

## Defy 391

### Chapter 391: Bonding Experience

"Whoa, wait!" Alaric shouted, throwing up his hands as Lila readied her sword for another attack.

Lila halted mid-lunge, the flames licking her blade fluttering in agitation while her eyes remained locked on them with violent suspicion.

Alaric asked cautiously. "What do you mean, 'what we've done to Violet?' Why would you think we did something to her?"

Lila's nostrils flared. "Then where is she?" She demanded, "Violet was supposed to meet me at the academy hours ago. Don't play dumb! What—did you all kill her after you found out what she did to this asshole?!" She swung her sword toward Asher, lunging again.

"That's enough!" Adele's voice boomed across the space like thunder.

Lila halted, her gaze shifting to Adele and taking her in.

"The Cardinal Alphas did nothing to Violet," she said coldly. "You'd know that if you could calm your rage for five seconds and look around you!"

Lila's hands tightened on the hilt of her blade, her expression still wild. "Then where is she? I warned her about hanging around you guys, but she asked me to trust you all... " her voice cracked as she pointed at the cardinal alphas, "... and the moment I do, she disappears?"

Asher told her with a heavy heart. "Violet and Griffin were taken last night by rogues. We found out early this morning and we've been tracking them since. Until you decided to show up swinging crazily at the people actually trying to rescue her."

His eyes darkened as he stepped closer to her. "You really think I would hurt her? After everything I've done to protect her? Everything I've sacrificed?" His jaw clenched. "To think you still believe that after all this time is sickening."

"Not when she's a threat to what you desire most. To what you all have trained for your entire life," she sneered. "Love or loyalty, Asher. Which one would win in the end?"

That word stopped Asher, burrowing under his skin like a sting. But more than the accusation, it was the certainty in her voice that rattled him.

He looked her in the eye and asked slowly. "What is your relationship to Violet, Lila? Is she Fae or more? What do you know about her father? You know something, don't you?"

Lila ignored him, her silence loud.

Then, with a chilling calm, she said, "I'm not saying anything to you creatures of lies and deceit." Then turned her back to them and started walking toward Asher's house.

"Where are you going?" Alaric demanded.

"To the place she was taken. I'll find her myself."

"You can't do this alone!" Asher snapped, stepping in her path.

"Watch me," she shot back, trying to move past him.

But Asher didn't budge. "Fine. Keep your secrets," he said through clenched teeth. "I'll figure them out eventually. But right now, we're working together not just to find Violet, but Griffin too. You might have magic and a sword, but don't pretend you know rogues better than we do."

The tension between them was intense and menacing. Lila's eyes burned into Asher's with her hand still hovering over her sword. But slowly, and reluctantly, she lowered it.

Her voice was a grudging growl. "Let's move then."

As they began heading back to the house, Roman, who had thankfully worn some pants, skidded up beside Lila with a grin that spelled trouble.

"I always knew you had a thing for trying to kill us," he said, eyes glinting with mischief. "And guess what? I was right."

He wiggled his brows, practically bouncing with energy. "But don't worry, I have this massive, world-shaking instinct that this mission will be our bonding experience. Before long, you'll feel the love too, Tinker Bell."

The ice-cold, venom-filled glare Lila shot him was enough to chill one to the bone.

But Roman just grinned wider, utterly unbothered.

Alaric groaned and cursed under his breath. "Fucking idiot."

Then he stomped over and yanked Roman away. "Do you have a death wish or were you just born with one?"

Roman shrugged with a cheeky smile. "A little from Column A, a little from Column B."

Alaric shook his head in disbelief.

Once they reached the house, the group moved in silence as Asher led the way to the kitchen.

"This is where she was taken," he said, gesturing to the space.

Lila took in the dried blood on the floor, frowning.

Roman, ever the talker, spoke up without being prompted. "I don't know what you're planning to do, but if it's scent-tracking, forget it. They blocked it. Real pro work. Honestly, at this point, we're screwed without a witch."

Lila scoffed.

"My kind aren't limited to sniffing floors for a trail," she said coolly. "And witches? They take lectures from us."

The Cardinal Alphas looked at each other and shrugged. Then they gave her space for her to do her thing.

Lila reached into the folds of her jacket and pulled out a small pouch. She opened it and revealed finely ground, multicolored sand.

"Every creature leaves behind a signature," Lila's voice had a strange rhythm as she spoke. "An energy trail... an echo. Some call it aura." She pinched some of the dust between her fingers and blew it gently into the air.

The sand scattered like shimmering mist, catching the light as it swirled and fell to the corners of the room. For a moment, nothing happened — at least to them.

But Lila's eyes lit with a strange color. It was not glowing but radiating several colors at the same time.

Roman blinked. "Okay, that's new."

"There were three rogues here, then Violet and Griffin." Lila murmured, scanning the space as if she were reading invisible ink on the walls.

Her gaze followed the swirling trails of energy that only she could see. It was not surprising the alphas and Adele fell in behind her as she traced a path through the kitchen and out the back door.

Outside, Lila announced with certainty.

"I can see the trail."

Asher commanded immediately. "Get the car! We leave now!"

Chapter 392: Something Human In Him

Violet didn't know how long she'd been screaming, an hour or two? It felt like an eternity since Griffin, no, The Beast, had tossed her over his shoulder like a sack of flour and taken off.

They hadn't just been running. He had been leaping from one treetop to another, over gorges, across cliffs and through clouds, for all she knew.

The world had become a blur of wind, roaring leaves, and nausea. It was just endless suffocating trees. So when he finally stopped, it took Violet a second to realize the blur had stopped.

He dropped her unceremoniously onto the ground and the moment her feet touched solid earth, Violet's legs gave out with a dramatic tremble. Her knees hit the mossy forest floor, and she crawled weakly forward, only to hurl up whatever remained in her stomach. She gagged and retched until there was nothing left.

When it was over, Violet crawled away from the mess and collapsed on her back beside a smooth rock. The coolness of it felt so good. So she lay there for a long moment, trying to remember what air felt like in her lungs.

Above her, the sky was painted in hues of deep indigo and fading gold as the sun began to make its descent, bathing the clearing in amber light.

The scent of earth and moss was thick in the air, but just beyond, a spring poured from the side of a rock, cascading in a silvery curtain into a shallow pool. The small stream was clear and peaceful as it wound through the dense trees.

Not that Violet cared where they were anymore. She just wanted to breathe. But peace, of course, was short-lived.

The sound of heavy breathing came next, followed by a low snarl with the ground trembling slightly as "he" appeared.

And yes, Violet was talking about an eight feet massive being looming over her with that primal look in his eyes. His thick hair fell in disheveled waves down his back, and his arms bulged with animalistic power. He was a beast through and through.

The Beast bent low, sniffing her with exaggerated huffs like a predator scenting its territory. Violet didn't even bother to flinch and just lay there, eyes half-lidded and emotionally bankrupt.

"Do your thing, buddy," she muttered. "Just don't drool on me."

After a moment of very invasive sniffing, The Beast suddenly froze. His nostrils flared and his eyes narrowed into a frown of confusion. He growled low, as if he didn't like her scent.

"Mate," he said, voice gravelly and guttural. "Smell wrong."

And then, absurdly, Violet started to laugh. At this point, it was either that or cry.

