

Defy 41

Chapter 41: Summoned By The Master

"You shouldn't take it to heart," Lila tried to console the shell-shocked Violet after reading every single comment under the Oracle's post.

"They think of me as a whore," Violet said numbly, turning to Lila. "They've already made up their minds about me. 'Like mother, like daughter,' that's probably what they're all thinking right now." She chuckled mirthlessly.

Lila gave Violet a concerned look, then turned to Dion, hoping he might offer a solution. However, he simply shrugged; this was not his forte.

With a note of frustration, Lila reached out and took Violet's hands in hers. "They're simply jealous of you. Moreover..." She straightened up. "It's not exactly unheard of to be dating two or more werewolves. In the old world, according to the texts, their moon goddess blessed them with multiple mates. In other words, you're not a whore, Violet."

But instead of relieving her, those words only further traumatized Violet. Why in the world would she want four mates, and to mention those four assholes?! That was a death sentence, plain and simple. Moreover, how did the moon goddess blessing people with more than one mate correlate with her situation?

Dion seemed to think the same, because he leaned in and whispered to Lila, "I think this is the point where you stop talking. You're not making things better." He swore the girl can be dumb sometimes.

"Don't be sad, Violet." Lila pouted, giving her a sympathetic look.

"I am not sad. I would actually care to be sad. People have the right to believe what they wanted. It only took me by surprise, that's all." Violet." She said with a smile.

But Lila and Dion saw through her act even though they didn't call her out on it. Violet might pretend to be tough, but she still human and hurt like other normal girls out there.

As if to further prove she was okay, Violet grabbed her fork and dug into her now cold macaroni and cheese, along with a few other cold and half-eaten dishes. Deep down, she knew the food would be wasted.

Having come from a poor background, Violet hated nothing more than wasting food, especially now when it was in abundance. But what could she do? Even as she swallowed, she couldn't taste any of it, having lost her appetite.

The table fell into an awkward silence as they ate, until Dion lifted his head and seemed to stare at something intently, his brows furrowed in confusion. He muttered, "Isn't that your boyfriend, Violet? Also, why is he coming our way looking like that?"

Even without a name being mentioned, Violet knew instinctively who it was, and when she turned, there he was.

Asher freaking Nightshade.

But Violet's expression did not show anger over his earlier actions, instead she looked bewildered. What in the moon was going on here?

Asher was still in his sports gear from earlier, but it was now bloodied and torn in several places. But that wasn't all.

The cardinal Alpha of the west was covered in dirt from head to toe, evidence of his brutal fight with Griffin's beast side.

However, his appearance was unsettling; his lip was busted, his face marred by cuts, and both eyes were blackened. But even with the severity of his injuries, his body was already beginning to heal.

Minor wounds had already vanished, and the deeper gashes were slowly closing up, all thanks to his superior Alpha healing abilities. Still, his disheveled, bloodied appearance unnerved anyone who looked at him.

He was walking towards them causing a sudden tension to swell in the air. Violet couldn't deny, Asher looked intimidating with all the blood streaks, the torn fabric, the wildness in his eyes. It was enough to send anyone running. But she was furious and an angry Violet was a fearless one.

And perhaps, Asher knew that because he came to a stop a short distance away, his eyes never leaving her. He didn't even say a word. Instead, he simply hooked a finger towards himself, gesturing for her to come over, as if she were some dog summoned by its master.

What the....?

Violet ground her jaw in fury. Who did this asshole think he was? The nerve of him! Her blood boiled at the sheer arrogance Asher exuded, a tightening feeling in her chest.

Yet, even with her murderous gaze, Asher inclined his head, watching her, as if he was expecting her to obediently approach.

Violet scoffed, as if she would ever yield to his will. No. Not today. Not ever.

With an sickly sweet yet defiant smile, Violet turned her back to Asher, a deliberate, bold move.

It was considered a grave insult to turn one's back on a wolf, most especially an Alpha like the likes of Asher. But Violet didn't care. Let him seethe. Let him throw a tantrum. He could go rot in hell for all she cared.

She took a deep breath, trying to ignore the stares of the students around them, who were now wide-eyed at the audacity she displayed.

She knew what this meant, defying an Alpha, especially a psycho like Asher, was risky. And yet, she did it with no second thought, standing her ground in her own way.

Perhaps, she was asking for death or simply a sucker for punishment. To be honest, Violet had no idea whatever stirred her! What pushed her into playing this risky game with Asher. He provoked her enough she lost all manner of reasoning around him.

With her back turned to him and her heart racing, Violet half-expected Asher to storm after her, but the seconds passed in silence. She didn't dare turn to look at him again. She wouldn't give him that satisfaction — plus she was scared to know what he was up to.

Asher both thrilled and scared her.

Then she heard a low growl behind her, barely audible, the kind that would send chills through anyone else. But Violet held her head high, asserting her refusal to be intimidated even when she felt a warm body press against her back and hands sliding around her waist.

Chapter 42: The Nightshade Is Poison

"Hello, my purple queen," a deep, masculine voice murmured into Violet's ear, making the hairs on her body stand on end.

The voice was unmistakably Asher's. It was velvety smooth, yet laced with an underlying edge of danger. The nickname and the warmth of his breath on her skin made Violet's heart lurch, both in a good and a bad way.

He said to her, "Why do you refuse to answer to your king?"

Violet turned her head just enough to see Asher's infuriatingly smug face beside her.

"For starters," she said with intentional coldness, "I am not your queen. Stop calling me that. Secondly, get away from me." She wrinkled her nose and nudged him with her shoulder, her annoyance showing. "You smell like blood and dirt. I wouldn't want you to get that on me."

But like an annoying mosquito, the nudge only seemed to spur Asher on further. His lips curled into a wicked grin, his tone dangerously amused. "Really? Is that so?"

Before Violet could even process what he was about to do, Asher leaned in and rubbed his face against hers. It was a gesture that should've seemed intimate, even romantic to everyone watching, but it was anything but. All Asher did was smear his blood, sweat, and grime all over her.

"Aah!!!" Violet screamed, her voice echoing across the lawn like a banshee. She could feel his sweat and the dirt caking her skin, and she recoiled, her face twisted in disgust.

But the psychopath wasn't finished. Asher, laughing like a child, took it a step further, rubbing his still-bleeding wound all over her, leaving trails of blood smeared across her cheek, neck and uniform.

"Get off me!" Violet yelled, completely losing her composure. She swung her arms wildly, trying to push him away. It felt like her entire world had descended into chaos, the laughter and blood, dirt, and her frustrated screams mingling together.

Asher finally pulled back, a triumphant look on his face as he took a step back. He could barely contain his laughter as Violet glared at him, her face flushed with rage. And just like that, without a word of apology or an ounce of shame, he took off, sprinting away with an agility that only a werewolf could possess.

Violet was beyond furious. Her body shook as she screamed at the top of her lungs, "You fucking asshole! I'm going to kill you today! Do you hear me! You're dead meat today!"

Fueled by sheer frustration, Violet bolted after Asher across the lawn, desperate to catch him. She was so angry that she could feel her pulse pounding in her ears, and nothing else mattered. Not the looks of the by standing students, not the fact that Asher was a cardinal Alpha. None of it mattered. She just wanted to teach him a lesson.

