it a name." Jameson muttered under her breath, a hint of irritation flashing in her eyes. So she'd been left out of the planning. Of course.

"Also," Alaric cut in casually, "Asher's been in touch with President Roy, the human president and he supports the proposal too. The man's been itching for a way to give humans real footing in Lunaris Academy. What better way than giving them their own house? He's so enthusiastic he's already agreed to fund the building once the proposal is accepted by the other side."

At that point, Jameson didn't know what to think anymore. She'd been calculating how to manage this situation and keep her job intact not realizing the boys had already moved two steps ahead of her. And their plans didn't involve her.

Before she could refute again, Roman cut in smoothly, "The announcement of a fifth house will create enough buzz to drown out Elsie's scandal. Students talk. Like I said earlier, they like Violet and would fall in line once she's named their leader. Their parents would back down once they see their kids are satisfied."

He gave a smug little shrug, "Besides, a woman in power? Isn't that progress? Supporting female leadership?"

"What about your parents?" Jameson turned to Alaric this time, knowing just how stuck-up his family was about tradition. "And did Asher make any plans regarding Alpha Henry?" she added with a smug tilt of her chin, clearly thinking she had them cornered.

Henry would never agree to this. Over his dead body. Especially considering he and Violet Purple had gotten off on the wrong foot, and never quite recovered.

"My mother will convince Alpha Leon to her side," Griffin said confidently.

Roman chimed in, "She wouldn't even have to try. The man would be too busy staring at her chest to say no to anything." He leaned closer to Griffin and whispered loudly enough for everyone to hear, "I didn't want to say it, but my father's got the hots for your mom."

"Well, you just said it," Griffin replied grimly, lips pressed into a tight line.

"And what about the Storms?" Jameson inquired. "Any chance of convincing them?"

"No." Alaric shook his head. "My mother doesn't like Violet. She wouldn't allow anything that pushes us closer together."

"So if it comes to a vote, it's a draw," Jameson said, rubbing her chin thoughtfully.

"Then the final decision would fall to Alpha King Elijah," Griffin concluded.

"And you think he'll judge in your favor?"

"We think he'll want to respect President Roy's stance and cave in," Roman offered.

Jameson scoffed. "I know Elijah. He wouldn't want humans gaining more ground in Lunaris. The Academy belongs to the wolves, not even President Roy can change that."

The three Alphas looked at each other, concern now diminishing their earlier confidence.

Then Alaric's eyes lit up. "Or we make Elijah believe the Sanctuary Accord is a Student Support Initiative and under our patronage."

Roman perked up instantly. "So the whole proposal looks clean, public-facing, and totally under our control."

Jameson narrowed her eyes. "Let me get this straight. You want them to believe this is... what? A leadership exercise?"

"Exactly," Alaric said with a nod. "They should think Violet is just the face of it. That she has no real authority and operates under our directive. Even Henry would eat that up."

But Griffin added cautiously, "Elijah's not stupid, and especially not Henry. We literally fought over Violet. Anyone with half a brain would see through this."

"Griffin's right," Jameson said, smugness radiating from her voice.

She could already smell the sweet scent of their plan failing. Yes, she couldn't go down alone. These boys had made her tenor a living hell. Nor can she wait to see the disappointment on their faces when their plan flopped. She believed.

"I guess we'll leave it to luck," Jameson said flatly. "Your time's up."

Right then, her private line rang.

She pulled out her phone with a tired sigh. "And you used up my minutes too," she added, a dry note in her voice, hinting that the Alpha King's Beta was the one calling.

Jameson glanced at them all and said, "Let's hope the goddess is on your side."

Then she answered the call.

Chapter 373: Saints And Sinners

Asher Nightshade never did anything halfway. The moment Violet stepped through the doors of the club, she was swallowed whole by heat, pounding bass, and raw, unapologetic decadence that clung to the air like perfume.

District One had a reputation for places like this. Still, even in a city like Aster, where humans and werewolves coexisted in tense harmony, it stunned her. Then again, desire didn't discriminate, and judging by what she was seeing, neither did indulgence.

Asher tightened his grip on her as women in lacy underthings sauntered past them with trays of champagne, their stilettos clacking against polished marble floors.

Violet looked around, a pair of twin brunettes spinning seductively around a chrome pole, their hair fanning like silk in the spotlight. Nearby, a man sat lazily in a velvet chair, raining bills over a curvy redhead who laughed as she bent forward, tongue dragging over her lip as she rubbed him through his pants.

Nearly every room they passed by echoed with the unmistakable sounds of moans, gasps, or outright screams and sometimes all three at once.

One door hung slightly ajar, and through it, Violet caught a fleeting but unmistakable glimpse of a werewolf in full shift, rutting into a girl from behind. She was taking him, screaming, wild and unashamed.

Violet didn't pause, nor flinch. She just kept walking like it was none of her business.

Because it wasn't.

Everyone had their kinks and this was a place of sin. Where good girls came to forget their background, and the twisted ones came to make fantasies real. Here, saints turned sinners and sinners became gods.

Asher cast her a half amused, half impressed glance, as if he hadn't expected her to take it all so easily. But then, with a mother like Nancy, what exactly had he expected?

Violet had grown up in the shadows of debauchery, and had brushed shoulders with desire more times than she could count. The real wonder was how she'd managed not to fall into them.

Thankfully, they were escorted to a private room by a woman who left little to the imagination. She wore a laced thong, heels that could kill, and a tiny bra that barely covered anything. Her fingers brushed Asher's chest as she handed him the key.

"Have fun," she purred, eyes dancing with heat. Then, with a wink at Violet, she turned and sashayed away, her hips swaying.

Asher and Violet looked at each other but said nothing. Then he turned the key with a click, pulling her in with a tug to the waist.

The room was dim, bathed in sultry crimson lighting that shone against the black velvet walls. Gold chains hung from the ceiling like vines, swaying slightly from the bass of the slow, seductive beat pulsing through the hidden speakers in the room. A singular leather chair was perfectly positioned in the center like a throne, awaiting its king.

"This is nice." Violet was honestly impressed, looking around.

However, Asher pulled her close and smooched her on the lips. "The room over there's for you to change. I can't wait to see what you have in store for me."

Violet smirked. "Oh, you're going to love it."

Then she walked away with that swing in her hips that made Asher's jaw clench. She hadn't even begun yet, and Asher could tell he was about to enter a world of suffering.