"Oh really? My smell offends you? You're one to talk when your giant nose keeps blowing hot air to my face!" She flipped him the middle finger without even looking.

The Beast recoiled with a guttural snarl, lips curling back in visible offense.

"Mate. Bath."

His voice carried the weight of authority, like a child emperor commanding his kingdom. He gestured toward the waterfall with a pointed claw.

"Oh, for Christ's sake!" Violet groaned. "Let me catch my freaking breath, will you?!"

Violet was tired. Her body was aching. She really needed a moment to process all that had happened so far.

But The Beast, impatient and completely tone-deaf to human emotion, began to pace, snarling under his breath. His steps

seemed to crack twigs and quake the earth, his frustration obvious.

But that movement gave Violet the opportunity to notice something she hadn't until now.

"Oh dear God..." She gulped at the sight of The Beast down there.

Violet had caught glimpses of Griffin during transformation and knew he was er.. well blessed. And unfortunately, even that was magnified in beast form.

She stared in unholy horror at the literal spear swinging between his legs.

"Moon and stars, no." Violet whispered, backing up an inch in the dirt.

No, no, no. That's not happening. He would destroy her with that thing. They were not doing that.

The Beast, apparently oblivious to her internal crisis, leaned down again.

"Mate. Smell. Not like Mate." He grunted, trying to pass a message as he pointed once again toward the waterfall with a firm grunt.

And yes, it wasn't a request.

Violet let out a shriek as The Beast grabbed her once again, this time hoisting her up and marching straight toward the waterfall. Before she could protest, he plunged her face-first into the water.

She thrashed wildly, bubbles escaping her lips as her limbs flailed beneath the surface.

Was he trying to drown her?!

Just as panic truly set in, he finally let go, and Violet broke through the surface with a loud gasp, coughing and sputtering as water streamed down her face.

"What the hell?!" she yelled between ragged breaths, shoving her soaked hair from her eyes.

Fueled by righteous fury, Violet lunged toward him, her intention being to tackle him and make him pay. But all she managed to do was slip and fall squarely on her ass, sending another splash of water up her nose.

Violet groaned in frustration, ready to curse him to oblivion, but stopped cold when she heard the deep, guttural, surprisingly joyful sound that left his throat.

The Beast was laughing?

Violet blinked. What in the holy hell...?

It was the first time she'd seen anything remotely human in him since he'd emerged, and it stunned her into silence.

Then an idea hit her.

Violet scooped a handful of cold water and hurled it directly into his face.

The Beast stopped as water dripped from his lashes and nose, and he stood so still that even the birds seemed to hush.

Violet's heart skipped. Had she gone too far?

But then, his lips twitched and then he boomed with unrestrained laughter that echoed off the cliffs and trees around them.

Then, without warning, The Beast bent down, scooped up water with his enormous hands, and flung it at her.

Oh shit.

The force nearly knocked Violet backward again. Water drenched her from head to toe, her already soaked pajamas clinging to her like a second skin.

She wiped her face, gasped, and narrowed her eyes with the grin of a woman who'd just declared war. "You are so dead!" she roared.

And just like that, Violet started a water battle she knew from the start she would not win. Yet, it was worth it.

Chapter 393: Mating Dance

It was night now and the Beast had left her to go look for food as he told her in two words.

"Food. Mate."

Violet came to an oddly comforting conclusion. The Beast didn't just operate on animal instinct, he behaved like a child. Not in size or strength but in his emotions.

When he laughed, it was unrestrained, and belly-deep joy. At the same time, when angry, it was fury unleashed like a wildfire. There was no in-between. No shades. Just the extremes.

It made Violet wonder, was he just some split personality hidden in Griffin's subconscious? Or was it the punishment from the goddess as she has heard so many times? Was this the cost for his power?

Deep down, she knew the answer.

Perhaps if Griffin let him out more often whenever she was around, the Beast would develop past instinct. Maybe even become someone more than just a violent alter ego. Someone Griffin could live with.

Someone she could live with.

The word "Mate" still echoed in her skull. The beast had said it so many times now that it had carved itself into her memory, every syllable melting into her bloodstream like wildfire. Like the mating fever she'd been trying so hard to ignore.

God help her, it was trickling through her veins like molten lava. Her skin had become too warm, her senses prickled, and every inch of her felt tuned to him.

But Violet had to control herself.

She needed Griffin, not his oversized man-child beast with the emotional range of a sugar-rushed toddler and the strength to snap trees in half.

The universe had to be shitting her to slap her with a mate bond at a critical time like this.

Fuck them!

Violet's attention snapped toward the tremor in the earth as The Beast returned from his food hunt, his heavy steps reminding her an inhuman being was sharing this clearing with her.

"Mate. Eat," he said eagerly, lowering the bountiful harvest in his arms like an overenthusiastic dog presenting a prize.

A waterfall of fruits tumbled to the ground in front of her, revealing apples, berries, bananas and some others she couldn't recognize.

Violet blinked in surprise. Okay, this was cute.

She picked up an apple, but before she could even mutter a "thank you," The Beast was gone again, disappearing into the trees with the grace of a wrecking ball. Except this time, he came back much faster, and he didn't come alone.

The Beast was grinning with something suspiciously hidden behind his massive frame. Then, with the dramatic flair of a child revealing a surprise drawing to their parent, he pulled out a whole-ass boar, freshly killed and dropped it with a thud before her, his eyes gleaming with pride. His chest puffed out like he had just gifted her the moon and expected a standing ovation.

Violet knew then she was so screwed.

"Uh, I think I'll stick to this," Violet said, forcing a smile and gently shoving more fruit closer to her side like a protective wall.

The Beast deflated slightly and Violet quickly added, "You can have that one for yourself. Eat for two!" She gave him a thumbs up and the most encouraging nod she could muster.

Apparently, that worked.

With a satisfied grunt, The Beast turned to his prize. Violet, for some ridiculous reason, assumed he would skin it, and maybe roast bits of it over the fire she had built. But how she was wrong.

Her eyes widened to the size of the moon as he simply ripped into the boar like a living meat grinder, tearing into raw flesh with his teeth and gulping it down like it was dessert. Blood dripped from his

mouth, staining the ground in wet, sticky splashes, and he looked even delighted as if this was peak fine dining.

"Oh, God," Violet turned a shade paler.

She had to physically swallow the bile threatening to rise.

The irony wasn't lost on her that she had actually been thinking about helping him smoke the meat. As if this was some cute camping trip. What a joke.

He was a predator in human form, for heaven's sake, while she had the unfortunate fate of a front-row seat to the National Geographic carnage edition.

Nonetheless, Violet let out a strangled, incredulous laugh. Today was really one for the books.

Apparently full, The Beast tossed what remained of the carcass aside and stepped back into the stream to wash off the blood. At least he had the decency to clean up. Good hygiene, great. Points for that.

Too bad every time he moved, she got an eyeful of Griffin Junior, now in XL Beast Mode. Yeah. She was never recovering from this.

Violet forced her gaze to the side and it landed on the discarded carcass. She stared at the blood still oozing slowly from the gaping tears in its flesh, pooling in the dirt, and something strange stirred inside her. Something hungry.

The longer Violet looked, the more intense it became. Her tongue swiped across her lips, and for some unholy reason, her mouth started to water. She wanted a bite.

What the hell?