But Asher seemed to enjoy the chase, his laughter ringing out loudly in the lawn, as he effortlessly dodged her attempts to catch him. Whenever Violet thought she was close enough, each time she stretched out her fingers to grab him, Asher would slip away at the last second, leaving her to groan in frustration.

This wasn't like his usual games. It wasn't him toying with others through manipulation. This was different. Asher looked... happy, genuinely enjoying himself, a sight that surprised everyone watching, even those who knew him well.

From a distance, Violet's friends watched the spectacle unfold, wide-eyed and stunned.

Lila's jaw dropped as she saw Asher teased Violet by coming close to grab but she shoved him away, only for him to come right back, his grin never fading.

"The gods help us all," Lila muttered, the realization dawning on her. "He likes her."

Dion, who was leaning casually against the back of the bench, shook his head and spoke ominously. "And that, my dear, means your friend Violet is in deep shit. Of all the cardinal alphas, nothing good ever comes from associating with Asher. The Nightshade household is poison. Anything good dies in their hands."

He took a slow drink from his water bottle, his gaze still fixed on Violet and Asher. "I would say if you were a good friend, you would advise Violet to stay away from him." He paused, a contemplative look on his face. "But it's too late. Asher has his eyes on her. And whatever the Puppet Master wants, he takes."

Lila glanced at Dion, her heart pounding with worry. There was something chilling about the way Dion spoke, the certainty in his tone. She swallowed hard and asked nervously, "How do you know all that?"

Dion relaxed, his smile widening as if he knew something she didn't. "You're a curious one too," he said smoothly, "so you should already know that information is power in Lunaris."

Lila fell silent, her gaze flickering back to her friend who was still chasing Asher, the two of them creating a spectacle that no one was forgetting anytime soon, at least till the end of today.

At this point, Lila could only hope that Violet understood the kind of danger she was walking into by associating with Asher, because there was no turning back now.

Meanwhile....

Through sheer luck, Violet managed to tackle Asher to the ground, his laughter ending abruptly.

They both went down with a heavy thud, the force of their fall knocking the air out of Asher for a brief moment.

Without thinking twice, Violet straddled him, her hands going straight for his neck. Her eyes were wide with fury as she leaned over him.

"Die, you asshole!" she growled, squeezing his throat with all the strength she could muster.

Yet even while she had her hands around his neck, even while she straddled him and tried to choke him, Asher was smiling. Not even fazed. His reptilian eyes gleamed mischievously as his glasses were long gone, forsaken during the chase.

"Why are you laughing, you bastard?" Violet yelled, her frustration boiling over at his infuriating grin.

Asher let out a low chuckle sending a shiver down Violet's spine despite her fury. "Because you seem to like this position, little purple queen."

Violet froze. Her hands loosened, and she suddenly became hyper-aware of everything, the fact that she was straddling Asher, the closeness of their bodies, and more pressingly, the way his hips shifted beneath hers. There was something hard pressing up, and that realization hit her like a freight train.

She looked down and saw the faintest outline of something that made her heart nearly stop.

"Ahhh!" Violet shrieked, her face flushed in mortified horror. Her immediate reaction was to scramble off of him, but Asher was too quick, too perceptive.

The moment her concentration broke, he took advantage of the lapse. Before Violet knew what was happening, Asher moved like lightning. His hands gripped her wrists, and in one swift motion, he flipped her over so that now she was pinned beneath him, her back against the grass.

Violet's breath hitched as she found herself staring up at him, his silhouette blocking the sun and her heart racing. Not only was she pinned, but Asher was leaning over her, his face close enough that she could feel his breath against her skin.

The weight of his body pressed down against hers, every inch of him. Every. Single. Inch. Including his very evident, raging erection.

Violet swallowed hard. She had just gone from the frying pan and straight into the fire.

The competition is getting tougher and tougher. We have less than fourteen hours to help our character "Violet Purple" qualify for the semi finals. Please vote for Violet with your points and push her to the point. There would be a mass release event if we win the competition!

Chapter 43: My King

Ba-dum! Ba-dum! Ba-dum!

Violet could hear the quick rhythm of her heart pounding in her chest. This was the closest she'd ever been with a man, and it bothered her greatly because she shouldn't like it, yet her body seemed to.

No man had ever stirred her like this. Asher was a bad idea, every one of her principles went against getting involved with someone like him. And yet, tell that to the throbbing need between her legs.

But then, just because her body desired him didn't mean she would give in to the bad idea. She controlled her body, not the other way around. Hence, she was determined to take back the reins.

"Get off me!" she hissed, her voice sounding as strong and confident as she could make it, despite the blush creeping up her neck, flushing her face with embarrassment.

"No."

"No?" Violet repeated in disbelief.

"Yes." He smiled that cunning, self-assured smile of his. "But you can make me."

Violet's eyes flashed with defiance. Did he think she couldn't? She would prove him wrong.

She pushed against his shoulders, attempting to throw him off her. Gods above! It was like trying to move an immovable wall. He didn't budge an inch.

Though it stunned her how he wasn't crushing her beneath all his weight, he remained infuriatingly immovable. Violet tried again and again, her muscles straining as she huffed in exhaustion. Her frustration grew until she could no longer hold back.

"Bastard!" she cursed, glaring at him with all the rage she could muster, especially knowing he was doing this on purpose.

Asher burst into laughter, his gaze never leaving hers. There was something dark and playful in his eyes, something that said he was enjoying this far more than he should. From the way he pinned her wrists, down to the way he hovered over her, it was as if he was relishing in her helplessness.

"Bastard?" He chuckled deeply, his tone mocking yet oddly affectionate. "Oh, darling, I've been called much worse. And the people who called me such usually lose a tooth or more. But you, my little purple queen, when you put it that way... somehow, it doesn't sound like an insult coming from you."

His gaze shifted slightly, and the look in his eyes sent a chill down her spine. His vertically slitted eyes seemed to glow brighter, as if some beast was awakening and peering down at her.

Violet could feel her heart thudding against her ribcage, her breath catching. No, she forgot how to breathe entirely.

Asher's face was so close, his lips only inches from hers. His dark, wild hair framed his features, the scrapes and bruises across his skin adding a rugged, dangerous edge to his already dangerously alluring presence.

He looked at her as though she were the only thing in his world, his eyes filled with an intensity that made her want to give in to whatever strange pull he had over her.

Violet could feel her nipples tightening, her skin flushed and hot under his gaze. There was something about Asher, something about the power radiating from him that made her want to submit. To let herself be taken care of by him. One who would care, provide and protect. An alpha. The best mating partner.

Oh Fuck. Oh fuck. She was doomed. Violet knew what this was. His wolf was calling to her and her body, though human, had primal instincts too. Just like natural selection, her body was recognizing a strong, dominant, powerful male for mating — in the case of the wolves — and reproduction — for the humans.

Except there would be no reproduction!

"Get. Off." She commanded him.

But all he did was raise a brow as if amused by her attempt at authority.

Realizing that wasn't going to happen, Violet changed her tactics. "Please," she begged him, her eyes darting around nervously, "people are staring."

And she wasn't wrong. Students were indeed staring. But this was Asher, and no one dared to stare for too long. They knew better than to test their luck with him, and those who did dare stare, kept their distance.

