

Defy 51

Chapter 51: Scenting Ceremony

A brown-haired werewolf stepped forward, arrogance in every line of his posture. He gave a crude thrust of his hips and sneered, "Perhaps someone should give her a taste of the real deal! Maybe then, she'd know the difference."

The moment he made a move toward Violet, she retreated, realizing the the situation was escalating dangerously.

However, Violet shouldn't have bothered, because a low, dangerous growl from, shockingly, both Asher and Griffin.

The brown-haired werewolf's smug expression drained of color, his cockiness dissolving in an instant. He froze, then stepped back sheepishly, visibly trembling with fear.

However, everyone was now staring not just at Asher, but mostly at Griffin in surprise. After all, Asher was known to be defensive of the purple-haired girl, not Griffin.

Even Griffin seemed taken aback by his own instinctive response. His brows furrowed slightly, as though questioning himself. But his hesitation was brief, and his expression shifted into something cool and composed.

"Let's get this over with." He said.

And then, right before Violet's eyes, Griffin began to shift, bones cracking and muscles ripping as he started transforming into his wolf form.

However, Griffin's transformation seemed to be the cue, as every single werewolf in the arena began to shift, the sound of several bones cracking and grunts almost grotesque. Violet nearly became light-headed seeing so many shifts happening at once, especially since this was her first face-to-face encounter.

As expected, Griffin was the first wolf to finish shifting, and Violet forgot how to breathe as she saw the huge, red-coated, ferocious-looking wolf. Its eyes were warm amber, and from the intelligence in them, Violet could tell this was both monster and beast.

But a second beast caught her attention. It was huge, but not like Griffin's gigantic beast; however, it was that midnight black coat that truly drew her focus. It seemed that even in wolf form, Asher's eyes remained the same, and it was honestly unsettling seeing a wolf with vertically slitted eyes. It still left her in awe, nonetheless.

As if not wanting only the black wolf to hold her attention, a green-coated wolf barreled into Asher, shoving him aside. Without a doubt, Violet knew that was Roman Draven. How a green-colored wolf was possible, Violet had no idea, nor was she complaining. He was like a breath of fresh air, unique and fun.

And then the most beautiful snow-white wolf Violet had ever seen stepped into view.

Alaric Storm.

His coat gleamed under the sunlight like freshly fallen snow. He

was a vision of elegance and ferocity combined.

Whether in human or wolf form, Alaric had a knack for stealing her breath away. But at the same time, human or animal, those blue eyes seemed to want to murder her.

And he had a go at it.

Before Violet could fully comprehend his intention, Alaric Storm tackled her to the ground. The impact knocked the air from her lungs as she hit the grass, leaving her gasping.

Her vision blurred momentarily, and in that instant, Violet swore she saw her life flash before her eyes. She was face-to-face with the beast's razor-sharp teeth, their proximity too close for comfort. Her instincts screamed at her to move, but fear paralyzed her. Instead, she shut her eyes tightly, bracing herself for the inevitable pain of her demise.

But instead of the searing pain she anticipated, she felt something cold, wet, and sticky dragging across her face. Her eyes flew open in shock, only to be met with the sight of Alaric's massive tongue eagerly licking her face, leaving a slick trail of saliva in its wake.

"What the—?" Violet tried to process what was happening, but before she could get a word out, the situation took a worse turn.

The wolves, circling her like a pack of predators, began closing in, tongues out and eyes gleaming with mischief. Violet's heart dropped as realization struck her like a bolt of lightning.

This is it. Her stomach churned as the first wolf's rough tongue joined Alaric's, swiping across her cheek.

The warm, abrasive sensation made her recoil, but there was no escape. One by one, the wolves joined in, their wet noses pressing into her skin as their tongues dragged over her face, her arms, and even her legs. Violet's world spun as their playful yet overwhelming assault consumed her senses.

Laughter erupted around her, a symphony of amusement from the human onlookers who found her predicament far too entertaining.