Thankfully, the Beast returned right at that moment and Violet snapped out of it.

That wasn't normal at all.

The Beast lowered himself beside her, stretching out his body. He didn't say a word and just lay there, watching her. Then he reached out, his large, calloused, yet surprisingly gentle hand brushing against her arm, and Violet leaned into it.

She craved comfort, anchoring herself to him without thinking.

Except it didn't end there.

In a blink, The Beast was on his feet, his eyes shining with a kind of wild excitement, his chest rising and falling like he'd just made some glorious discovery.

"Mate. Mine," he declared with urgency and satisfaction.

"Huh?"

Violet was still wondering what he was up to now when he turned her around without warning, pressing her forward on her stomach, hoisting her hips.

"Mate. Mate."

Oh. Shit.

It dawned on Violet that he wanted to mate with her.

That was what all this had been about. The protecting, the feeding, the sniffing, the obsessive scent-checking. It hadn't been just instinct or affection, it was

carnivore-style courtship.

She had been so damn wrong. He wasn't just a child with emotional extremes but a beast with base instinct and he wanted to claim her.

The Beast rubbed against her with a low rumble in his throat, his massive weapon pressed against her.

Violet's eyes widened in pure, horrified realization. No freaking way!

Then she screamed at the top of her lungs.

"Griffin!!!!!!"

Chapter 394: Soul-Bonded

The scream must have roused Griffin from his slumber because the Beast staggered back as though he'd taken a punch to the gut. Without hesitating, Violet scrambled away with her heart hammering in her chest. She loved every version of Griffin, but if he took her in that form, he was going to shatter her into pieces. Literally.

The Beast let out a guttural groan, his body trembling violently as though he was wrestling something from within. He stumbled like a drunk, shaking his head and thrashing, and Violet had to dive for safety, scared he might stomp over her in the process.

From her hiding spot, she watched in stunned silence as his massive body began to shrink until he was back to his normal size. Griffin's tall, six-foot-six frame collapsed to the ground, his chest rising and falling in labored gasps. Hosting the Beast always drained the life out of him.

"Griffin!" Violet ran to his side, dropping to her knees. "Are you okay?" she asked, cupping his face.

His eyes fluttered open to look at her. "Mate," he whispered hoarsely.

Violet froze, her heart stuttering in her chest. It wasn't until now the gravity of that word hit her and she didn't know what to say.

But Griffin smiled widely. He pushed himself up with determination and said again, more clearly this time, "You're my mate."

Before Violet could respond, he moved and pinned her gently to the ground beneath him. His body hovered over hers, large and warm, and her breath caught. However, Violet hasn't forgotten what happened with Asher and it made her hesitant to take things further.

"Griffin, I don't think we should—" she started, even as she arched toward him.

Then their lips met and Violet knew at that moment, it was over. It was like a solar flare ignited between them. No longer blood, nor oxygen, but heat and wildfire run through her veins.

Griffin felt it too. She could tell by the way he clutched her tighter, kissed her deeper, as though he'd been waiting for this moment his entire life. They clawed at each other like they couldn't get close enough, their bodies pressed flush.

They kissed with wild intensity, nipping voraciously at each other and Violet swore she tasted blood from where she'd bitten his lower lip. Then his tongue swept into her mouth and tangled with hers, licking, sucking, and devouring till they couldn't breathe. Not that they needed air.

There was no room left for reason. All that mattered was touching one another and solidifying this intense pull between them.

Griffin didn't bother undressing her, he tore the pajamas clean off her body like they were nothing more than a sweet wrapper. Violet gasped, a startled moan escaping her lips. The sheer savagery of it would have unnerved her on other days, but right now, it turned her on.

While Griffin shredded her clothes, Violet pressed frantic kisses across his chest, his shoulders, anywhere her lips could reach. Her fingers traced over his skin, worshipping the wild strength of him.

When he parted her thighs, she opened them wider without hesitation, welcoming him. His body covered hers, hot and heavy, his hardness burning against her slick folds. The heat between her legs pulsed with raw need, aching to be filled.

Then, with one powerful thrust, Griffin buried himself inside her. Violet cried out, her head snapping back. Even in this form, he was too thick and her body stretched painfully around him. But she didn't ask him to stop. She couldn't. The burn only fed the hunger and she wanted more.

"Go on," she gasped, her voice half-pain, half-plea.

Griffin obeyed.

He began to move, hard and fast, his thrusts brutal in its desperation. His eyes were glowing a deep amber, wild and unrestrained as whatever control he had slipped.

Violet's wanton moans filled the clearing, loud and beautiful. Her legs wrapped around his waist, urging him deeper inside of her. She wanted all of him. Her soul craved the connection.

They rutted like animals beneath the open sky. The sound of skin slapping against skin, her breathless gasps, and his feral grunts echoing through the trees. Violet words were incoherent, overwhelmed by the powerful thrusts of the savage above her. And she loved every bit of it.

As the pleasure built, Violet felt this strange coiling in her chest. A pressure, not just of pleasure, but of something far deeper. Her heart was pounding so hard, so fast, it felt like it would burst. And suddenly, she could feel his heartbeat too as if their hearts had aligned.

Ba-dump. Ba-dump.

Somewhere above, the clouds parted, revealing a full moon that hadn't been there before. It gleamed down on them, its light bathing their bodies like a blessing as it bore witness.

And then, Griffin bit her, his fangs sinking deep into her neck and Violet screamed in release. Pain and pleasure melded until the line between them blurred, her body shattering around him as her climax hit like a storm.

In that instant, their heartbeats became one. But deep down, Violet knew it wasn't complete. Not yet.

Violet shifted and bit him hard on the neck too. His blood rushed into her mouth and it was like the sweetest ambrosia — the drink of the gods. She sucked until she couldn't anymore, the unrest in her soul calming.

Griffin groaned her name like it was the only music he knew. His hips jerked, and his seed spilled inside her in a hot, endless torrent. He didn't stop. Couldn't stop. His body trembled with the sheer intensity of release.

When it was finally over, he collapsed on top of her, both of them panting. The Moonlight had strangely vanished and the clearing was quiet now.

They lay together, their souls bound.

Violet blinked up at him, dazed only to see him staring in wonder. Her eyes glowed for a second there.

But it didn't unnerve Griffin, instead he smiled, his arms wrapping around her tightly. He buried his face in her neck and breathed her scent in.

"Mate," his wolf howled in his head for the first time, loud and clear.

No way.

#### Chapter 395: Goodbye Lila

Asher and the others had long gone off the road and were now trudging through a forest thicker than any of them expected.

It was late at night, and thank the moon they had their wolf sight else they'd have tripped over every gnarled root and gotten whipped by every low-hanging branch clawing at them from all directions.

The rogues had hidden themselves well which wasn't surprising. Lone wolves were always on the move, always adapting, and no one survived as long as they had without learning how to vanish in plain sight.

The trail should have faded hours ago, but Asher had to admit he was impressed. The Fae was moving ahead with the kind of confidence that came from instinct, not guesswork, leading them unerringly through the maze of undergrowth.

But not even the tension of the unknown, or the unsaid dread in the air, was enough to kill Roman's vibe. The South Alpha was belting out loud, cheery, dramatic rhymes like they were headed on a family vacation, and not a rescue mission in rogue territory.

"Four wolves with teeth so white,

Snuck through the woods in the dead of night.