But Violet knew for certain that she'd be appearing on the Oracle's post once more.

What a popular celebrity she'd become.

To her surprise, even after lowering her dignity to plead, Asher merely sighed regretfully. "I wish I could help you, but your king called earlier and you ignored him."

The gods help her. So this was what it was? Punishment?

She racked her brain, her nerves fraying. How had she gotten involved with this madman again? So much had happened in such a short span of time she had forgotten. Oh, right, the damned application! She'd put herself in this situation.

Well done, Violet! She chided herself inwardly.

Violet tried to hold back the anger, but the words slipped out anyway. "I swear, I will murder you if you don't get off me."

"Too bad," he said, his grin widening, "you might just be the death of me."

Those words should be illegal, Violet thought as her heart skipped a beat. It wasn't just the romantic words, but the way he said it like he meant it. Every single word of it.

Before she could fully comprehend what had just happened, Asher finally got off her, only to lie beside her, pushing her to face him as they lay side by side.

"Let's stay like this, then," he said, resting comfortably, his face inches away from hers.

Violet blinked, completely dumbfounded. She'd never met anyone like him before. She looked over her shoulder, catching sight of her friends, communicating with her gaze for them to help her.

But Dion and Lila looked away, purposefully avoiding looking at her. If anything, their expressions seemed to say, "Good luck with your boyfriend, Violet."

"No, look here," Asher said, gently turning her face back towards him. "I like it when your eyes are on me."

Her heart skipped a beat again, her breath hitching. Damn, he was smooth even without trying.

"Let's talk this way." He said to her.

Violet had no choice but to indulge him, not that it was entirely terrible. She just hadn't expected to spend the rest of her break lying in the grass with a cardinal Alpha, one who looked like he'd just had a fight with death itself, while basking in the warmth of the sun.

Very romantic, indeed.

Whatever man that would come after Asher would have to beat this record.

If only she knew.

So, to indulge him, she said with a hint of sarcasm, "Now, do tell, my king, what do we talk about?"

Chapter 44: Sour Gift

~ Asher ~

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"Now, do tell, my king, what do we talk about?" Violet said, the sarcasm in her voice unmistakable.

He stared at her, amused by her lack of self-preservation. Asher couldn't help but wonder if Violet realized she was the only one who spoke to him like this and got away with it unscathed. But then again, that was precisely what he liked about her and expected, not some cowering, timid soul. If she were such, she wouldn't be his purple queen after all.

Above all, if there was one thing he loved about her, it was the way she looked at him. To be precise, at his eyes. There was no hint of disgust, no false admiration.

She didn't pretend to be fascinated; she genuinely saw them for what they were. Those cursed eyes he had always loathed each time he stared at the mirror, Violet gazed at them as if they were beautiful and magical. That alone had won him over, and now, she was his beautiful, magical purple queen.

Violet was everything he had ever longed for. The one good thing the gods had granted him in a long time. He longed to run his fingers through that striking purple hair, to feel its silky softness. And her eyes, those stunning golden eyes that held an unexpected intensity.

It wasn't usual for a human to possess purple hair and golden eyes. With hybrids on the rise these days as a result of the union between humans and wolves, Asher had his own theory.

Perhaps one of Violet's ancestors had been entangled with a wolf, if you know what he meant. But since she was an orphan, there was no way to track her genealogy down.

Unfortunately, if his purple queen were part wolf, she showed none of the traits. He had been watching her since today, testing her on the training field to see if she exhibited anything special. Although she was completely unaware of his intentions.

No one ever knew the full extent of his games until they found themselves too deeply entangled to escape.

And as for his purple queen, she didn't smell like a wolf, nor did she possess the energy. She was just an ordinary human. But "ordinary" didn't seem to fit when it came to her. She was anything but that. Not to mention, her fiery temper rivaled that of any wolf he'd met.

"Earth to his majesty, what are you thinking?" Violet's voice broke through his thoughts as she snapped her fingers in front of his face.

Asher turned to her, as she continued, her sarcasm ever-present. "Have you forgotten, your majesty, we are supposed to be having royal talks?"

So, she wasn't going to let that go. Fine, then. They could have it both ways.

"What about some royal fun?" he responded, his hand slipping to her waist, gliding lower until he cupped her backside.

"Hands. Off. Now." Violet's voice lost its playful edge and was replaced with such seriousness that he had no choice but to oblige.

"You're no fun," he lied, though a grin tugged at his lips.

"Then find someone else to bother. I'd be so glad." She shot back, seemingly delighted at the mere thought.

"That's the point," Asher said, his eyes darkening as they held hers. "You'd be too glad. And that's exactly why I can't let you go."

Violet's mouth dropped open, her eyes wide. "You're crazy, you do know that?"

He flashed her a grin, eyes twinkling with mischief. "Spot on."

Indeed, there was no denying it. He was utterly, beautifully mad. His purple queen didn't know the extent yet. But she'd find out soon enough. Only then would he know if she was truly worthy to be by his side. To wear his crown.

"Very well, you seem to be in the mood, I see. If that's the case, let us begin this discourse with a touch of questioning and answering, shall we? Indeed, Your Majesty, pray tell me of your intentions regarding Elsie Lyka Lancaster?" she asked without hesitation, her golden eyes fixed intently upon him.

Of course, he stiffened. If there were any question Asher Nightshade had expected from his little purple—who didn't seem so little at this moment, not with her claws out—it certainly wouldn't have been this.

Asher propped his head up on his arms, the air of arrogance slipping back onto his face. "Someone appears to be jealous, hmm?" he mused.

Violet hissed, her eyes narrowing. "Do not even try to change the subject, I can see right through your tricks, puppet master."

Ah, she had him there. His gaze held a flicker of acknowledgment. His purple queen was getting sharper, catching onto his tricks more quickly. He almost found it endearing.

"Very well then," he said, his tone taking a serious edge. Asher decided it was time to lay it all bare. There wasn't much point hiding it, especially with that parrot-mouthed friend of hers always hovering about. It was only a matter of time till she found out. If she hadn't already, with that question, and only wanted confirmation from him.

"The Alpha King is impotent and unable to bear an heir," He began with a cold voice, unable to hide his disdain towards the man. "Some say it is merely the king's unfortunate fate, others believe it is the goddess's own way of balancing the order, with four overpowered wolves already in place. If the Alpha King were to have an heir, it would mean any one of us could challenge him for the throne and obviously take it."

Asher paused, the bitterness in his tone thick. "But with no heir, the playing field is limited. Only one of the Cardinal Alphas is eligible for the throne, and to sweeten, or, in my view, sour, the deal, the Alpha King, in all his magnanimity, decided to grant us a gift."

There was nothing but pure venom in his voice, etched in the way his face twisted slightly in disgust.

"A pure-blooded she-wolf, for the taking," Asher spat. "For whoever emerges as his heir after graduation. A prize to be won, like a possession. And now Elsie seems to think that she owns me. Us. All of us." His words were filled with loathing.

However, his purple queen remained quiet, taking it all in with an unreadable expression. There was tension in the air with his words having ripped away the usual playful banter, exposing a raw undercurrent of resentment, reserved towards the Alpha King and the situation itself.