Taking off his shirt, Asher sank into the leather chair with his legs spread, arms draped on either side, eyes darkened with anticipation. He had reserved this room to watch her his queen dance and he couldn't wait to get started.

The door creaked open behind him, and then he saw her. Violet stepped into the room, and for a heartbeat, Asher forgot how to breathe.

Her heels were obsidian stilettos that resounded with power against the marble floor as she approached. Violet wore his button-down shirt that was open just enough for him to glimpse the tease of lace underneath. Thin wine-red straps clung to her hips, connecting to sheer stockings that made his mouth dry. And in her hand, she held a tie.

A choker hugged her throat and her lips were glossed, parted slightly. Her purple hair was tousled into an artful mess, one strand hanging over her eye, making her look like sin wrapped in temptation.

Asher's throat bobbed. He was hard already.

Violet circled him like a panther, eyes hooded with a dark promise. Her fingers grazed the back of his neck as she came behind the chair, slipping the tie around it. Then she tugged just enough to tilt his head back.

Her voice was silk on his skin. "As promised."

Asher cursed under his breath. That was sexy as hell.

As if on cue, the music changed into a low, slow, thick with bass and Violet let herself melt into it.

Her eyes fluttered closed as she swayed, her hips rolling to the rhythm. She moved like liquid temptation, going down to her knees, arching, touching herself. Her hands caressed her own thighs, her neck, and then her belly. With one slow motion, she parted her legs just for him.

A guttural growl rumbled from Asher's chest, fists clenched on the leather. Violet intended to drive him crazy.

Violet looked straight at him and began to unbutton the rest of the shirt seductively, revealing the sheer, boned corset beneath that shaped her body. She tossed the shirt aside and leaned back, her chest pushed forward, her breasts practically begging to fall out.

Asher's gaze was hungry and he roamed over her body like worship.

She moved over to him this time.

Straddling one thigh, Violet began to grind against it in time with the beat. Her hips rolled in mesmerizing circles, drawing a helpless growl from Asher's throat. Her hands trailed up her own body, skimming her waist, her ribs, cupping her own breasts with a low moan as she locked eyes with him.

Violet rocked forward, her thighs caging him in, pressing her body against his, and her breath tickling his jaw, her heat burning through the fabric between them.

Asher nearly snapped. "Violet—"

"Shh, you're not allowed to touch," she whispered against his mouth, her lips not quite brushing his while her hands pinned his arms against the chair.

Then, teasingly, she ground again.

Asher groaned, his muscles strained while a vein ticked at his temple. Violet purple would be the death of him.

Violet leaned back, the curve of her ass brushing his already hard length, every sway of her hips a calculated strike.

She dipped, twirled, arched her back and flipped her hair, making sure he saw everything.

And when her knees straddled his thighs again, this time sitting on his lap properly, Violet rocked her hips into his in small, torturous circles. Her breasts brushed his chest while her breath painted his cheek, the friction maddening.

Asher's jaw clenched, his chest rising and falling like he was one second from losing control.

"You're killing me," he rasped.

"I know." Her smile was pure wickedness.

Then she kissed him, hot, wet, and dirty.

And just like that, Asher lost every shred of control.

He gripped her hips, lifting and slamming her down against him, growling her name between kisses. Violet moaned, gasping into his mouth as she ground against the bulge in his pants, feeling just how wrecked he was by a single dance.

"I want to fuck you right here," Asher growled into her throat.

"Who said I was stopping you?" Violet panted, eyes wild.

And that was when the lap dance ended, but the real dance began.

Chapter 374: The Altar And The Sacrifice

Asher rose upward from the chair, one arm looped around Violet's waist, while the other cradled the back of her head carefully. Their mouths collided again, harder, needier, with nothing polite about it now. Teeth clashed and their tongues tangled with one another, heat crackling between them like wildfire.

Violet wrapped her legs around his hips instinctively, gasping into his mouth as her back slammed gently against the wall, the gold chains behind her clinking.

Asher's hands roamed her body hungrily. He gripped her thighs, her ass, his fingers sinking into the soft curve with bruising intent. "You drive me insane," he growled against her lips.

"Good," she whispered, breathless. "I'm only getting started."

He rolled his hips into hers, the friction shooting sparks down her spine. Violet moaned as he kissed down her jaw, her throat, tugging the corset just low enough to drag his mouth across her breast. Her head lolled back against the wall, a cry escaping her lips that she didn't even try to hold in.

"Say it again," he rasped. "Say you're mine."

"I'm yours," she breathed, eyes fluttering shut, her whole body aching for more.

"No." Asher lips trailed back up to her ear, biting gently. "Look at me and say it."

Violet's golden eyes met his, hazy and wrecked. "I'm yours, Asher. Completely."

Something in Asher snapped.

In one smooth motion, he carried her to the low chaise in the corner, laying her down like she was both his altar and his sacrifice. The room's low light wrapped around them, shadows dancing along their skin as Asher kissed his way down her stomach, branding her with each press of his lips.

And when the Nightshade prince knelt between her thighs, reverently, hungry, and wholly unholy, Violet knew the lap dance had merely been the ignition and what came after was the fire.

Asher's eyes gleamed up at her like a wolf kneeling before his queen, not in submission, but in promise. Violet's breath hitched as he pressed his mouth to the inside of her thigh, slow and purposely. He kissed higher and higher and then higher. Asher was taunting her with each touch. It was a vow. A fire-starter.

Violet could barely think. Her fingers threaded through his hair, nails grazing his scalp, her hips twitching beneath the weight of want. "Asher..."

He hummed against her skin like her name was the only prayer he'd ever learned. "You gave me a show," he murmured, voice rough with restraint. "Now let me worship the performer."

He ripped the material that was in his way, and spread her thighs farther apart, the moan escaping her lips ragged, and needy. Violet was slick with anticipation, breathless under the club's lights that painted their bodies in warm, decadent hues.

The music still pulsed in the background, slow, dark, dripping with temptation, and moving in time with his kisses as he reached the part of her that throbbed with need.

Asher took the whole of her clit into his mouth and Violet's back arched. She let out a strangled sound, not even sure what language it was.

He didn't let up. His tongue was both cruel and kind, playful one moment and devastating the next. He was slow—God, so slow—drawing out every shudder, every whimper, until her legs were trembling and her hands were fisted.

When her climax hit, it wasn't a spark but an explosion. Violet's whole body bowed, and she cried out his name like a promise and a curse. But even then, Asher didn't stop. He held her there, flicking, licking and sucking through the aftershocks, drinking in every broken sound she made.