On a quest so bold, with hearts all sour,

To fetch back our stolen purple flower."

Asher, Alaric, and Adele exchanged a look and moved on. No, they wouldn't say a word. It was always safer to just let Roman be Roman.

"There was Thunder Boy who summons the clouds,

And Lover Boy who broods in crowds.

Then Smiley Wolf with jokes so cute—

(That's me, hello, you're welcome, chum!)"

"God, this is killing me." Alaric groaned internally.

"And last came the brainy with the balm

She heals your soul and throws a fade.

But just when things were going wrong...

Enter Tinkerbell with a blade and a spine!"

"Oh dear..." Adele sighed, already prepping her healing powers knowing someone was about to get it.

"She rides like death with glitter and sass,

Swearing she'll shove her sword up my—"

(Ahem.)

"Anyway, she's fierce, she's cool, she's Fae,

With the charm of a cactus and zero foreplay!

"So off we go through creepy woods and mud and mire

Four wolves, one threat, and a bite-sized demigod.

May the rogues beware and Lila not snap,

Because one wrong joke—boom—neck goes snap —!"

"I swear on the old gods and the new," Lila snapped, "if one more word blasts out of your goddamn mouth, I'll snap your neck for real!"

Her glare could have melted iron, but of course, it rolled right off Roman like sunshine off a raincoat.

Roman grinned. "Aww, see? I told you, we're already bonding."

Lila blinked, flabbergasted. How in the hell did Violet even get tangled with the likes of him.

"And," he added cheerily, "Violet loves my godforsaken mouth. To be precise, my tongue, it does wonderful things to—"

"Roman!" Asher and Alaric barked in unison, exasperated.

"Fine," Roman rolled his eyes. "I'll keep the sugar to myself," he added with a dramatic shrug, as if Lila was truly missing out.

Lila stared at him for a long beat, shook her head, and then turned on her heel with a huff.

"Yeah, you're bonding just fine," Asher said dryly before moving on.

Alaric and Adele gave Roman a similar look and followed after Asher.

Roman was just about to toss out another witty line when he noticed something odd with his keener animal senses.

"Wait. Stop!" he barked.

Everyone did except Lila.

She marched ahead, clearly done with Roman and his nonsense.

"Lila, wait!" Roman called after her.

But Lila spun around and snapped, "I'm not wasting another second while Violet is out there in danger because of your childish jokes. For once in your life, grow up, you fool!"

She hardly took a step when there was a cracking sound and the ground beneath her gave way. Lila let out a scream as she plunged down.

"LILA!" they all shouted, sprinting forward only to freeze as soon as they reached the edge.

Alaric gagged.

Asher muttered under his breath, "Shit."

Adele's hand flew to her chest. "Dear Lord..."

"That is nasty," Roman said grimly.

Lila had fallen into a brutal trap, precisely, a punji pit. Iron stakes, sharpened to deadly points, lined the bottom like a bed of skewers. It was exactly the silent, lethal, and barbaric weapon the rogues would use to impale unsuspecting newcomers on their turf.

The scene was pure horror as one stake had pierced straight through Lila's stomach, while another was lodged in her chest, and the third went through her shoulder. But the most gruesome of all was the one that had gone clean through her mouth, and emerging from the back of her head. There was blood everywhere.

Alaric was in shock knowing without a doubt this was the end of the road for Lila.

"Well? Adele, do something!" Roman shouted with panick.

"What do you expect me to do? My healing works through contact, and I can't just jump in there!"

"Then let's pull her out!"

"Pulling her out would kill her faster. We'd need to stabilize the wounds around the stakes and Adele's power would not last the hours it would take to cut them."

"Those are iron stakes," Asher said darkly. "And Fae don't react well to iron. What are the odds that Lila would land in a damn pit like this?" He let out a bitter laugh. "Fate is a cruel little bitch."

Down in the pit, Lila was still twitching. Blood gurgled from her throat, and she made horrible choking sounds, eyes wide as if trying to speak through the metal silencing her. She lifted a hand weakly toward them.

"Yes, Lila, I see you," Roman whispered, reaching out.

Then her hand fell.

"Noooooooo!" Roman dropped to his knees with a dramatic wail. "You can't just go like that, Lila. What about the good times we could have had?!"

Asher, Adele, and Alaric stood behind him, dumbfounded.

Roman sniffled, then plucked a small wildflower from a nearby branch.

"Till we meet again, my Tinkerbell. May the goddess welcome you into her ample bosom." He kissed the flower and dropped it into the pit and it landed on her body.

The silence was interrupted by a "click".

"What are you doing?" Alaric was confused.

Roman was casually snapping pictures with his phone.

"Evidence," he said without shame. "In case Violet thinks I killed her Fae friend. I did warn her, you all saw me."

When he was done, Roman stood, dusted himself off, and looked back at the group.

"What are we waiting for? She's gone. Come on, we've got our purple flower to rescue."

He added over his shoulder, "And maybe this time, follow my lead, unless you want to end up like our Fae friend now called to glory."

With that, Roman marched off into the woods.

The others stood frozen, unnerved by how effortlessly Roman could flick through grief, humor, and indifference like flipping pages in a book

"...Is he okay?" Adele finally asked.

"Hell if I know," Alaric muttered.

"No choice now," Asher said grimly. "Let's move."

They stepped around the pit carefully, leaving behind the shattered body of the fiercest Fae they'd ever known.

Goodbye, Lila.

## Chapter 396: Spill Some Blood

"I still think it's a terrible idea leaving her back there like that," Alaric said with guilt.

"Lila's dead," Asher replied bluntly. "We'll give her a proper burial after we rescue Violet and Griffin. Until then, we can't afford any more delays."

"For someone so loud about protecting Violet, she died too quickly though," Adele muttered with a snort.

"Yeah, too easily," Asher said, his brows pinching together in thought.

Suddenly, Roman raised his hand. "Stop."

At once, they halted, having learned enough from Lila's unfortunate fate.

Roman tilted his head, his ears twitching while his now glowing eyes searched the forest.

"Someone's coming." He announced.

"I hear it now," Alaric said, tuning into his wolf instincts.

"Not just one, but two." Asher commented.

Adele murmured, tensing. "And they're coming my way fast."

They all turned toward Adele's direction. Electricity crackled in Alaric's palms as he readied himself while Asher and Roman crouched into attack stance, their muscles coiled for fight. The trees rustled louder as the footsteps came closer and closer.

Suddenly, two young girls burst out of the treeline, screaming at the sight of them.

"Please don't hurt us!" one of them cried, shivering.

The Alphas and Adele glanced at each other, thrown off.

Adele then stepped forward carefully. "It's okay. We're not here to hurt you." She could see the raw distrust in their eyes.

Asher stepped up, eyes glowing. "We're looking for a girl with purple hair and a guy with red. And don't bother lying, I'll know and trust me when I say, it won't end well for you."

"Stop it, they're scared already," Alaric scolded, elbowing him.

Roman crouched down, offering his most disarming grin. The girls flinched.

"Don't mind him," Roman said cheerily. "He just likes scaring people. It's why he has no friends. You're welcome to feel sorry for him."

Asher scowled. "We don't have time for this."

One of the girls blinked, then gasped. "I know you. You're Alpha Roman."

That got his attention. "Well, damn. My reputation precedes me."