"Well," She finally spoke up, "I guess that makes you more of a prisoner than I thought."

"Oh, that's where you're wrong, little purple," he chuckled cruelly.

His hand clasped her cheek, fingers curving possessively around her face. Violet didn't swat him away this time. Whether it was his words or the strange allure of the moment, she found herself frozen, unable to react.

Asher's gaze bore into hers, intense and unyielding. "I'm the puppet master. No one dictates my role for me. I make the rules. I decide my path," he continued, his voice lowering to a near growl, something predatory lying beneath his words. His thumb brushed her cheek gently, a juxtaposition to the dark energy she could sense radiating from him.

"And that's where you come in, my little queen," he murmured, his breath warm against her face, the intensity of his proximity drawing every one of her senses to focus on him alone.

Asher leaned in closer, the air around them charged with tension, almost suffocating. His lips hovered so close to hers that anyone watching might have assumed they were about to kiss.

But that wasn't the intention here, he stared her dead in the eyes instead.

"You, my purple queen, will take Elsie's place."

Chapter 45: Who Knows Asher's Plans?

A cold like never before burrowed deeply into Violet's skin, chilling her to the bone. The steps she took down the empty hallway felt heavy, almost robotically, as if she had been disconnected from her own body.

Nothing made sense anymore. Not when her head swirled with a thousand thoughts, all crashing into each other like waves in a violent storm. It was as if the world had tilted off its axis, and she was left grasping at straws to regain her footing.

Her instincts had always whispered to her to be wary of Asher, and now she knew they had been right all along.

"You, my purple queen, will take Elsie's place." Those words kept echoing in Violet's head, haunting her as she replayed them over and over. They looped through her mind, like a broken record that refused to stop.

It was chilling.

At first after he had said that, Violet had assumed Asher was joking. She thought it was another one of his games, you know, his own twisted way of riling her up. But there had been nothing playful about that dark, intent look in his eyes. And that was all the confirmation she needed to know he was deadly serious.

"You mad man!" she had shouted, pushing him away before taking to her heels, her breath catching in her chest as she fled. She hadn't looked back. No, she didn't dare to.

What the fuck was wrong with Asher? What did he mean by her "taking Elsie's place"?!

Elsie was the one chosen by the Alpha King for one of them. Taking Elsie's place would mean challenging the Alpha King himself, and only someone with a death wish would even consider that. It was madness. Suicidal.

And Violet, as reckless as she was, still wanted to live. So she clung to that desire fiercely, which meant there was no way she could go along with Asher's ridiculous idea.

The first thought that rushed into Violet's mind was running away. To leave Lunaris and escape Asher and his insanity as planned. But she couldn't do it now. Not in broad daylight when his eyes and ears were possibly everywhere.

After all, Asher had made it crystal clear that he doesn't plan on letting her go anytime soon. Violet shuddered at the thought of what he would do if he caught her trying to "leave him." so running wasn't an option. Not while the sun was up.

She had to be smart. Strategic. Violet couldn't afford any mistakes at this point in time. She had to figure out a plan and keep herself safe until she could escape properly, without leaving a trace.

Before Violet knew it, she had wandered aimlessly for what felt like hours, lost in her thoughts. By the time she realized herself, the hallway was deserted, and she had completely missed half of the lesson. But then, she couldn't avoid class forever, no matter how shattered she felt.

Taking one last deep breath, Violet steeled herself and began to walk in the direction of the classroom. The teacher would likely deduct points, maybe, even punish her. But that was nothing compared to the fear of what Asher had in store of her.

But Violet suddenly came to a complete stop when someone stepped out from the corner of the hallway, intentionally blocking her path forward.

Her eyes met Griffin Hale's, and a chill ran down her spine. The blood drained from her face, leaving her feeling cold and hollow. Of all people, it had to be him. Just her luck.

But when Griffin didn't move and kept his gaze fixed on her, an unsettling reality dawned on her that this was no coincidence.

Griffin Hale had been waiting for her.

Oh God.

Without a word, Violet spun around, intending to run in the opposite direction, but she slammed right into someone else. She stumbled back, lifting her gaze to see who it was, and her heart leaped as she met the eyes of Alaric Storm.

For a brief moment, Violet almost felt a sense of relief. Alaric had always seemed the most harmless among the cardinal alphas. Maybe, just maybe, he'd help her. But that was until she remembered that Alaric and Griffin were best friends, just like Asher and Roman. It made sense then. Alaric wasn't here to save her; he was here to ensure she didn't escape.

Fuck her life.

Their eyes locked for a split second, and he knew at that moment what she was thinking. Violet's fight-or-flight instincts took over. She tried to dash to the side, but Alaric moved fast, wrapping an arm tightly around her waist.

"No! Let me go!" Violet screamed, struggling against him with all her might, twisting and squirming. But Alaric was strong—unbearably strong—and he pulled her back, holding her tightly against his chest. She could feel the tension in his body, and his grip was ironclad.

Without thinking twice, Violet threw her head back, hard. It connected with Alaric's face, hitting his nose with a satisfying crack. He yelped, and his grip loosened, giving her a split second to escape. Violet didn't waste any time as she pulled free, turning and driving her elbow into his stomach for good measure, feeling him double over in pain.

She was free then, but it only lasted for a few seconds.

Violet managed just two desperate steps before she felt hands wrap around her shoulders, and then she was being lifted, her feet leaving the ground.

A cry of shock left her lips as Griffin Hale threw her over his shoulder like she weighed nothing. The world tipped upside down, her stomach lurching as she landed hard against his broad back. The jarring force knocked the air from her lungs, and she groaned, wincing in pain.

"Put me down! Let me go!" her scream reverberated through the hallway.

She kicked and struggled, beating her fists against Griffin's back, but he didn't even flinch. Instead, his arm clamped around her legs, securing her tightly as he strode on.

Panic clawed at Violet's insides as she realized how powerless she was against him. Griffin was a mountain of muscle, his sheer strength making her feel utterly helpless.

Her screams for help fell on deaf ears as the hallway was deserted, and any hope of someone coming to her rescue was dwindling by the second.

Griffin pushed through a door, dragging Violet into an empty classroom. She heard the heavy door slam shut behind them, the sound echoing off the walls like a final seal of her fate. Alaric followed them, his nose bleeding slightly and his expression torn between anger and annoyance.

Before Violet could gather her bearings, Griffin sat her down onto one of the desks, his shadow casting her in darkness as he loomed over her like a towering mountain.

Violet's body tensed in panic, her heart thudding wildly in her chest. The heat radiating off Griffin was suffocating as he stood between her legs, their proximity unnervingly close. She barely had space to breathe.

A wicked smile crossed his lips, "Finally, I've got you, Purple head. You don't know how hard it's been to catch you without Asher getting in my way."

Violet's eyes widened, fear constricting her throat. Wait, what? Why? She had not done anything to provoke him since yesterday, not deliberately at least. Except for the fact that Asher had punched his pack member because of her.... oh shit. She was in serious trouble.

Her breath hitched as Griffin grabbed her hair, yanking it painfully and making her gasp. Tears pricked her eyes at the sharp sting in her scalp, and she let out a cry.