By the time Asher kissed his way back up her body, Violet was an utter wreck. She was heaving, covered in sweat and definitely seeing stars.

He hovered over her, lips brushing her cheek, her jaw, her temple. "Do you know what you do to me, Violet Purple?"

She opened her eyes and gave a breathless smile. "Ruin you?"

"Worse," Asher whispered against her lips. "You make me beg while I'm used to taking."

Then he kissed her again deep and slow, and she tasted herself on his tongue.

Suddenly, Violet shifted beneath him, a dangerous glint in her eyes.

"Lie back," she commanded him.

Asher obeyed without hesitation, his heart pounding as Violet undid his belt, slid down his zipper, and freed his already hard dick.

She straddled him, the heat of her thighs sliding over his hips like silk dipped in fire. Her hands anchored on his chest, nails biting into muscle as she rolled her hips forward. Slowly, agonizingly inch by inch, Violet sank onto him and they both gasped.

Violet closed her eyes as she sheathed him inside her, the stretch a delicious burn, the connection between them instant and maddening. Asher's hands flew to her hips, but she caught them and pinned them above his head.

"Uh-uh," she whispered with a wicked grin. "I'm in charge now."

And Goddess, did she mean it.

Violet began to move, rolling her hips in slow, tight circles that had Asher cursing under his breath. Her pace was torturous. She'd rise until he was barely inside her, then sink again with a moan that made him twitch beneath her. The control, the confidence and the slick, perfect drag of her pussy gripping his dick shattered every thought in his head.

"Violet..." Asher rasped.

Violet leaned down, her breasts pressing against his hard chest, the brush of her pebbled nipples sending jolts of sensation through her body. Her lips hovered just over his, taunting. "You like that, Alpha?" she smirked darkly. "... Or would you prefer, Daddy?"

Asher growled, trying to lift his hips, but she planted a hand on his throat, not choking, just firm enough to remind him who ruled this moment.

Violet rode him harder now, pleasure making her thighs tremble, and her breath catching with every bounce. The room was heat and haze, the lights dancing across her body as she lost herself to the feeling.

Asher couldn't take his eyes off her. He was mesmerized by the way her head tilted back, the way her hair cascaded down her back, her cheeks flushed, and lips parted as she whispered his name like a benediction. He was done for.

When her walls fluttered around him and her moan turned to a cry, Asher knew she was close. His hands broke free, flying to her waist as he bucked up, meeting her thrusts with reckless intensity until she was pounding down as fast as she could.

"Come for me," Asher groaned, "Right here, Violet, on me. Let me feel it."

Violet broke with a scream, the sound raw and aching as she shattered around him. Her entire body convulsed, locking around his dick and, pulling him deeper.

That was all it took. Asher followed almost immediately, hips stuttering, a growl ripped from his throat as he emptied his seed into Violet, gripping her like she was the only thing keeping him grounded.

They collapsed into each other, spent, and breathless. It was in that moment, with their bodies still humming from what they'd shared, that Asher looked up and froze.

Violet felt the shift in him instantly and her grip tightened just a little.

"What is it?" she asked, still breathless, her brows furrowed.

Asher stared into her eyes but the eerie glow he swore he'd seen seconds ago was gone. Now, they were just her usual golden eyes, warm and human.

"Asher?" Violet asked again. "What is it?"

He opened his mouth to respond, only to feel something warm trickle down his nose. Asher reached up and touched it, only for his fingers to come up bloodied.

"What the hell?" he whispered.

"Asher?" There was fear in her voice now.

He looked at her, and tried to smile. "Don't worry. It's—"

Asher never got to finish, his body jerked violently once and then again.

"Asher!" Violet screamed, scrambling as Asher began to convulse right in front of her, his body writhing, and his eyes rolling back.

Chapter 375: The Boys Left Behind

"What do you think Asher and Violet are up to right now?" Alaric asked no one in particular, his expression distant as he stared out the window, the cocoa mug untouched in his hand.

"Fucking, obviously," Roman replied, leaning over to stick his tongue into Alaric's cup and lap at the drink like a dog.

"Dude, what the fuck!" Alaric recoiled, pure disgust written across his face.

"I licked it. It's mine now." Roman showed no remorse as he snatched the mug and chugged it down. When he drained the last drop, he let out a deep, satisfied burp.

"Thanks, Momma Griffin," he greeted cheerfully just as Griffin walked in, an apron tied around his waist. "That was divine."

With Asher and Violet gone, Roman had been restless. Nothing—not even the company of his own pack—could soothe the strange ache in his chest caused by Violet's absence. So, without thinking much of it, he found his feet dragging him to East House.

He hadn't expected to run into Alaric in the foyer and the both of them froze mid-stride, locking eyes. Violet's presence had been a balm over their constant feud, but now that she was gone, the scab had ripped right off.

Alaric, sensing Roman's intent, sprinted for Griffin's room like it was war. Roman, swearing under his breath, bolted after him. Alaric arrived first and locked the door behind him, triumphant, until Griffin, curious about the commotion, opened it moments later to a breathless Roman.

And just like that, both idiots were inside, and handed mugs of Griffin's famous cocoa, the one that was almost, mark the word "almost" better than an orgasm.

"Really?" Griffin's expression brightened, lingering between bashful pride and doubt. "You like it that much?"

Roman clutched his chest. "Like it? Griffin, I am obsessed. This cocoa didn't just warm my stomach, it healed ancestral trauma. I took one sip and I saw my entire life flash before my eyes, except this time it was happier."

Griffin blinked.

"I'm serious," Roman went on, deadpan. "If Violet is the sun of my universe, you're the soothing moonlight that reminds me it's okay to feel things. I'm in love with it, and maybe a little bit with you. Not like Violet-love," he added quickly, "but you've definitely claimed whatever remains of my giddy, emotionally unstable heart."

Griffin looked stunned. Then, slowly, his face split into a grin so wide it could've powered the East House on joy alone. He looked like a kid who'd painted his first masterpiece and had it declared a national treasure.

Alaric's jaw dropped, stunned by the sheer audacity of Roman's flattery skills. He groaned, burying his face in his palm. "Don't tell me you believed that? He's so dramatic." he said to Griffin.

"Really, Alaric?" Roman said in a theatrically scolding tone. "Is this how you support your friends? No wonder they say you don't know what you've got until it's gone."