"We're from the East Pack," she continued. "The rogues raided our home and took us."

Everyone stiffened instantly.

"Did you see Griffin?" Alaric asked, a thread of hope in his voice.

"I don't know. We were kept in separate cells," the girl answered honestly. "There are a lot of them, cells, I mean for women. The rogues keep us like prizes and boast about it. Then earlier, we heard a roar like nothing we'd ever heard. A wall near us cracked in the commotion. So we widened the gap and escaped. But there was blood and bodies everywhere like something tore them apart."

Asher's eyes narrowed. "Griffin let the Beast out."

"So where did he go? Did you see him with the purple-haired girl?" Roman asked eagerly.

"No," said the other girl. "After the whole thing, the surviving rogues tried rounding up the escapees. They caught us, but then these men in dark gear showed up with these guns. We don't know who they were but they started killing the rogues and capturing some of us."

This time, not just Asher but everyone looked uncomfortable with the news. As if on cue, a gunshot cracked in the distance.

They instantly crouched, alert.

"Well, this just got complicated," Asher muttered.

"Humans?" Roman asked.

"Very much," Alaric answered.

"You think it's the military?"

Asher replied. "Could be, but I don't think so. They wouldn't be this sloppy. Not to mention the Accord would never allow them to leave witnesses if they're capturing the women."

"Exactly," Adele agreed. "If it's them, they'll kill everyone and cover it all up."

"We have to go. Now," Asher ordered.

Roman turned to the girls. "Follow our trail. It'll lead you out." He added with a wink, "And watch for traps. Also, if you happen to bump into Irene Hale, let her know her son's boyfriend-in-law saved your asses. Got that? Good. Now Go!"

The girls didn't wait a second and bolted.

"That gunshot was close," Roman pointed out as he scanned the woods.

"Some of them must've tracked the escapees into the forest," Asher said, putting the pieces together quickly.

"Be careful out there, guys," Adele warned them with worry in her voice. She can only heal the living, not the dead.

They took off, sprinting toward the direction of the gunshot. It didn't take long before the rogues' hideout came into view but Asher was the first to encounter trouble.

A man in uniform stepped out of his hiding place with his gun raised. But he never got the chance to fire because Asher ripped the weapon from his grip, and drove his claws through the man's chest, tearing out his heart in a brutal move.

The man dropped to the ground while another appeared firing, but Asher spun away, dodging it with inhuman grace.

Roman lunged out of the darkness, grabbed the shooter by the collar, and flung him so hard into a tree that the bark exploded on impact. The man hit the ground with a groan and went still.

"And that's how we roll." Roman grinned,

brushing his hands off like he'd just taken out the trash. He glanced at Asher's victim and winced. "Dude. That's some nasty work."

Asher ignored him and crouched beside the man, rifling through his pockets. He pulled out a phone, a black wallet, and an ID card with a foreign insignia.

"This isn't military," he said to them.

Alaric appeared beside him and picked up the discarded weapon, studying it for a second. "This is a private firm. The gadget is custom tech. The military doesn't carry tech this specialized for cleanup jobs."

None of them needed further convincing.

They dropped to the forest floor and crawled through the brush toward the clearing ahead. Lying flat on their bellies, shielded by leaves and darkness, they observed the scene.

Uniformed operatives moved around with weapons while several wounded and terrified she-wolves were being loaded into a black transport truck.

"They've clearly got plans for our kind," Adele said coldly, watching the capture unfold.

"Violet could be in that truck," Roman said with fear in his voice.

"No, she's not." Asher's tone was firm with confidence as if he knew something they didn't know.

"Either way," Alaric said, his eyes locked on the truck, "we're not letting that leave. She-wolves are rare, and we don't know what sick shit they're planning."

"So we do it, then," Asher said, the finality in his voice sealing the moment.

Roman's smile returned, that familiar dark thrill lighting his eyes.

"Let's spill some blood."

Chapter 397: All Gone Wrong

"Boss, we can't find the targets," the squad leader reported, standing stiffly before Cynthia.

Her jaw ticked. "Are you sure? Have you searched everywhere?"

"Thoroughly, ma'am. We turned this entire place upside down."

Cynthia sucked her teeth, clearly unimpressed. She took in the scene around her. The place had already been a disaster when they arrived, but she hadn't had time to question the cause until now.

Griffin Hale and the purple-haired girl were still missing which wasn't ideal. Still, the mission wasn't a loss, if anything it was quite the opposite

They had uncovered a cache of she-wolves hidden by the rogues. It was quite a jackpot. Capturing male werewolves for experimentation was much easier. Pure-blooded females were rare and highly prized, and the disappearance of even one was enough to raise suspicion.

The rogues had taken a risk. A stupid one.

Albeit a stupid risk that would work to their favor because now, they had females for their experiments. Once they returned to the facility, they'd sort out the pure-bloods and dispose of the rest. Cynthia could already picture Patrick's face, weeping with joy.

Her gaze swept toward the corner, where the captured rogues knelt in a line, their power restrained by the suppressor cuffs. Her eyes landed on the wiry one scowling at her with intensity.

"Get him," she ordered coldly.

The squad leader gestured, and two operatives yanked the rogue to his feet.

He struggled wildly, forcing one of them to jab him in the stomach with an electrified baton. His body convulsed with a scream, his eyes flaring gold before dimming again as he crumpled to the ground, breathing hard.

Cynthia stepped forward with a look of superiority. "Ready to talk now?"

"Go to hell," he spat.

"You're already in it, fool" she sneered, and slammed her weapon across his face.

The werewolf hit the dirt again, groaning. Cynthia planted a boot hard on his chest.

"Where is he?"

The Rogue wheezed. "Who?"

Her heel dug deeper, forcing another pained groan from his lips.

"Shane. Where is he?"

"I don't know."

"Really?" Her smile was all venom. She nodded at the operative with the baton, who stepped forward and delivered another jolt of electricity. The rogue's body shook violently, teeth chattering.

When it ended, Cynthia stomped on his chest again, this time roaring, "WHERE IS HE?!"

"I don't know!" the rogue shouted, his voice cracking. "He went in with the purple-haired bitch we were ordered to capture. No one saw what happened after that! Then that thing came charging through and tore everyone to pieces! Nobody knows where he is!"

Cynthia's nostrils flared. "This. Is. Why. You. Should. Have. Never. Captured. Griffin. Hale." She kicked him with every word she said, her frustration boiling over until she was breathless.

She turned to the squad leader. "Griffin Hale's beast is unbelievably resilient. We're not taking chances with him. Good thing we came prepared."

Her wicked smile said it all.

Suddenly, a scream rent the air and weapons were drawn instantly as operatives turned in the direction, tensed for a threat.

"Snake! Snake!" one of them screamed, flailing backward.

Several others burst into laughter.

"Dude, it's just a green snake," someone chuckled. "It's not even poisonous!"

Cynthia exhaled loudly, unimpressed. "Amateurs," she muttered.

"Let's waste the goddamn serpent!" another operative growled, already cocking his gun.

"Chill out, man. You're the one invading its territory." One operative knelt down carefully, reaching to pick the snake and steer it aside.

Except two things happened in a blink.

The small, seemingly harmless snake twisted and expanded, a monstrous green bear rising in its place.

The operative had just enough time to gasp, before the bear leaned down and bit his head clean off.