"Who the hell are you, and what does Asher want with you?!" He growled, his voice vibrating in her ears like the snarl of an animal.

"I don't know!" Violet's voice cracked as the searing pain made her eyes sting.

Griffin didn't seem satisfied. His expression darkened, and his grip became impossibly tighter, tugging her head back, exposing her neck.

"Don't give me that bullshit answer!" he spat, his breath hot against her ear. "I know that bastard, Asher. And the fact that his eyes are on you can't be anything good for the rest of us. So, tell me now, what is he planning to do with you?!"

Violet swallowed hard, her thoughts scrambling in fear. She knew she couldn't tell him the truth. The very thought of it sent a chill through her. The last thing she wanted was for Griffin to know Asher's plans. That the bastard intended to use her to challenge the Alpha King. Griffin would kill her on the spot, and nobody would care.

Nobody would mourn her, except Nancy who would shed a few tears for all the money spent on her she didn't gain back. She was an orphan after all. Justice for orphans was close to zero.

She had to be smart.

Griffin shook her roughly, yanking her head back, his voice a furious shout. "I said talk to me!"

"I swear, I don't know! He just... he just hangs around me, calls me his 'purple queen,' that's it!" She lied, trying to sound convincing, her heart thundering in her chest as she stared up at him defiantly.

Chapter 46: Teddy Bear Heart

"You're lying," Griffin growled, his voice rough and feral, teetering on the edge of snapping. His animalistic tone sent shivers down Violet's spine.

Violet's entire body went rigid upon recalling that werewolves could tell when one told a lie. They could hear the slightest irregularity in a heartbeat, a telltale sign of deception.

Unfortunately, Violet had no choice. Griffin didn't like her, and he could never know the truth she had learned. This was a dangerous game, but Violet had to make him believe her lie. Fake it until you make it, that was her only strategy right now.

With no other option, Violet suddenly screamed, her voice loud and filled with anguish. "The gods be damned! Why won't you believe me?! Why are you doing this to me?! Is it because I'm a human? Is that why you're bullying me? Why won't you go ask Asher yourself why he's doing this to me? I did not do anything wrong by getting accepted into this school, did I?"

Tears began streaming down her face, and Violet let herself go, bawling uncontrollably.

Griffin froze instantly. His hands on her hair stilled as he stared at her, wide-eyed, utterly dumbfounded. It was clear from the startled expression on his face that crying was the last thing he had expected from Violet.

"Griffin..." Alaric's voice was heard through the commotion, calling his name with a grimace. There was an unmistakable accusation in his gaze, as if silently blaming Griffin for making her cry.

Alaric hadn't supported this plan in the first place. Griffin had promised only to scare Violet into telling the truth, and Alaric's role was to ensure things didn't escalate further. God forbid Violet provoked Griffin into letting his beast out. The heavens knew it would be an unmitigated disaster.

Griffin released Violet at once, almost as if she had burned him. His gaze darted nervously between her and Alaric. Shaking his head desperately, he cried out, "I didn't even do anything!"

Unfortunately for Griffin, Violet wailed even louder, her wails echoing through the classroom. "Why are you doing this to me?! Why do you hate me so much?! I didn't even do anything to you!"

"I swear, I only grabbed her hair!" Griffin defended himself, his voice rising in panic.

Alaric face-palmed, groaning in exasperation. "You fool! You must have hurt her with your strength! Humans are much more fragile! How many times do I have to tell you that?!"

"But I—" Griffin started to protest, only to stop dead in his tracks as Violet suddenly threw her arms around him. She buried her face into his massive chest, sobbing as if her world had crumbled.

The room fell into a stunned silence. Even Alaric held his breath, staring at the scene in disbelief. What was supposed to be an interrogation had flipped entirely. Instead of scaring Violet into confessing, the girl was now the one doing the scaring.

Griffin looked utterly lost. He was a giant of a man, his imposing size intimidating everyone he encountered. Most avoided him, too terrified to even get close. Only his closest friends or occasional lovers ever dared to touch him. What many didn't know was that Griffin had the most tender heart amongst all the cardinal alphas. He was a brute with a teddy bear heart.

And yet, here was this human girl, someone with no relationship to him whatsoever, clinging to him as though he were her lifeline.

For over a minute, Griffin stood frozen, unable to process what was happening. But then, in a shocking turn of events, his massive arms encircled Violet. He began patting her back awkwardly, as though she were a small child in need of comfort.

"Shit," Griffin muttered apologetically. "I'm so sorry, Purplehead. My mama would be so disappointed if she found out I made a girl cry." His tone was genuinely remorseful as he continued to pat her back, his earlier aggression completely gone.

Unfortunately for Griffin and Alaric, neither of them knew that Violet had been pretending all along. Griffin would never have believed her outright, and being headstrong wasn't going to get her out of this situation.

So Violet relied on a skill women often held an edge in—tears, or rather, emotional manipulation. Like before, she clung to her mantra: fake it till you make it. Except this time, she decided to take it to the next level.

Except what Violet didn't realize was that tapping into her emotional reservoir was a double-edged sword. The moment Griffin wrapped his massive, muscular arms around her, she didn't notice when everything shifted. But suddenly, the floodgates opened, and the emotions she had pretended to feel crashed over her like a torrent, turning her act into reality.

Violet had always been tough. But being tough came with its own burdens, there were silent wounds and emotional bandages that weighed her down every single day. She had been holding onto them for so long, never realizing how desperately she needed to let it all out until now.

It had all been a lie, every pretense of strength she clung to. Griffin's hatred for her, seemingly without reason, hurt more than she wanted to admit. Asher's unrelenting control over her life, like he was some untouchable god, terrified her. And above all, Violet was homesick. She missed Nancy, missed the trailer, missed the life she had left behind. Here she was in an unfamiliar world with no familiar face, no comfort, no safety net.

"Yes, just like that, little purple girl," Griffin muttered softly, his tone soothing. His massive hand ran gently through her hair, and the sensation was unexpectedly heavenly. "Let it all out. It's good for the heart. Let the feelings flow."

And just like he ordered, tears streamed down her face, her sobs turning ragged.

"You're safe," he murmured, his voice dripping with sincerity. "I won't harm you again."

Even through her tears, Violet could feel the truth in his words. Griffin's tone held no malice now, only a strange tenderness that she hadn't expected from him.

Meanwhile, Alaric stood nearby, staring at the scene with a slightly horrified expression. Whatever was unfolding before his eyes, he had no name for it. Relief flickered across his features, at least there was no bloodshed. Not that he would have allowed it; even Alaric had his limits. Still, this? This was something else entirely.

As he observed Violet, a growing suspicion crept into Alaric's mind. First Asher, now Griffin. It seemed like the girl had both of them wrapped around her finger in some inexplicable way.

Alaric didn't like it. Not one bit.

Chapter 47: Matthew 7:7

Violet stood in front of the restroom mirror, staring blankly at her reflection. The tap ran on, cold water spilling over her hands, but she barely noticed. Her mind was a million miles away, still trapped in the whirlwind of what had just unfolded in that classroom.

She had escaped, mostly unharmed. Her scalp still tingled where Griffin had gripped her hair, but it wasn't the lingering pain that unsettled her. It was the emotional vulnerability she had shown.