Then to Griffin, he raised the empty mug in salute. "Dramatic? No. I just know when a man deserves his flowers. And cocoa. And maybe a slow clap."

Griffin looked from Roman to Alaric, then down at the plate of still-warm double-chocolate marshmallow swirl cookies which was his signature sweet tooth masterpiece.

Then he said, "You know what? Roman, have this."

"What?!" Alaric nearly choked on air. "But that's mine!"

Griffin turned to him slowly, like a disappointed parent catching their child with bad grades. "Well," he said with a perfect raise of his brow, "not anymore."

Roman snatched the biggest cookie off the plate with glee. He bit into it, letting out an exaggerated moan of satisfaction. "Mmm. Tastes like betrayal and chocolate."

Then, with the cookie still between his teeth, he turned to Alaric and added with a devilish grin, "You heard him, big bro. Mama's chosen. Your new favorite sibling has arrived."

Alaric looked like he'd just been kicked in the gut.

"I'm going to kill you today," he declared as he lunged at the south house Alpha.

His hands wrapped around Roman's throat, but Roman, ever the drama king, just threw his head back and laughed like a madman, even as Alaric throttled him.

But that only made it worse.

Alaric's patience snapped and he drove a fist into Roman's gut, knocking the air clean out of him.

"Oof—! Okay, okay! He's serious!" Roman wheezed, gasping as he doubled over.

Then chaos broke loose.

Roman tackled Alaric, and the two of them went crashing to the floor with a loud thud, fists flying. Their fight wasn't exactly graceful and was more like two toddlers with testosterone.

Griffin sighed deeply like a tired mother at her wit's end.

"I'm so done," he muttered, shaking his head.

He didn't even try to intervene this time, instead, he sat away from them and took a bite out of his cookie.

Meanwhile, the two idiots rolled across the floor like deranged puppies and in the process sent a lamp flying, followed by the shattering of a decorative vase. While all this carnage was happening, Griffin didn't bother. They'd pay for all of it later.

Finally, Roman managed to straddle Alaric, pinning his wrists above his head with a smug gleam in his eyes.

"Guess I'm stronger," he panted triumphantly.

Then a shutter clicked and both of them froze.

Roman and Alaric turned, only to see Griffin casually holding up his phone, camera still raised.

"Don't worry," he said, oh-so-innocently. "You two looked so good together. I figured Violet might appreciate a little bonus content."

Roman grinned like the devil. "If that's the case," he said, glancing down at Alaric with mischief burning in his eyes, "why don't we give her a show? Say, a kiss, aye?"

"What?!" Alaric practically shrieked.

But Roman was already leaning in, eyes closed in full commitment to the bit.

Alaric's brain nearly short-circuited. With a burst of electricity, he zapped Roman clean off his body.

"FUCK!" Roman howled, jerking away and twitching as he flopped onto his side.

Alaric dusted himself off, still fuming.

Roman blinked through the pain and wheezed, "At least you didn't zap my balls, Evil Prince."

Right then, Griffin's phone rang. He glanced down at the screen and immediately perked up.

"Violet!" he announced loudly, letting the name hang in the air.

Roman and Alaric's head turned towards him so quickly it was nearly hilarious.

Griffin answered with a cheery, "Hey, Vee," but his face changed mid-sentence. The light drained from his eyes as a frown tugged at his mouth.

"What's going on?" he asked, his voice serious now.

Even the electrocuted Roman sat up at once while Alaric's expression darkened, his eyes narrowing.

There was a pause. Griffin nodded slowly, said a quiet "Okay, we'll be there," and ended the call.

Before he could rise, both Roman and Alaric were already on their feet, eyes locked on him.

"What happened?" They asked in unison.

Griffin didn't sugarcoat it.

"Something's happened to Asher."

Chapter 376: Asher Will Fight It

Violet had no idea how she held it together.

One moment, she'd been having the best night of her life, and the next, it turned into a nightmare.

The second Asher went into a seizure, she barely had time to think. Violet yanked his shirt off the floor, covered herself, and bolted for help.

Though the club staff didn't know Asher's true identity, they didn't hesitate. In a world where werewolves were still clawing their way out of the second-class stigma, establishments like this bent over backwards to show care, especially when it came to werewolf patrons.

A death on their premises, particularly one involving a werewolf, was a PR disaster waiting to happen. It would not just cause a scandal, but an official inquiry, maybe even a visit from the Alpha King himself. Werewolves weren't as common as humans hence their lives carried weight.

The ambulance eventually arrived, the sound of their sirens splitting the night like a scream.

Violet could not forget standing in the open doorway of the club, Asher's shirt on her body damp with sweat and fear as she screamed. "He's in here! He's not breathing!"

The paramedics swarmed around her like bees, rushing past without so much as a glance. Within seconds, Asher's body was being loaded onto the stretcher.

He was limp and lifeless. The once strong, and cocky Asher Nightshade looked terrifyingly small and breakable.

"No pulse," one of them shouted. "Get the paddles. Clear!"

The doors of the ambulance were still open as she stood frozen at the edge, her arms clutched tightly to her chest, her lips trembling with the force of the prayers she mumbled under her breath.

"Goddess, please, Please don't take him. Please, not now. Not like this."

Without permission, Violet climbed into the back, her knees nearly buckling as she sank into the corner bench. She watched as they pressed the defibrillator pads against his chest.

"Charging. Clear!"

His body jolted once. There was nothing.

"No response!"

"Again!"

Jolt. There was still nothing.

Violet's heart thrashed wildly in her chest, her fingers digging into her thighs. Her breath came in short gasps. He couldn't die. Not Asher. Not her monster.

Without thinking about it, Violet was screaming into his ears, "You cannot go, Asher! I swear if you dare do this, I'll face Hades and drag you out myself! I don't care!"

"You have to calm down, young lady!" one of them said to her.

But Violet didn't care because she meant every word. Death was not going to take Asher. Not today.

Then the other medic looked up. "I've got a pulse!"

Violet groaned in relief at once.

"Get him stable. Let's move!"

The doors slammed shut and the vehicle lurched forward. Violet could barely hear anything over the roaring in her ears. She reached out and gripped Asher's hand which was cold and unmoving in hers.

But she didn't let go. Not until they reached the hospital, where Asher was rushed into the emergency room, and they were separated.

Left behind with nothing, Violet paced up and down the sterile hallway anxiously. Her feet were bare, her hair disheveled and her hands wouldn't stop shaking. She hadn't even realized she was still in Asher's shirt with nothing beneath.