For a second, no one moved as blood erupted from the headless corpse like a fountain. Then the body crumpled to the forest floor, twitching, and that was when chaos erupted.

The other operatives screamed, some of them in fury, and others in terror as the confusion cleared from their eyes. Then they lifted their guns and began to fire.

But the bear was unbelievably fast as it weaved through them, dodging with a disturbing kind of grace. The few bullets that hit him barely left a dent as its hide was thick enough not to let them penetrate. The green bear swept through the operatives, causing bodies to fly and breaking bones.

Reinforcements burst from the house and treelines with shouts, raising their guns to fire. But before any could shoot, crackling arcs of electricity snapped through the clearing with direction, electrocuting them one by one until they dropped to the ground violently, convulsing.

"Shit!" Cynthia cursed when she saw what was happening. Those were the cardinal alphas. How did they even get here?!

Her gaze sharply scanned the field noticing each Alpha in their element, and noticing one was missing.

Where the hell was Asher?

But Asher was already in the thick of the action.

While their focus was on the frenzy bear who killed them with abnormal delight, and the lightning wielder, Asher moved like a ghost. He stepped into their ranks without them even knowing and touched the first operative. The moment the operative snapped his head around, his eyes fogged as Asher's compulsion took hold.

"Dude, what the fu—"

Bang.

The man shot his own teammate in the head before turning to the next.

Just like that, there was confusion in their midst as the operatives turned on each other, shouting, accusing, and firing. Even though the operatives had the number on them, it was safe to say that this was quickly becoming a carnage.

As if that was not enough, Cynthia spotted a familiar face at the truck trying to free the captured females.

Adele.

Hell no. Not on her watch.

"Turn on the sonic emitter now!" she barked to the squad leader beside her.

Without hesitation, the man pulled out a control device, tapping fast.

Within seconds, the air itself vibrated as a

vicious, high-pitched frequency blared from the mounted truck speakers, slicing through the ears and minds of every werewolf in range.

Even the mighty Cardinal Alphas couldn't stand against that sound. Alaric screamed, the electricity around his hands fizzling out and died. Roman roared in pain as he shifted back into his human form, shivering and naked in the dirt. Asher collapsed to his knees, clutching his skull. Adele cried out, blood trickling from her ears as her veins bulged with the strain.

It was safe to say that all the werewolves were in pain.

Cynthia smiled at the effect. Then she commanded the surviving operatives. "Get up! Kill them now! Get rid of them now!"

Cynthia laughed as the tide changed in her favor. Patrick was so going to love this. The death of the cardinal alphas would destabilize the packs while giving them the morale to go on with their plans.

At once, the cardinal alphas were surrounded as the operatives rose, their eyes burning with vengeance. They cocked their guns in anticipation of the satisfying kill. Then they fired in unison, bullets upon bullets upon the alphas.

Asher, Alaric and Roman knew at that moment that they had underestimated their enemies and would now pay the price with their lives. Asher had no regrets, knowing Griffin would protect Violet with his life.

The only regret on Roman's part was not having the chance of showing his purple flower how awesome he could be in bed. As for Alaric, he wished he could see her just one more time. But then, it was too late.

So they closed their eyes waiting to exit gloriously, except for over a minute, nothing happened. Then they opened their eyes to see some sort of force field shielding them from the hail of bullets. Huh? What was going on?

They turned, and all three shouted in unison.

"Lila?!"

Roman was the most befuddled. Didn't she die? To think he even wept for her.

There she stood, glowing with furious Fae power, a fierce wind rippling through her hair as her eyes sparked with light.

"Stop gawking, you morons!" she snapped. "Take out the damn speakers!"

Inside the shield, the sonic wave couldn't reach them. So Alaric rose to his feet, rage reigniting his spark. Electricity flared from his hands and he obliterated the mounted emitters one by one. The speakers exploded like fireworks.

The sound died instantly.

Lila dropped the shield and with a wave of her hand, summoned a violent gust of wind that launched several operatives across the clearing.

This time when the alphas stood, their eyes were lit with vengeance. They were so going to end this.

Seeing what was going on, Cynthia's face darkened and then she said to the squad leader, "Get the chopper ready. We leave now!"

"But what about the hostages? "

"Leave the damn hostages! Get out of here now!"

But even as she barked the command, she felt a cold chill creep up her spine. She turned to see Asher. With a face set like stone, he stared at her directly like death came to claim its due.

"Shit."

She didn't wait and ran.

Her boots pounded the dirt as panic clawed its way into her throat. How the hell did it all go so wrong?

Behind her, rapid gunfire erupted as the squad leader was unloading every last bullet he had, whether to stop Asher from reaching her or to buy himself a second of mercy, she didn't know. Neither did she care.

All that mattered now was this: she could not get caught.

#### Chapter 398: Weakness For Wolves

Cynthia had no idea how she went from hunter to hunted. She sprinted through the woods blindly, running with every ounce of strength she had. Asher couldn't get his hands on the kind of information she carried. She wouldn't be the one to bring her darling Patrick's downfall. So yes, she would die if that was the cost to protect his secret.

She was still holding on to that thought when something slammed into her, hard. Cynthia hit the ground with a gasp, the breath punched from her lungs. She scrambled to look behind her, and it was exactly as she'd dreaded.

Asher Nightshade had found her.

Without hesitation, Cynthia reached for the gun strapped to her thigh, not to shoot him, but to end her own life.

But Asher was faster.

He moved with the brutal accuracy of a werewolf, kicking the weapon out of her grasp in a blink. In the same motion, he hauled her to her feet like she weighed nothing.

"Aren't you so eager to die now," Asher sneered, his face inches from hers, a gleam of contempt in his eyes.

He added coldly, "Usually, people who behave the way you do are the ones with deadly secrets to protect. What are you hiding, doctor?"

"No! Let me go!" Cynthia thrashed in his grip, struggling wildly. She couldn't let him get into her head.

But Asher didn't care. His hand clamped around her skull, firmer than necessary, and without warning invaded her mind.

What Asher met stunned him.

A wall of resistance slammed into him so dense and unrelenting that his knees nearly buckled. For a human, her will was formidable. But then, Asher's own resolve was iron clad and he pushed harder.

When Asher broke into minds, he usually took care not to press too far knowing how fragile the brain could be. But with Cynthia, he had no mercy to spare. With a grunt of effort, he forced his way in, the sensation akin to a hot knife slicing through thick butter.

In reality, Cynthia screamed, collapsing to her knees as Asher ruthlessly plunged into her mind. Her eyes glazed over, lips trembling while her fingers clawed at nothing. But Asher didn't look much better either with blood dripping freely from his nose.

And that was the sight Adele, and Lila, stumbled upon when they caught up to them.

"Shit!" Adele cursed, skidding to a halt. "He shouldn't be using his powers this intensely after barely surviving a brain aneurysm. He's going to get himself killed."

"Asher!" she shouted, bending beside him. "Asher!"

But there was no response.

"Well, I could knock him out!" Lila offered, cracking his knuckles with more eagerness than normal.

"No! Don't!" Adele snapped. "Blunt attacks might do more harm than good right now. We don't know how deep into her mind he's gotten."

"Well, we might never find out by the time his brain melts out." Lila deadpanned, pointing at Asher, who now had blood trickling from his eyes.