Her golden eyes seemed to stare back at her accusingly. "You cried," they seemed to say.

Violet couldn't believe she had let that happen. Crying in front of Griffin Hale? The brute of East House? It was almost laughable if it didn't make her stomach twist with unease.

And yet, Griffin's reaction had been...unexpected. After her emotional breakdown, all he had done was apologize. The sincerity in his voice still echoed faintly in her mind.

"You are right," he had said regretfully. "I was a coward for facing you when Asher should be the one I should be interrogating. But don't worry, I'll surely get the truth out of his mouth one way or the other."

And then, like some holy knight delivering a grand promise, he'd added with unwavering determination, "In case you ever need my help, or need to move into another house, don't hesitate to come to me. I'll fight for you and will be happy to welcome you into the East House."

The memory of his words made Violet scoff quietly, water still running over her hands. Holy knight? You have got to be kidding me.

Griffin might have played the role of protector in that moment, but she wasn't about to start seeing him as her savior. Still, she couldn't deny that his demeanor had shifted drastically, almost disturbingly so.

But what bothered her more than Griffin's sudden turn was the look Alaric Storm had given him before they left. That cold, distrusting glare.

Violet shuddered, her spine tingling as she remembered how the Lightning Prince's sharp eyes had lingered on her, as if dissecting her very existence. It was crystal clear that Alaric didn't like or trust her. Not even a little bit.

Well, he's right not to.

Violet shut the tap off abruptly, gripping the edges of the sink as she took a deep breath. Her reflection stared back at her, showing eyes red and puffy from crying.

Violet bit her lip, hating herself for not having any makeup to hide the evidence. There was no way she could walk into her next class looking like this. The last thing she needed was for anyone to think she was a crybaby. She wasn't weak.

Her thoughts were interrupted by the sound of a stall door creaking open. Violet's head snapped up as a girl stepped out with an air of confidence that practically radiated off her. From the elegant sway of her hips to the sweet, almost intoxicating scent of her perfume, Violet instantly pegged her as one of the bluebloods, the wealthy elite that dominated Lunaris Academy.

And if there was one group Violet avoided like the plague, it was the rich and entitled.

The girl walked up to the mirror beside her, placing a small designer bag on the counter with practiced grace. She unzipped it, revealing an arsenal of makeup accessories that gleamed like treasure under the fluorescent lights.

Violet couldn't help but stare as the girl pulled out a sleek tube of red lipstick and expertly applied it, the vibrant color accentuating her full lips. She popped them with a satisfied smile, radiating the kind of confidence that made it clear she knew she looked good.

She didn't even wear her jacket and

her shirt was unbuttoned just enough to show off a red lace bra and the subtle curve of her cleavage. It was deliberate action, Violet noted. The girl intended to grab attention and she did. But Violet had no time to judge. Her gaze was fixed on the makeup bag as if it held the answers to all her problems.

She swallowed hard, internally debating whether to ask. Bluebloods were predictable. The girl would probably sneer at her, give her a condescending look, or outright ignore her. But the alternative was walking into class looking like a wreck. Violet shivered at the thought.

Her fingers itched with the horrible urge to snatch the bag and run, but she immediately dismissed the idea. This wasn't her old school. She wasn't a thief and being branded such would be a living nightmare. Gritting her teeth, Violet decided to take the risk and ask for help.

Before she could get a word out, the girl turned to her with a dramatic flair and said, "All you have to do is ask..." Her voice was smooth, teasing, as if she'd been expecting Violet to speak all along. She smiled. "And you shall receive."

Violet blinked, momentarily taken aback by the girl's unexpected response. She studied her closely now, taking in her attractive dirty blonde hair cascading in loose waves, sharp cheekbones, and beautiful hazel eyes. There was something familiar about her, but Violet couldn't quite place where she'd seen her before.

"I didn't think you'd help me," Violet finally admitted, her voice cautious.

The girl raised a perfectly arched brow, her lips curving into a smirk. "And why wouldn't I help you? You're one of us."

And just like that, Violet's suspicions were confirmed. She was an elite student. And, apparently, she — Violet — had become one of them. Except for the title, she was still broke though.

Since the girl seemed to be feeling magnanimous, Violet decided not to waste her luck.

"Fine. Help me with your makeup, please," she requested, doing her best to keep her tone polite.

"Sure," the girl said with a casual shrug, only to add, "But on one condition, Violet Purple."

Violet froze, taking an instinctive step back. Her wariness wasn't just because the girl knew her name — nearly everyone in this school seemed to know about her — but because she had learned the hard way that making deals with the students of Lunaris Academy was a death sentence. Nothing good ever came out of it.

The girl seemed to catch her reaction and burst into laughter, her eyes sparkling with amusement. "Gosh, your expression is priceless! Don't worry, calm your ass, sis. I'm not about to demand your firstborn or anything."

But her lighthearted teasing didn't ease Violet's nerves in the slightest.

"Then what do you want?" Violet asked cautiously, her muscles tensed as if ready to bolt at any moment.

The girl smirked, leaning slightly closer as she spoke. "I have a tea party with the girls tomorrow, and I was hoping you'd attend."

Violet blinked, utterly stunned by the unexpected request. A tea party? That was about the last thing she expected to hear. For a fleeting moment, she considered the possibility that this girl might be mocking her. But the way she held Violet's gaze with unwavering seriousness made it clear she wasn't joking.

"And why would you want me at your tea party?" Violet asked, her tone sharp with suspicion. "You just met me, or do you make a habit of inviting everyone you see to your tea parties?"

The girl scoffed lightly, the corner of her lips twitching into a smirk. "Are you kidding me right now? You're Violet Purple, the mysterious human with the purple hair who walked into Lunaris Academy and left the entire school buzzing without even trying. You're practically a legend. People, especially the elites, are dying to know more about you. It's honestly a tragedy that you don't spend more time with your own kind, especially when they're so eager to know you better." She tutted her lips in mock disappointment.

Violet's stomach churned at the thought. "Knowing her" was precisely the thing she dreaded the most. She wasn't some circus animal meant to entertain these entitled brats, yet the girl's tone left little room for argument. It wasn't exactly a request, it was more like an expectation.

Lifting her chin, Violet asked pointedly, "And how do I know this isn't just another scheme to humiliate or undermine me, like most sororities love to do?"

The girl didn't respond immediately. Instead, she tilted her head slightly, studying Violet with a curious expression before gracefully stepping closer. Violet's instincts screamed at her to step back cautiously, but she forced herself to stand her ground, refusing to show any weakness. When the girl was finally face to face with her, she spoke confidently.

"It's my party, Violet. I'm inviting you personally, which means you'll be under my protection. I don't let anyone undermine my guests, not the queen bee, not Griffin Hale, not even the gods themselves." The way she spoke carried such authority, such certainty, that for a moment, Violet almost believed her.

Still, the way this girl seemed to know so much about her —and the enemies she actively tried to avoid—sent a cold shiver down Violet's spine.

Her instincts screamed trap

, but something about the girl's poise and confidence made Violet hesitate. Against her better judgment, she found herself wanting to believe her.

"Fine," Violet finally said after a long pause, weighing her options. "I'll come to your tea party, but only on one condition. I leave whenever I want." Besides, Violet told herself, it didn't really matter. She'd be gone from Lunaris by tonight, so this whole ordeal was a moot point.