But she didn't care. Not even when people stared and their judgemental gazes raked over her body. All she could think about was Asher. Her poor Asher. He can't die. She didn't permit it.

"Hello?" Someone said and Violet looked up.

A nurse with warm brown eyes and the gentlest smile in the world approached her quietly, not wanting to startle her. "Miss Purple?"

"Yes?"

Violet's heart was pounding now. Had she come here to tell the bad news? That they tried their best but her Asher was no more?

"These are your belongings. The club had them sent over." She handed her a neatly folded bag. "There's a private changing room just past those doors. I'll show you."

Thank the gods. Violet let out a shuddering breath. It was not bad news. Yet.

Then she followed the woman numbly. It was only when Violet pulled on the clothes that she felt remotely human again. But then, it was the same clothes she had worn to the club, and just like that, her heart split open again.

With the emotion choking her, Violet pulled out the phone, her fingers trembling as she dialed the boys.

"Okay, we'd be there." Griffin had said.

Violet waited for them. For thirty more unbearable minutes, she waited. Then the elevator dinged, and her world changed.

The doors slid open, and Roman, Alaric, and Griffin stepped out like war gods arriving at the gates of hell. Their eyes locked with hers instantly, and it was all over.

Violet broke.

She stumbled forward and barely got out a strangled, "I—" before her knees buckled with all the guilt.

Thankfully, Roman was already there and caught her mid-collapse, his arms strong and warm and safe. He held her like tight, tucking her against his chest even as she trembled.

"Shh, I've got you," he whispered.

"It's my fault," Violet sobbed. "It's all my fault. I shouldn't have taken him to that club. I shouldn't have brought him outside the academy at all."

"No, hey," Roman tilted her face up, his eyes fierce. "Don't do that. This is not your fault, Violet. Do you hear me? It's not your fault."

Alaric came up from behind and wrapped his arms around both of them, encasing her in the middle. "You don't have to be afraid anymore," he said gently, his chin resting on her head. "We're here now, and Asher's going to be fine. He has to be."

Violet let out a broken sob and clung to them tighter, like they were the only thing keeping her from shattering further.

Griffin stepped closer and without a word, he wrapped his arms around the three of them. His hand cradled the back of Violet's head, his voice a quiet rumble. "We're not going to let him go. Asher will fight this. We're not losing him."

Violet finally let herself cry, held up by her boyfriends.

Chapter 377: Did This To Asher

In the hallway, Violet was cradled against Griffin's chest like a baby, her legs stretched out and resting on Roman's lap as he used the opportunity to gently massage her toes. People walked past and gave them curious stares, but none of them cared, especially Violet, whose distant gaze stared through it all.

Alaric in question stood in the corner, answering calls. Once he hung up, he turned back to the others.

"Apparently, our parents are in a meeting with the Alpha King, which is why I can't get a hold of Alpha Henry. But I've informed Jeremiah, and he's keeping the news on the low. He thinks we shouldn't let this get out at all and that's what Asher would want. Unless it turns life-threatening, no one wants to deal with Alpha Henry."

"He's right," Roman said, nodding. "Henry's a handful and even I, I'm not ready to deal with him. Besides, we came here in a rush without any cover and it wouldn't surprise me if this is already in the news." He cast a worried glance at Violet. People were going to drag her online if they found out how this all went down. What was a student doing in a club like that, anyway?

Griffin scowled. "I'll make some calls and stop this before it spreads. We don't need more scandals."

"Me too," Alaric said grimly.

"I'm so sorry, guys. This is my fault. It's my fault all this is happening." Violet barely finished the words before Griffin growled in warning.

"I love you, Violet, but I swear to the gods, if I hear one more apology from your lips, I'll tape your mouth shut. So something happened, then what? How is that your fault? And what's the point of having us as

your boyfriends if we can't handle one minor inconvenience?" His voice was fierce, and his gaze seared into hers until she looked away, wanting to shrink beneath it.

Griffin might always look like the gentlest of them all, but everyone knew when he got angry, he snapped. And when Griffin did, it was a whole other kind of destruction. That was why her big guy almost never got angry. Or at least, he tried not to.

So Violet wisely kept her mouth shut, afraid of provoking him further. They had enough problems on their hands already.

As if on cue, the doctor stepped out of the emergency room, the lines on his face etched deep with concern. He pulled off his gloves slowly, his gaze sweeping the waiting area.

"Are any of you family?" he asked, his eyes briefly landing on Violet who was already on her feet the moment she spotted him. The others stood too, tension rising in the air like smoke.

"We're his friends," Griffin said. "And pack."

The doctor gave a short nod. "That's good enough."

He sighed. "Asher suffered a brain aneurysm. A serious one at that. If he hadn't been brought in as quickly as he was, he wouldn't have made it."

The room froze.

Violet's stomach twisted, bile rose to her throat. Asher had what? A brain aneurysm?

"Brain Aneurysm?" Alaric repeated as if what the doctor said didn't make sense. "That's impossible. We're werewolves. We don't get things like that."

"You're right," the doctor said. "It's rare, but not impossible. You may be werewolves, but you're not immortal. You're just harder to kill."

Roman's eyes darkened. "So you're saying he's had this condition all along?"

If Asher had hidden this from him — his best friend — Roman swore he'd wring his neck the moment he woke up.

"That's where I'm curious," the doctor continued. "Has he ever been diagnosed? Any symptoms? Intense migraines? Nosebleeds? Blackouts?"

Everyone turned to Roman, who knew Asher best.

"Nothing," he said, jaw tight. "Asher's been fine. He's one of the strongest bastards I know. No signs ever."

The doctor raised an eyebrow. "I was told he has psychic abilities. Mind-based powers?"

Violet answered this time. "Yes, but he hasn't been using them. Not lately. Not at all, as far as I know." She glanced at the others.

"No," Griffin confirmed.

"You're right," Alaric agreed.

"Hasn't used them once," Roman added.

Violet turned back to the doctor. "Besides when it happened..." Her cheeks flushed. "We were... er, together."

The doctor, to his credit, didn't blink at the implication of her words. "Yes, I've been filled in on the circumstances, miss purple. That's what concerns me more."

He held up a chart. "According to the scans, this wasn't gradual. There were no pre-rupture signs, no swelling. It hit him fast, violently, like a strike of lightning. Almost as if something attacked his mind from within."