"Oh my God," Adele murmured, panic tightening her chest.

She didn't hesitate anymore and shouted at him. "Asher Nightshade! Let go of her this instant!"

He did not.

But Adele pressed on, desperation bleeding into her tone. "Is discovering her secret more important than Violet? What would Violet do if you die out here? Do you want her to bear the guilt of thinking you wouldn't have died if you hadn't come out to save her?"

That did it.

Asher recoiled with a sudden jerk, breaking the connection.

Cynthia slumped to the ground, gasping violently as her mind returned to her body. Her limbs twitched, her breaths shallow and uneven. She was alive but shaken.

"They are the ones who made Ignis," was all Asher managed to say before he dropped to the ground with a thud and began to convulse violently.

"Asher!" Adele screamed, rushing to him, her hands already glowing as she tried to heal him.

Cynthia took the opportunity of the confusion and bolted. The branches whipped against her face but she didn't care. All that mattered was escape.

But fate had other plans.

While running blindly in the dark, her foot slammed down onto something taut that was hidden beneath.

Cynthia didn't even see what it was when

a massive log, spiked and sharpened at the end, swung down from the treetops with terrifying force. It hurtled toward her like a missile, and before she could scream—Crack!

The log crushed her against the trunk of an old oak, its pointed end impaling her midsection with such force that the bark behind her split. A sickening crunch followed as her ribcage shattered, the impact crushing her heart. Her eyes bulged, while her mouth parted in a frozen gasp.

Cynthia coughed blood once before her body slumped on the bloodied timber, her head lolling lifelessly.

Just like that, she was gone.

"No, no, no," Adele choked out, watching helplessly as the healing glow in her palms faded out. She was drained.

Lila stood watching the scene with her brows drawn in a furrowed line. She could help lend Adele the fuel she needed, but that meant burning through her reserves. And if she did, she would not have any left to continue her search for Violet.

She exhaled shakily.

Earlier, she had spun an illusion and staged her own death. Sure, she hadn't fallen into the trap on purpose, but she had lived so long it would be more than embarrassing to die that way.

Lila had saved herself seconds away from plunging on those spikes. But that was when the idea came to her to craft the spikes to appear as cold, merciless iron. It was the only way to convince Asher, the ever-logical wolf, that she was truly dead.

And it worked.

Lila had done it to test them and see their reactions. It didn't bother her that they left her behind to search for Violet, that was what a true protector would do.

Maybe Violet would never forgive her for the way she operated but everything she did was for her. To protect her from the fate that had claimed her mother.

Still, it seemed the royal bloodline had a cursed weakness for werewolf assholes.

But these ones were different.

They weren't just fighting for Violet. They were bleeding, sacrificing and risking death again and again without hesitation for her sake.

Lila looked past the trees, eyes scanning the distant horizon, then back at Asher, stuck between making the decision to leave or stay.

It was quite unfortunate the princess wouldn't forgive her if one of her idiot boyfriends died.

With a groan that spoke of reluctant affection and frustration in equal parts, Lila strode to Adele and pressed her palms firmly against the woman's back.

A surge of magic pulsed from her and hit Adele like a jolt of life. Her eyes widened as she gasped, as if air had returned to her lungs for the first time. Her hands glowed this time with a vibrant, greenish, her healing magic roaring back to life.

Adele looked back at her and whispered,

"Thank you."

Although Lila didn't answer, a strange, unfamiliar warmth prickled against the armor she wore over her heart.

## Chapter 399: Her Amazing Mate

Nancy hadn't been exaggerating when she warned about the mating fever. It was relentless and all-consuming. It was the evening of the second day since they'd escaped their captors, and yet, they hadn't moved an inch from their clearing.

And yes, they'd been having sex all day.

There had been pauses, of course with brief intervals to sleep, to eat, to breathe. But every moment in between had been spent locked in each other's arms, fucking. There was something magnetic building between them, a connection that fed and strived on physical intimacy.

Violet could think of nothing else beyond her mate. Griffin practically consumed her every thought, and the mating bond had her in a frenzy that she didn't want to be saved from.

So it was no surprise that she was on top of him now, straddling him with wild abandon, riding him like her life depended on it. Her thighs burned with effort, but she didn't stop. No, she couldn't stop.

Violet bounced over his thick length with a maddening urgency, her back arching as pleasure clawed its way up her spine. He filled her completely, hitting those electric spots deep inside that had her gasping, and mewling on top of him.

It was unfiltered, delirious and beautiful in its wildness.

Violet threw her head back, hair cascading down her spine, her moans tearing through the clearing as she moved with a reckless pace. There was nothing timid or restrained about this moment. She was riding her mate like she belonged to him, and she did.

Her climax built fast, and insistent like a wave gathering momentum, and she leaned over him, collapsing forward onto Griffin's chest, their bodies slick with sweat. Their fingers laced together tightly, grounding her as she rolled her hips and ground down harder, angling just right. She cried out, then kissed him, her moans caught between animalistic and aching, until pleasure finally cracked her open like a starburst in the night sky.

She shattered around him.

With a rough growl, Griffin grabbed her hips, slammed into her one, two more times, and then stilled with a guttural sound as he spilled inside her, his entire body jerking beneath hers. His hands gripped her like he'd never let go.

The world slowed down at that moment, the only sound between them being their heavy mingled breathing. The fever still pulsed between them, but for now they were content, and wrapped in each other.

Griffin began to press gentle kisses across her face. Then he trailed down her jaw and over the curve of her neck, only to pause when his eyes landed on the mark there.

The mating rune.

The goddess had chosen to place Violet's rune on her neck which was on the exact same place as his. It shimmered in his signature color, a deep, blood-rich red, and shaped like a bold, upright arrow flanked by two outward-facing branches.

His own rune was the mirror opposite and was etched in her shade of royal purple, shaped in a symmetrical design of two opposing curves meeting at the center, forming a heart with a single vertical line through it.

It was so beautiful it made his chest ache. Griffin couldn't help it, he leaned down and kissed it.

Violet moaned instantly, her back arching off the forest floor in response. Her body jerked against his as her walls clenched tightly around him—he was still nestled deep inside of her.

Griffin groaned, the sudden tightness hitting him like a drug. He remembered that reaction. He'd felt the same when she'd kissed his rune earlier. The mark was as sensitive as hell.

He dragged his lips slowly across the curve of the mark again intentionally, savoring her against him. And then, suddenly, he couldn't wait any longer.

With a low, guttural sound, Griffin flipped her over, his hands gripping her waist as he pulled her back onto him and then he was thrusting hard, deep and reckless.

"Yes—yes—oh fuck!" Violet screamed, her voice breaking as her body surrendered completely. She gasped, mewled, cried out in intervals as the pleasure was everywhere, searing, and devouring. Her fingers clawed at the dirt beneath her, trying to hold on to anything as her mate pounded into her like a man possessed.

Griffin grabbed her hips tighter, lifting her nearly off the ground with every punishing thrust. His grip was bruising, desperate, and his pace relentless. Her breath was broken sobs of pleasure, the sounds coming from her lips sinful, uncontrollable screams.

He slammed into her harder and faster again and again until the pain blurred into ecstasy. Until every breath she drew was ragged with need. Until she couldn't tell where she ended and he began.

And Violet didn't care.