"Perfect!" the girl exclaimed, clapping her hands together. Even that simple gesture was executed with an effortless grace that made Violet's stomach twist with envy.

With a bright, almost mischievous gleam in her eyes, she grabbed Violet's arm. "We're going to have so much fun, sister."

"Indeed, Sister." Violet echoed flatly, her tone devoid of the enthusiasm the girl clearly expected.

Unbothered, the girl turned to her makeup bag, retrieved it, and dropped it onto the counter in front of Violet. "Here, you can have it."

Violet stared at the bag in disbelief. "Wait, what? I don't need all this. Just give me a minute, and I'll borrow what I need and give it back."

But the girl raised a finger, pressing it gently against Violet's lips to silence her. "No arguments, think of it as a gesture of goodwill. Besides, I've got so many of these I wouldn't even notice it's gone."

Whether or not the girl meant to be arrogant, the statement rubbed Violet the wrong way. The last thing she wanted was to be some charity case for the elite students to fawn over. But before she could muster a response, the girl was already walking away.

"See you at my tea party, Violet Purple," she called over her shoulder, flashing a dazzling smile.

"Wait!" Violet shouted after her, a sudden thought striking her. "I don't even know your name!"

The girl paused at the doorway, her hand resting lightly on the frame. With a playful wink, she said, "Don't worry, I'm sure you'll find out right after now." And with that, she disappeared through the door, leaving Violet alone.

For a long moment, Violet stared after her, bewildered. What in the moon just happened?

She glanced down at the makeup bag, then back at her reflection in the mirror. Well, at least she had makeup now. As for the tea party... if the girl was confident Violet would find her, then the location wouldn't be a problem.

Violet carefully reached into the makeup bag and began sifting through its contents. The array of expensive products made her pause for a moment. This girl must own half a beauty store, she thought with a small shake of her head.

Her fingers found a foundation close to her skin tone, and she applied it carefully, blending it with precision. She followed it up with a subtle blush to bring life back to her cheeks.

As Violet worked, her reflection gradually transformed. A light sweep of golden eyeshadow made her striking eyes pop, and eyeliner added an edge to her gaze that seemed to challenge anyone who dared look her way. Mascara coated her lashes, giving them a thick, dramatic effect. She finished with a soft peach lipstick that made her lips look full and warm, pulling the whole look together.

By the time she was done, Violet leaned back to take in her reflection. The face staring back at her was dazzling. Her golden eyes gleamed like molten amber, brighter and bolder than they had any right to be. The faint signs of her earlier tears were completely erased, leaving her looking composed, radiant, and untouchable.

"Wow," Violet muttered under her breath, tilting her head as she examined her handiwork. For once, she felt a surge of pride at her appearance. She was beautiful.

Her eyes flicked back to the makeup bag sitting on the counter, brimming with luxurious products. Her jaw tightened slightly. What was she supposed to do with all of this?

The bag wasn't hers, it hadn't been part of the deal. The girl had only promised her makeup for a touch-up, not to hand over an entire kit.

For a brief, wild moment, Violet considered dumping it into the waste bin beside her. But then she paused, her practical side kicking in. The bag and its contents were undeniably expensive, throwing it away would be like committing a crime. A grave one. Violet couldn't bring herself to do it.

Fine, she'd return it to her at the tea party. Violet made up her mind. It was the most logical solution.

Violet didn't want to owe anyone, especially an elite. She had spent her whole life avoiding obligations to people who could later use them against her. This way, she could keep her end of the unspoken bargain intact.

Clutching the bag, Violet squared her shoulders and glanced at herself one last time in the mirror. She had armor now, not the physical armor, but the kind that made her feel capable of holding her own in a school full of wolves, both figurative and literal.

With a decisive nod, she picked up her belongings, threw the makeup bag over her shoulder, and strode out of the restroom.

Chapter 49: Walls Of Invisible Cage

Etiquette and Social Dynamics was a class Violet had genuinely been curious about, mostly because she had no clue what it entailed. The title sounded fancy, like something out of a blue-blooded socialite's handbook.

If she'd had more time—or less chaos dominating her life—she might have taken a moment to look over the curriculum. But considering she'd started school the day after her arrival and had been drowning in drama since, researching class details hadn't exactly made it onto her priority list.

Violet must have a knack for being late because by the time she pushed open the door and stepped inside, the lesson on manners and social behavior was already in full swing. Violet barely made it two steps into the classroom before she froze, her breath hitching.

Her sudden halt had nothing to do with the teacher, who paused mid-sentence and turned to regard her with a raised brow. No, Violet's paralysis came from the unexpected sight of him.

Asher Nightshade.

And not just him, all the cardinal alphas were here.

Her stomach plummeted as her eyes darted to the corner of the room, where the four most infamous and powerful students at Lunaris Academy were seated. They exuded an effortless dominance that made the rest of the classroom fade into the background.

Relaxed yet undeniably commanding, their presence alone shifted the energy in the room. Together, all four of them were a wall of charisma, power, and danger, a combination that put everyone on edge, whether they realized it or not.

Her pulse quickened as she realized all four pairs of colored eyes—amber, emerald, electric blue, and smoky gray—had turned their full attention on her. It was like a predator locking onto its prey, and she was standing in the open, vulnerable and unarmed.

Why the hell were they all here? Violet thought, her pulse quickening.

It didn't take a genius to figure out that the cardinal alphas rarely occupied the same space unless there was some purpose behind it. They sitting together like some elite council of chaos, was anything but comforting.

They weren't the best of friends by any stretch, only tolerating each other when it suited their individual agendas. If they were gathered like this, it could only mean trouble. And judging by the way all four of them were focused on her, she had the sinking feeling that trouble might involve her.

"Miss Violet, I assume?" the teacher's voice broke through her thoughts, snapping Violet back to the present like a slap of icy water.

Violet's head shot up, her golden eyes meeting the teacher's eager gaze.

"Yes, ma?" she responded, unsure and already feeling the knots in her stomach tighten.

"Good," the woman said, sounding definitive, if not almost gleeful. "We have been waiting for you for so long, and I'm so glad you're finally here."

"We?" Violet asked, her voice faltering as she swallowed hard. "I don't understand."

The teacher, Mrs. Clarkson, placed her sleek tablet onto her desk with an air of finality, her polished heels clicking against the floor as she approached. "You have not been scented, Violet, and that is a requirement for this class, in case you haven't noticed."

The breath hitched in Violet's chest, her pulse quickening. She struggled to keep her expression neutral, but her nervousness betrayed her unease as she stuttered, "S—scented? I um... don't understand what you mean by that."

"It's nothing to be afraid of, Violet Purple," Mrs. Clarkson said with an almost maternal smile that did nothing to settle Violet's nerves. "It's something every human in here has gone through, and no one was harmed. Trust me, it's for your own safety and good."

At her words, a ripple of anticipation coursed through the room. The atmosphere shifted with thick tension. Students exchanged knowing glances, some barely stifling their laughter while others wore grins that sent a chill down Violet's spine.

Her anxiety climbed higher as her golden eyes darted around the room. What did they mean by "scented"? She knew werewolves had lots of unique customs but she had no idea what being "scented" entailed.