"Attacked him?" Roman repeated, eyes narrowing.

"That's not possible," Violet breathed. "It was just us in the room."

"Maybe," the doctor said, his tone calm but firm. "Or maybe something was triggered. I don't know, it's just theories I'm making at this point. But whatever the cause, one thing's clear: his werewolf physiology saved him. A human would've died on the spot. So yes, he's lucky."

Griffin, Roman, Alaric and Violet all looked at one another with relief. It was good news Asher was fine, but now, they were left with more confusion and suspicion.

The doctor scanned their troubled faces. "No need to panic for now. He's stable. We've done what we can, but this is beyond human medicine. We've called in a werewolf specialist. He'll be here in the morning. Also, if you have a healer, now would be a good time."

"Thank you," Alaric said, stepping forward to shake his hands. "Thank you for saving our friend. We'll make the calls."

The doctor nodded and turned away.

As soon as he left, the boys huddled close, beginning to whisper and exchange ideas, making plans within themselves.

Violet didn't mind she was being excluded because she had demons of her own to face.

"Attacked from within." That line wouldn't leave her alone for strange reasons.

She kept seeing the moment Asher had looked at her as if he had seen something that didn't make sense to him.

A cold chill spread through her chest because deep down, Violet couldn't shake the feeling that she had done this to Asher.

Chapter 378: Something Inside Of Her

The beeping sound was the first thing Violet heard when they entered the room, the slow, mechanical beat filling the silence with dread.

Then came the sight of Asher on the bed with wires everywhere. He had a breathing mask over his face, IVs in both arms, and monitors flashing numbers she didn't understand.

Violet had never seen Asher look so pale. So fragile. So vulnerable. And it was all because of her.

This time, Violet didn't cry out loud, she let the tears run free on her cheeks. Her knees hit the floor beside the bed as if her legs had forgotten how to hold her up. Then she reached for his cold and limp hands, and clutched them desperately like they were her lifeline.

"I'm sorry. I'm so sorry, Asher. Please don't do this. Please don't leave me. I'm sorry..." Violet said it over and over, like a prayer, like the words themselves could undo what had happened.

The boys hated hearing her blame herself, but this time, they said nothing. She needed to get it off her chest. So they let her. They stood by while Violet poured out everything she'd been holding in, crying until her chest stopped heaving and the tears ran dry.

Roman was the one who went to her saying, "I know you're scared, but if Asher was awake right now, he wouldn't want you crying like this. You know that."

Although her lips trembled a little, Violet nodded. Slowly, she forced herself to breathe and was able to pull it together.

Roman then cupped her face with a gentleness that surprised Violet, saying. "You need to leave, love. Go back to Asher's place. Griffin will take care of you."

No way. Violet shook her head, frantic now. "No. I'm not leaving him. I won't."

Roman's hand didn't move. "I'm sorry, but you've had a traumatic night. Right now, you're hanging on by a thread, and if you stay here any longer, you'll collapse. We can't worry about you and Asher at the same time."

"I'm fine—"

"You're not," he cut in. His eyes darkened, a low growl rumbling in his throat. "I can smell him on you. His seed inside of you. And it's driving my wolf insane with the urge to claim you too."

Violet's breath hitched.

As if to prove his words, Roman's pupils dilated, glowing faintly gold, the light humming beneath his irises before it vanished as if it never came.

Dear lord. It dawned on Violet that Roman was fighting his wolf right now.

"I'm sorry, I didn't know" she whispered, ashamed.

"I know you didn't." Roman took a shaky breath. "But it's not just me, Violet. It's all of us. You are driving us crazy."

That was when Violet turned and discovered Alaric standing stiff in the corner. He deliberately turned away when he caught her staring, his hand clenched at his side. Griffin himself was silent, his jaw tight.

Violet was stunned. How could she not have noticed this?

Roman gave her a strained smile. "Griffin has the strongest self control amongst us trio. He'll keep you safe tonight. I promise."

"And Asher?" she asked.

"He's not going anywhere," Alaric said. "Roman and I will stay. We'll watch over him."

Violet's throat tightened, but she nodded. "Thank you."

Impulsively, she leaned in to kiss Roman's cheek, but he stepped back with a feral hiss.

"Not now, Violet," he warned with a hoarse voice. "Maybe later."

Violet nodded again in understanding before she turned to Griffin. He opened his arms and she walked into him, letting him guide her with a hand on her lower back.

Before they left, Violet paused by the door and looked back at Alaric. "See you tomorrow?"

"Yes," he said quietly. "Tomorrow."

And then she was gone.

The ride back to Asher's place was an awkward one. Griffin didn't say a word, and neither did Violet. He just kept his eye on the road, hands tightly clenched around the steering wheel in restraint.

When they finally arrived, Violet informed him. "There are two rooms inside, the master and the guest. I'll take the guest."

Griffin hesitated. He wanted to be near and offer her comfort. But then, he also knew what that closeness might stir, what his wolf might crave.

Violet wanted Griffin, that was for sure. But after everything that had happened, she wasn't ready for any intimacy. Not when she was tormented with guilt over Asher's condition.

"Good night, Griffin." Violet turned away before she let her emotions get the best of her.

Once inside, Violet headed straight for the bathroom, stripping off the clothes that still carried Asher's scent. She clutched her phone tightly, unsure how far werewolf hearing really reached, so she turned on the faucet to muffle her voice before dialing Lila.

The phone barely rang before Lila answered, speaking as if she'd been bracing for this exact moment.

"Please tell me Asher hurt you so I can finally have a reason to punch that idiot."

Her insensitive words hit Violet hard. The pain she'd been holding in cracked open, and a loud sob escaped her lips as her knees hit the cold tiled floor.

"No," she choked out. "He didn't hurt me. I hurt him."

There was a beat of silence before Lila asked in a serious tone. "What are you talking about?"

Violet swallowed and explained through hiccuped breaths. "We were having sex. Really good sex. And then, Asher looked at me like he wasn't seeing me anymore, but something else. And then he just... started convulsing. The doctor said it was a brain aneurysm. Lila—he could've died if he wasn't a werewolf."

Tears slid down her cheeks, hot and relentless. "The doctor said it wasn't normal. Said it came too fast...Like something attacked his mind. And I think—I think I did that. I think I almost killed him."

Violet waited one second. Then two, and finally a minute for her response.

"Lila?" she whispered. "Are you there?"

When Lila finally spoke, her voice had become weary.