Panic welled up inside her, and Violet tried to push the wolves away, but her hands faltered at the sight of their sharp teeth flashing in the sunlight. The thought of accidentally provoking them kept her frozen in place, her breathing shallow and erratic.

Their playful nips felt dangerously close to aggression, and Violet's heart raced as adrenaline surged through her veins. Despite their antics, they never actually hurt her. If anything, the sensations were more disorienting than painful. But the combination of their rough tongues, wet noses, and the oppressive heat of their proximity left her on the verge of losing it.

"Get off me!" she finally managed to croak, her voice strained with fear and frustration. But her plea was drowned out by the cacophony of laughter from her classmates and the howls of the wolves, who were clearly reveling in her discomfort.

The licking continued, relentless and humiliating, their playful bites sending a jolt of unease through her every time. Violet felt like a trapped rabbit, utterly vulnerable and at their mercy.

For what felt like an eternity, Violet endured the humiliating experience. Every nerve in her body screamed for reprieve, and finally, as if someone had given a signal, the wolves all dispersed.

Violet lay there on the grass, her heart pounding erratically, her clothes damp and disheveled, trying to process what had just happened. Her breathing was shallow, and her limbs felt as if they had turned to lead. Violet could hardly comprehend the humiliation she had just endured.

But just as she began to think it was finally over, her momentary relief was shattered. A mischievous green wolf sauntered over to her with an almost leisurely gait, its green eyes gleaming with mischief.

"No..." Violet whispered, dread pooling in her stomach as she watched him approach. She didn't even have the energy to move or even protest. She was utterly spent.

And then, to her horror, Roman lifted his leg. Before she could react, a warm stream of liquid hit her, soaking through her clothes. It took her a moment to register what was happening, but when she did, her body stiffened with shock.

The laughter around her hit a deafening pitch as the other students realized what Roman had done. Violet's breath caught in her throat, her humiliation now reaching an unbearable level. The damp warmth seeped through her clothes, sticking to her skin, branding her with his scent.

Her mind went blank, her body unmoving. She couldn't summon the strength to fight, to scream, or even cry. The sheer weight of the experience rendered her catatonic, leaving her lying there, unable to muster even the faintest response.

As the laughter subsided, Roman shifted seamlessly back into his human form. He crouched down so that his face was level with hers.

"And that is how we give the best scenting treatment!" Roman said with a wide, toothy grin, "Welcome to Lunaris Academy, little purple head!"

Chapter 52: High Staker

Violet stood under the shower, letting the water stream over her head as she chanted four names over and over, as though reciting some dark mantra:

"Asher Nightshade."

"Roman Draven."

"Griffin Hale."

"Alaric Storm."

It had been over an hour since she stepped into the showers, and though the stench of wolf urine was gone, her skin still crawled with the memory of it.

Wolf urine.

That was what they had branded her with, Roman Draven, in particular. Yet the others, Asher, Griffin, and Alaric, had stood by. Maybe they hadn't explicitly agreed to it, but their silent approval had been damning enough.

Violet's blood ran cold as her mind drifted back to the scene. She could still picture the mocking grins on her classmates' faces, especially the elites. They had whipped out their phones to record her humiliation, broadcasting it for everyone at Lunaris Academy to see. Now she was undoubtedly the most talked-about person in the school forum, all over again.

What enraged her most wasn't just her classmates, though, it was the teacher who should have protected her. Instead, after the ordeal, the teacher had only offered Violet a hand to help her up. When Violet ignored it, all Mrs. Clarkson had said was:

"Congratulations, you're now a full member of Lunaris, and it took real courage to endure that. You can go wash up and take the rest of the class off. I'm sure you need it."

There had been a flicker of pity in her eyes, but not a shred of remorse, as if what had happened was just another ordinary day at the academy.

Her classmates' taunting laughter echoed in her ears once more, threatening to overwhelm her. Violet suddenly shut off the shower, the abrupt silence deafening. She shivered, goosebumps rising on her skin, and not just from the memory of the scenting prank. The water had turned cold.