When her gaze landed on Lila, her so-called friend, Violet saw her quickly avert her eyes, guilt written all over her face. Of course. Conveniently forgetting to mention this little tidbit, huh, Lila?

Violet had a lot of thought going through her head as she searched for an escape plan, but Mrs. Clarkson's next words sealed her fate.

"Since the situation calls for it, let's take this outside, shall we?" the teacher announced.

Before Violet could even protest, the students burst into motion, eager and electric with excitement. The sound of chairs scraping against the floor and eager whispers filled the room, drowning out Violet's growing panic. Her heart began to pound wildly, each beat echoing in her ears like a drum.

"Come along now, little one," Mrs. Clarkson said, her grip firm as she grabbed Violet's arm and began to steer her toward the door, ignoring any attempt at resistance.

Violet stumbled after her, half-dragged, half-walking, as they exited the classroom and spilled into the sprawling lawn. The open space was vast, lush, and deceptively peaceful. But the energy crackling in the air made it feel like she was stepping onto a battlefield.

The students quickly formed a loose circle around her, their faces alight with anticipation. Violet's gaze darted from one face to another, her unease growing with every knowing smirk and glint of mischief she caught. She was surrounded, encased in a wall of predatory excitement that made her stomach churn. What exactly did they plan to do to her?

Mrs. Clarkson's voice rang out cheerfully, breaking the tense silence. "All right, everyone, let's proceed. I'll be handing over to the wolves, you all know what to do, right?"

Wait, what?!

Oh God, not again.

Violet's heart nearly gave out at that moment. And just as she had feared, all four of the Cardinal Alphas had stepped forward. Not just them, the other wolves seem to follow after them.

"Are you ready, my purple queen?"

Chapter 50: Dick Debate

"What's happening?" Violet's voice cracked with fear. She cast a desperate glance around the circle of werewolves surrounding her, but no one answered. Not even Asher.

Instead, they began to strip.

"What the hell..." she whispered, watching every single one of them

remove their clothing.

It didn't stop at shirts. To Violet's mounting horror, they undressed completely. In no time, every werewolf stood before her, stark naked.

Violet froze, her muscles locking in place as she was overwhelmed by panic and disbelief. She could have turned away, but where? She was surrounded, hemmed in on every side by naked werewolves.

Her feet felt glued to the ground, her tongue heavy in her mouth. Her wide, golden eyes bulging as they involuntarily took in the sight of so much exposed flesh.

And there, standing directly in front of her, was Asher.

Her gaze locked on him, trailing over his broad shoulders and down his muscular frame. She wanted to scream, to demand an explanation for what was happening, but her focus wavered as she noticed something that made her pause.

Scars.

Asher's body was riddled with them. Jagged, cruel scars marred his otherwise flawless skin. Some of the scars were faint and old, while others looked more recent, as though they'd refused to fade.

Violet's heart clenched in her chest. She didn't understand why, but staring at those scars felt like someone had physically squeezed her soul. Werewolves were known for their rapid healing abilities, their bodies rarely leaving any trace of injury behind. And yet these scars remained. There was only one weapon capable of leaving such marks

Silver.

From the look, it was obvious that someone had tortured Asher, over and over, with silver. Who could have done such a thing to him? And why? Violet didn't know why it mattered so much to her, but an unexpected great anger surged through her. Whoever had done this to him, they deserved to pay.

"Like what you see, princess?" Asher's teasing voice broke through her reverie, shattering the moment like glass.

Violet's head snapped up, anger flashing in her golden eyes. How could he smile at a time like this? After everything someone had put him through? And yet, his teasing words unintentionally drew her gaze downward again.

Her breath hitched for an entirely different reason.

A very prominent, very large erection jutted out boldly in front of him.

Asher made no attempt to hide it. His unashamed desire was written all over his smug expression.

Her cheeks burned as rage mingled with embarrassment. He was shameless, absolutely shameless.

Determined to look anywhere but at him, Violet turned her head, only for her gaze to land on Griffin.

Grinding her teeth, Violet tried to look away, only for her gaze to unfortunately land on Griffin next.

The Cardinal Alpha was a walking tower of muscle. Built like a mammoth, his body rippling with stocky muscles that spoke of brute strength. And unfortunately, her eyes betrayed her yet again, landing on his... thing.

It was enormous. If there was ever a weapon to fear, it was that. He could slice a lady in two with that.

Such an unlucky lady.

Violet inhaled deeply, steeling herself. They wanted to intimidate her, to make her squirm. But she wasn't going to give them the satisfaction.

Had they forgotten who she was?

She was the daughter of a whore. She'd seen it all. Growing up in Nancy's trailer, Violet had walked in on more than her fair share of inappropriate moments. Men flashing their parts wasn't shocking to her. It was almost routine.

If they wanted to give her a strip show, then fine. She'd watch. Who knows, she might even enjoy it.

And so it began....

Lifting her chin high with an arrogant defiance, Violet's gaze moved to Roman next.

Unlike Asher and Griffin, Roman was leaner, his body built more for speed and agility. Yet he was no less imposing, his frame exuding power in its own way.

Roman, ever the showoff, struck a pose that made it seem like he was on a runway rather than standing naked in a circle of wolves. Unlike the others, he seemed to be having the most fun out of this.

He caught her eye and winked, clearly enjoying her reaction. Violet rolled her eyes in response, muttering a curse under her breath before moving on to Alaric.

Alaric shared a similar lithe build to Roman, but his complexion was paler. Just like the others, he was eer.... perfect. If you know what she meant. Voliet could finally understand where all of the Cardinal Alphas confidence came from.

But then, Alaric's electric blue eyes bore into her with unsettling intensity, as if he were trying to peer into her very soul. The weight of his stare made her stomach churn, and she looked away quickly, refusing to meet his piercing gaze any longer.

But then, everywhere Vi turned, she was met with bared flesh, confident stares, and an air of dominance so thick it threatened to choke her. But Violet squared her shoulders and forced herself to stand tall.

If they thought they could rattle her, they were in for a rude awakening.

"Is this it?" Violet said with a loud voice. "Are you done filling my gaze with your little dicks?!"

The words left Violet's mouth before she could stop them, and for a heartbeat, the world seemed to pause. Her boldness had caught everyone off guard, especially the Alphas. Their expressions ranged from stunned silence to annoyance. While some of them, like Roman, found it humorous.

But then, unexpectedly, laughter broke out, not from the Alphas, but from one the humans standing behind them.

"Guys," said the elite student who laughed, a blonde with a smirk plastered across her face. Her voice carried the haughty tone of someone who lived for moments like this. "She called them little dicks! It seems Violet has been surrounded by puny dicks her whole life, and now she can't recognize the real deal!"

The result was instantaneous.

The mocking laughter reverberated through the lawn, growing louder with the passing second. Violet felt the heat rising to her face, her cheeks flushing a deep crimson.

This wasn't how she had imagined things playing out.

She had aimed to insult the Alphas, to cut them down to size— pun intended—but instead, she had somehow dragged herself into a public debate about the size of male anatomy. And not just any debate, but one about werewolf anatomy.

Great.

Why in the moon's name would she be arguing about dicks in the first place?