"What your mother feared is starting to happen."

"What?"

"Queen Seraphira locked it away," Lila continued slowly. "But your powers, they're surfacing, and they're doing what they were meant to do."

"Lila," Violet said, confused and breathless, "what are you talking about?"

"We'll talk tomorrow," Lila said. "How soon can you return to the academy?"

Violet hesitated, her mind spinning. "Seven. I'll leave by seven."

"Good," Lila said. "There's a lot we've kept from you. More than you can imagine, Violet. But you were right. It's time you knew everything. For now, just stay calm. Whatever powers you have, they're tied to your emotions. So don't get angry. Don't get too excited. Don't feel too much—and definitely, no sex. Just hold on, okay? I'll see you tomorrow."

The line clicked off.

Violet sat there, alone in the silence of the bathroom, and for the first time, she felt it.

Something was stirring inside her and it was terrifying.

Chapter 379: House Of Wolves

There were a hundred better things Alpha King Elijah could be doing with his time, but instead, here he was, presiding over a glorified shouting match. The parents of the Cardinal Alphas sat at his long table, bickering like children.

Still, he didn't mind. He rather enjoyed watching them devour one another.

The last time the High Houses united, they had birthed the Cardinal Alphas, a dream his brother and chief instigator of his misery, Alpha Angus, had tried yet failed to achieve.

So let them stay divided. He would feed the fire himself if he had to.

Irene Hale said, "This scandal has done irreparable damage to Lunar Academy's image. It's not just about a school anymore, it's about the credibility of our sons. Elsie Lancaster cannot remain as a bride option for my son."

"That is, if your son emerges as the heir," Alpha Henry pointedly reminded her that Griffin would have to defeat his own son, Asher. And in Henry's arrogance, that could never happen.

"Heir or not, appearance is everything, and Elsie Lancaster is heavily affiliated with our sons," Leon Draven argued. "Elsie was supposed to be the perfect role model as our chosen Luna-to-be. What does it say when she's at the center of such disgrace? I'm sorry, but I have to agree with Irene on this, she can't remain a bride option."

The look that Henry gave Leon after those words was pure poison. They were supposed to be allies, and now the coward was jumping ship?

"So what then?" Henry sneered. "We throw Elsie away and roll out a carpet for that purple-haired whore? The one all our sons are sniffing around like dogs in heat?"

Elijah, who had thus far reclined with a bored expression, perked up, his eyes gleaming with interest.

"Excuse me?" he asked mildly.

Irene Hale cursed under her breath. She had been careful not to get Violet implicated in this, but of course, Henry obviously wanted that girl's head rolling on the ground. That fucking bastard!

Elijah's voice came again, quieter now, and far more dangerous. "What whore are we referring to?"

Irene spoke through clenched teeth. "Violet is not a whore, Alpha. Henry just uses that word for any gender that doesn't have a dick between their legs. If that's the case, I can't help but wonder what he thought of his own mother."

Henry slammed a hand against the table, rising halfway from his seat. "You venomous little—"

"Sit," Elijah snapped, not even raising his voice. The command alone dropped the temperature in the room and Henry sank back into his chair, lips pressed tight.

"If you can't have a civil discussion," Elijah continued, "I'll make decisions without your input."

Zara Storm picked up where the tension left off. "What Henry means to say is that Violet Purple has become a distraction. Our sons are following her around like bewitched fools, and there's even talk of a polygamous relationship."

Caspian grunted. "It's 'polyandrous,' not polygamous."

"Don't correct me!" Zara hissed at her husband, shutting the man off successfully. This situation was frustrating already, and he was correcting her? If he had the energy, he should be bringing their son back to his senses.

Elijah leaned back, stroking the edge of his jaw in thought. "Violet Purple," he repeated softly, tasting the name. "That's one interesting name,"

Irene said at once. "I believe we were talking about Elsie. This isn't the time to discuss other distractions. After all, we're here to determine how to reduce the damage to Lunaris Academy."

She had purposefully shifted the attention away from Violet. Irene didn't like the gleam in Elijah's eyes at the mention of the girl's name.

Henry turned on her. "Or you don't want us talking about you grooming Violet to follow in your image? "

Irene didn't flinch. "Or perhaps you're still bitter because she knocked you flat on your ass during the supposed friendly parents match?"

Elijah's lips twitched. "She did what?" A spark lit behind his eyes, a smile almost breaking through the serious air. "Well, now I'm curious. Tell me more about this girl."

Irene frowned at the attention Violet was suddenly receiving. "There isn't much to tell. Violet is a temperamental, hormonal teenager. She's bold, yes, but that's hardly new. The heirs are at an age where they form bonds and chase feelings. It doesn't mean anything."

Zara folded her arms. "Perhaps to you, but that bond is too strong for comfort. I don't like her influence over my son. I'd take Elsie as his Luna any day over risking Violet twisting his future."

"Ah, now that is interesting," Elijah mused, watching them all. For someone who was supposed to be mad that they kept such a secret from him, he seemed rather delighted?

He said, "So we're deciding between a scandalous heiress and a girl with dangerous sway. This should be fun."

Everyone in the room shifted uneasily at that last word. Elijah's idea of "fun" was rarely shared.

Henry, sensing an opportunity, jumped in. "What did Elsie even do that's so wrong? Like Irene said, they're teenagers. The scandal can be smoothed over. The media will move on. People forget." He used Irene's words against her.

"Elsie will not be anyone's Luna," came a cold voice from the doorway that silenced the room.

All eyes turned toward Luna Beatrice. She stood dressed in striking white, regal and radiant. Not just the parents of the cardinal alphas, Elijah's eyes widened slightly in surprise. Luna Beatrice was after all known for her silence in politics. Hence her sudden presence was thunderous.

Luna Beatrice moved with purpose, unfazed by the wide eyes and stunned faces as she approached.

Elijah lifted a brow. "Beatrice?"

But she didn't even look at him. Her eyes were locked on Henry as she stopped directly in front of his seat.

"Really?" She hissed. "People forget? You mean humans that can be easily manipulated and their voices suppressed."

As a human herself, her fury was understandable. And even Henry, smug as he was, leaned back slightly beneath her fire-lit gaze.

She turned to Zara next. "You'd rather a disgraced, manipulative girl become Luna than someone fresh just because she doesn't share your incestuous bloodline?"

Zara's face twisted, but she held her tongue. Human or not, Beatrice was Luna over them all. Any insult toward her could mean serious consequences.