She didn't care if he shattered her completely. If he broke her in half right there, in that clearing. The brutality, the overwhelming ache of it only made the pleasure rise higher, deeper and sharper. Every thrust was fire in her blood and veins, and she never wanted it to stop.

Then Griffin roared. "I'm coming, Violet!"

She didn't need the warning. Instead, she wriggled her waist against him, meeting his thrusts, encouraging him with everything she had left. Her body begged and demanded for it.

With a final brutal thrust, Griffin slammed into her so deep she cried out again, feeling him hit the end of her, and shaking her to her core. And then, there was thick, pulsing heat as he spilled inside her, his groan low and ragged.

Griffin collapsed on top of her, pinning her into the earth with the full weight of his body. His chest heaved against her back, sweat slicking their skin.

But Violet didn't care about the dirt, nor the soreness blooming between her thighs. All she could say with her hoarse voice was, "Fuck. That was amazing"

How in the world did they just do that?

But Griffin responded, "What would be amazing is me not getting you pregnant with that kind of performance."

Violet should have been scared, but a smile crossed her lips instead. She wouldn't mind getting pregnant for her amazing mate.

Chapter 400: Don't Stop

She was not getting pregnant.

Violet took those words back the moment the fog around her mind began to lift. The mating fever had finally eased, though she could still feel it humming beneath her skin like an ever-annoying, invisible itch. But at least she could think again.

And right now, she needed to get out of this damn forest and find Adele. She prayed whatever contraceptive the healer had given her that day was "extremely" effective, because frankly, Griffin had literally fucked her brains out in the short time they'd spent here.

Not just Adele. Violet needed to see her other boyfriends. And while she and Griffin hadn't talked about it, it was obvious this was going to become a very complicated situation.

It was said that once the mate bond struck, the only person you'd crave, think about, or desire was your mate. Other men would repulse you, your body, mind and soul belonging to one person only.

But that wasn't the case here. Not even close.

Violet very much thought about them. In fact, she was worried sick. It had been days since their disappearance. She knew those guys and she bet they were probably tearing Aster City apart looking for her.

"The boys are coming for us, aren't they?" Violet asked softly, glancing at Griffin with concern.

"Definitely. And that's what scares me. Asher, especially," Griffin muttered.

Violet gulped. Just the thought of Asher leaving the hospital to search for her made her stomach twist. She wouldn't forgive herself if anything happened to him.

"I honestly don't know where the hell we are," Griffin said, rubbing the back of his neck as he looked around. "But I'm guessing we're out of Aster City and our best bet is retracing our steps."

"You mean going back to our kidnappers?" she deadpanned.

"I can handle them. Kinda already did." Griffin puffed his chest out, proud and smug as if remembering the carnage he'd left behind.

Violet rolled her eyes. Men and their egos. It was ridiculous, yet hot. There was something inherently sexy about having someone strong enough to burn down the world for you. Or in his case "Pound" them — the beast's strength was scary.

Her lips curved into a teasing smirk. "I remember clearly that was The Beast's doing. In fact..." she purred, stepping closer, "I'm thinking he deserves a reward. Maybe I'll give him a better name. Something that gives him an identity, other than just 'the animal.' Although, The Beast doesn't sound so bad either."

But Griffin's expression changed. He frowned. "Don't encourage him, Violet. The Beast is dangerous."

"He's still a part of you."

"A part I can't control."

"Maybe that's the problem," Violet countered. "You're trying to control him. What if he just wants his own different identity, yet not separate from you."

"You're talking about an aggressive, super-strong entity with the emotional maturity of a rock. Or have you forgotten he nearly took you?"

"Well," Violet shrugged, her voice turning into a breathy tease, "That was the mating bond wanting us to connect. And considering we've been fucking like animals all day, you can't exactly blame the guy for wanting in on a little action."

"Really, Violet?" Griffin groaned in disbelief, his voice ragged with exasperation and arousal.

Unbothered, Violet stepped closer enough to tease, but careful not to touch him. She wasn't letting the fever win this round. Not yet.

She leaned in with a sultry whisper. "Don't delude yourself, Big man. One day, The Beast and I are going to get a bit of action. I don't know how or why, but I find myself craving you in all forms."

"Fuck, Violet!" Griffin growled, eyes darkening as he glanced down helplessly at his dick which had risen, rock-hard.

And well, they were both still naked.

Thanks to Griffin shredding her clothes like some rabid alpha in heat—with no thought about what she'd wear on the way back—and his having been annihilated the moment he shifted into the beast, they were left entirely naked.

So Violet got a full, unfiltered view of him. And God help her, that view. Griffin's cock stood swollen, thick, flushed, with beads of semen glistening at the tip.

On Violet's part, her mouth watered while her core pulsed with heat rushing between her legs.

Yes, the fever was back.

Oh no. Not now.

Oh yes. Now.

Violet dropped to her knees without hesitation, and in one fluid, hungry motion, she took him into her mouth with a wanton moan that reverberated through the clearing. Griffin threw his head back, groaning. This mate of his was impossible.

That expressive face of hers said it all. Violet wasn't just doing this because it was the mating fever — although that didn't give them an option here. No, she was enjoying every damn second of it.

God, this woman was going to be the death of him. And yes, he wasn't going to last. Not with that look in her eyes.

Griffin's hands threaded into her hair as his hips began to thrust, fucking her mouth the way he wanted, and she let him. There was no resistance, just heat and wet and that sinful expression of hers that told him she wanted to be ruined by him.

He groaned, deep and guttural, as he spilled into her mouth and Violet swallowed him down, her throat working greedily. Well, not all of it.

Griffin pulled out with a ragged breath, and let the rest of his seed streak across her body just the way his wolf demanded. He was marking her. Claiming and painting her in his scent as his wolf cheered and chanted possessively in his mind, Mine. Mine. Mine.

Then he looked down at the result of his madness. His seed glistened on her flushed face, her chest, and the corners of her mouth where it dripped like a decadent sin. The scent of her, of them, was thick in the air, saturating everything.

It drove him into a frenzy.

Violet squealed in surprise when Griffin suddenly scooped her up like she weighed nothing. But through the bond, she felt his need so she didn't resist. Instead, she wrapped her legs around him just as he thrust back into her.

Oh God. She was still so wet and sensitive yet this was perfect.

Griffin's hands gripped her ass, steadying her with a strength that stunned her every time. And then he began to move fast, hard and deep just the way she liked it. It was like he couldn't get enough of her, and he would never.

"I don't think we're going to get out of here anytime soon," Violet gasped out between each thrust, her breath heavy and broken.

"We'll be fine," Griffin grunted back, his own breath just as ragged as he pounded into her like the world might end.

Violet's moans were loud, and unfiltered. She was chasing the high again, getting closer and closer.

But then she felt Griffin tensed, even as he kept fucking her.

"I can hear footsteps," he said through gritted teeth.

"No, no, please don't stop," Violet pleaded, nearly delirious.

Enemy or not, she didn't care. If anyone dared interrupt her climax, she would kill them.

"Not that I can stop either," Griffin growled, still moving inside her, each thrust slamming her higher as the sound of rustling leaves grew louder.

"Griffin!"

It was hard to tell who screamed his name.

Whether it was Violet who finally hit her climax and broke in his arm.

Or his mother, Irene, who had just burst into the clearing and froze.