Violet had used up all the hot water, the icy cascade pouring over her without her noticing for a while now. A small, bitter smile tugged at her lips. At least someone would be annoyed when they discovered there was no hot water left. A petty victory, but a victory nonetheless.

Violet stepped out of the shower, wrapping a towel around herself as she moved toward the mirror. She rubbed her hair with another towel, watching her reflection take shape.

Her hair, plastered to her scalp, made her look beaten down and exhausted. Yet as she gazed into her mirror, something fierce stared back at her from those golden eyes. They still burned brightly, refusing to admit defeat. She might be tired, humiliated, and furious, but she was not, by any means, broken.

With her head still buzzing with the events of the day, Violet stepped out of the bathroom. She froze in her tracks when three pairs of eyes immediately turned to her, conversations dying mid-sentence.

Damn it.

She had forgotten they were in the room. And judging by the way they fell silent, they had definitely been talking about her.

Swallowing her irritation, Violet quickly recovered, walking straight to her side of the bed. Without a care for their stares, she unwrapped her towel, standing naked for a brief second before slipping into her tank top and drawstring shorts swiftly without caring for their stares.

Violet then busied herself by making her bed. She was already preparing to lie down on it, when Lila approached her sheepishly. Although Violet caught her coming from the corner of her eye, she pretended not to notice.

"V—Violet?" Lila called out tentatively, but Violet ignored her.

Once she finished, Violet lay down, draping an arm over her face, burying herself in the crook of her elbow. Even though she couldn't see Lila, Violet could still feel her presence. The girl was refusing to leave.

Fine, she could stand there then.

Except a few minutes later, Violet lifted her head and growled, "What the fuck do you want from me?!"

But to her shock, Lila presented a tray in front of her. "Hungry?"

Violet was stunned; she hadn't seen that coming. She had expected Lila to come groveling and begging for forgiveness—something Violet could ignore to make her suffer a bit, which was just her nature, holding grudges and being vengeful.

But then the scent of food drifted into her nose, and it dawned on Violet that she had not eaten supper, having been holed up in this room licking her wounds.

"Don't think this changes anything," she told Lila and took the tray from her, not missing the small smile on the girl's face.

Violet dug into her food like a savage, tearing the fried chicken apart without grace. She hadn't had an appetite earlier in the afternoon and now, having missed dinner, she was starving. Not to mention, she needed her strength to escape Lunaris later today.

"How are you doing?" Ivy's voice broke through her focus, startling her.

Violet paused, glancing up at the blonde girl. There was no sarcasm or hostility in Ivy's blue eyes, just... warmth. That was quite unexpected.

"What do you think? How would you feel in my shoes?" Violet snapped, her mouth full of food.

"I'm sorry," Lila blurted out suddenly. "I should have told you. I thought it would be fun and didn't want to ruin the surprise."

"Oh, I guess a hundred guys flashing their dicks in my face is what you call a 'surprise,' aye?" Violet sneered, her sarcastic tone returning.

Lila opened her mouth to respond, but someone else beat her to it.

"Werewolves have no issue with nudity. It's just how they are. If there's any problem, it's us humans who feel awkward about it," Daisy Fairchild, the quiet nerd, spoke up from her corner.

There was no challenge or insult in that response, as if the girl had merely stated a fact. But Violet wasn't in the mood for cold logic, not when she felt like the target of a cruel joke.

"And the urine part?" Violet shot back, her voice sharp. "Are werewolves so uncivilized that they don't recognize chamber pots?"

The insult landed like a spark in a dry forest. Ivy glared at her, clearly disapproving of the jab. Guess someone was still an ass-kisser after all.

But Violet didn't care. She was a victim here. She wouldn't let this be dismissed as some trivial cultural quirk.

And to think, she'd thought Ivy would have learned from her own experience with those assholes.

"It's a marker," Daisy replied.

"What?"

"Werewolves aren't far removed from their primal beasts, and wolves are known to mark their territory with their scent. In your case, urine."

"So in one word, they marked you all like this?" Violet asked, suddenly feeling stupid if that was the case.

"Oh no, you're the only one marked with urine."