Beatrice wasn't finished. Her voice rang with steel. "Do not forget, it's my position she would inherit. Do you think I'll sit back and watch my legacy drowned in scandal?"

She let her gaze sweep across the table and found no seat had been arranged for her. Beatrice didn't ask for one.

Instead, she marched straight to the head table and before anyone could blink, sat herself astride Elijah's lap.

Everyone froze.

And for the first time in a long while, Alpha King Elijah was completely and utterly stupefied.

Chapter 380: Kill The Alpha king

"What do you think you're doing?" Elijah whispered to his wife, who had made herself comfortably at home on his lap.

"Isn't it obvious?" she said coolly, then turned her attention to the others across the table.

It was clear that power had changed hands, and they all knew to act accordingly. Beatrice wasn't Elijah, and right now, she seemed far more terrifying than him.

With her arm resting on the table, Luna Beatrice leaned forward and declared, "You can all argue about options and power plays all you want, but I've made my stance clear. Elsie is done. I will never accept her as the next Luna."

Murmurs rippled through the room, especially from Henry and Zara's side. If anyone looked most pleased by the news, it was Irene. Who would've thought Beatrice had this kind of fire? The woman had been silent for far too long.

"With all due respect, Luna Beatrice," Henry said, "Alpha King Elijah gifted Elsie to the Cardinal Alpha who emerges as heir after graduation. You can't just change that."

"Well, you heard my wife," Elijah cut in, his voice edged with both amusement and danger. "Looks like we'll be needing a new bride list."

But Beatrice said firmly, "There will be no bride list."

"What?" Elijah blinked, disbelief spreading across his face.

The murmurs in the room grew louder. Beatrice might be Luna, but she was human and challenging Elijah's authority was unheard of.

Beatrice turned to him, eyes steely. "There will be no gifting of a bride. The greatest gift you could give your heir is the freedom to choose."

For a moment, Elijah didn't speak. He stared at his wife, his expression unreadable and stormy. To the others, it looked like a stare down. None of them saw how his hands shifted, and claws sprouted and dug into her waist, drawing blood beneath her gown. But Beatrice didn't flinch. She bore the pain in silence, holding her ground with regal stillness.

"I agree with Luna Beatrice," Irene said suddenly.

The sound of her voice snapped Elijah from the bloodlust that had begun to cloud his judgment. His claws retracted, the blood on his fingers disappearing just as Beatrice let out a breath she hadn't realized she was holding.

"Me too," Zara added, to everyone's surprise.

With Elsie out of the picture, she could finally position a respectable North girl for her son, and get rid of that purple-haired menace.

"Let the boys do what they want," Leon Draven shrugged. "I mean, it's free to love."

Now all eyes turned to Henry.

He paused. And then, with tight reluctance, said, "Whatever you say, Alpha King. I'll follow your lead."

As soon as the words left his mouth, attention returned to Elijah. Beatrice kept her back to him, never turning to see the expression on her husband's face. Even Irene, fierce as she was, had to admit she was impressed. Beatrice was bolder than any of them had ever given her credit for.

After a tension-laced silence that stretched unbearably, Alpha King Elijah finally said, with a smile that didn't touch his eyes, "Who am I to go against my wife's decision? Wife knows best, right? The heirs are free to date whoever they want."

Irene didn't show it, but she was relieved. The boys were going to love this. Still, beneath that triumph sat something uneasy.

Elijah never made decisions that favored the Cardinal Alphas. Right now, this felt too easy.

It felt like the calm before the storm.

Hopefully, in her quest to make things right, she hadn't fallen into Elijah's trap and made things worse for the boys.

"Now that that aspect of the conversation is over, let's move to the next segment of this meeting," Luna Beatrice announced, sounding every bit like the one in charge even though the Alpha King was around.

Elijah, in question, looked relaxed, as if he had given up and let his wife do whatever she wanted.

"Right before I stepped into this room, I had a very detailed conversation with President Roy."

At the mention of President Roy, Elijah, who had appeared disinterested, immediately stiffened. He turned sharply to face his wife. "You had a conversation with President Roy behind my back?"

"Of course not, sweetheart!" Beatrice forced out a casual laugh. "If I'd had it behind your back, you wouldn't be hearing about it now, would you?"

She ignored the deepening frown on Elijah's face, and the way he stared at her like he was truly seeing her for the first time.

She went on, "Principal Jameson has given us an effective solution to end the ongoing crises at Lunaris Academy. A solution I believe my husband is yet to share with us. Isn't that right, my king?"

All eyes turned to Elijah, and for a man who was always the center of power in any room, Elijah for once looked caught off guard.

"Come on, honey," Beatrice urged with that same honey-laced sarcasm. "Tell them all about Jameson's solution."

"About that..." Elijah muttered, then grabbed his wife and tugged her closer, seating her firmly against his crotch.

Luna Beatrice stiffened, sensing his intent instantly.

"Jameson thinks the solution to the raging chaos is building a fifth house for the humans," Elijah announced smoothly, his hand now subtly guiding her hips in slow, suggestive motion against him.

"That's ridiculous!" Henry slammed his palm against the table, fury in his voice. "You cannot allow that, Your Majesty!"

"Yes, I cannot allow that," Elijah echoed with a cool smile. "But that's what my wife likes, doesn't she? Tell them, love."

His tone was dripping with cruel sweetness.

Everyone noticed the shift in Beatrice's posture, the quiet tension in her shoulders. They could sense something was happening beneath the table, something they weren't supposed to see. But they saw it anyway.

Irene especially recognized it was a punishment. This was Elijah's way of humiliating her. Classic dick move.

Even though they all knew what was going on, none of them said a word. They pretended to be blind.

But Beatrice's voice didn't waver. "The news of a fifth house created exclusively for humans would sate the anger currently burning through their communities. They'd finally feel heard."

"The four houses represent our authority. Bringing in a fifth one is diminishing our power and tradition," Zara countered.

Anger flared in Beatrice's tone now. "You diminished your tradition the moment you brought humans into the academy and crafted a flawed system around them. You can't invite humans in, force them into pack dynamics, place them at the bottom, and then act shocked when they push back for change. When you climb to power by stepping on the backs of others, eventually your balance will —."

She didn't finish her sentence because Elijah groaned loudly.

"Yes, that feels so good, my queen," he muttered, voice thick and taunting.

Beatrice's hands balled into fists in her lap. She was going to kill this man one day.