"What?"

Lila spoke this time, "For us, they only licked and smelled our hands. It was ticklish. That's why I couldn't tell you. I knew you would hate it and try to escape the experience. I couldn't let that happen."

Violet was frowning now. "So why did he do that? Why did he piss on me?"

Daisy shrugged, lying back on her bed as she said, "Who knows? Perhaps he's staking his claim on you?"

Chapter 53: Watchers Of The Night

The clock read 11:47 PM when Violet rose upright from her bed in a manner so unsettling, it could have been mistaken for a ghost rising from its grave. Her room was quiet aside from the soft breathing of her roommates. Thank God, they were asleep already.

Violet had been close to drifting off herself, after all, it had been a stressful day. But her resolution to escape Lunaris Academy today was stronger than any temptation sleep could offer, no matter how inviting it was.

The West House was eerily quiet at this hour, which meant she had to be extremely careful as every tiny sound would be amplified. Tiptoeing like a thief at night, Violet carefully climbed down from her bed, crouching to retrieve the satchel she had tucked away under it earlier.

After the scenting incident, Violet had been so furious and embarrassed, she knew there was no way in hell she was staying at this academy. She had taken the time to prepare carefully. By the time her

roommates returned, her plans were already in motion, and now she only waited for the perfect moment, which had finally arrived.

Opening the zipper carefully, Violet pulled out the clothes she had set aside. She quickly dressed in her all-black outfit, the purpose being to remain unseen tonight. She tightened the straps of her boots, adjusted her dark jacket, and tucked her hair into the hood.

It was time.

Violet slid her backpack over her shoulders. She had taken all the remaining money Nancy gave her, some clothes, a water bottle, and snacks. To be honest, Violet had no concrete plan yet, but she would figure it out once she got past the academy walls.

Leaving through the front entrance of the dormitory was out of the question. The house prefect always patrolled the foyer. Although Mary said he would turn a blind eye to where students went, Violet knew better. He was under Asher's jurisdiction, and she had no doubt he would report her. She'd be caught before even reaching the doorknob. After all, what plausible reason could she have for being outside at this time of night?

However, Violet was smart and had obtained information on the house prefect's patrol pattern. Every half-hour, like clockwork, he passed through the main hallways and checked the side doors. That gave her about ten minutes between his rounds to escape, and she had to make every second count.

As quietly as possible, Violet slipped out of her room. The faint creak of the door hinge made her heart leap into her throat. She froze, glancing back at her sleeping roommates. Their breathing remained steady. Letting out a breath she hadn't realized she was holding, Violet stepped into the hallway, her movements as light as a whisper against the polished wooden floors.

Violet's destination was a small window near the storage room at the back of the house. She'd tested it earlier and found it unlatched. It led to a narrow strip of grass, hidden by the thick foliage of the academy's trees, making it the perfect spot to slip out unseen.

From there she would head directly into the 'silver glade,' the academy's infamous, eerie woods. Violet couldn't leave through the school's main gate; the guards at their booth would surely stop her.

No matter how strong Lunaris Academy's walls were, Violet was certain she would find a weak spot and escape. Truthfully, she was scared, but if she wanted to get away from Asher, this was the risk she had to take.

Violet wasn't even sure she was still breathing as she walked through the corridors alone. As she neared the storage room, she paused, pressing herself against the wall.

Soft, shuffling footsteps echoed faintly in the hallway behind her. The prefect. Her heart pounded as she crouched low, peeking around the corner. He strolled past, oblivious to her presence, humming a soft tune to himself.

Violet waited, muscles taut, until his footsteps faded into the distance. Only then did she run into the storage room, with quick but careful movements. The room smelled of dust and neglect, cluttered with old furniture and forgotten items. She didn't spare a glance at the mess. Her focus was solely on the small window ahead.

She pushed the window open gently, the cool night air brushing against her face, carrying the earthy scent of the gardens and the sweet promise of freedom.

Violet swung one leg over the ledge, careful not to make a sound. Her boot landed softly on the grass below, quickly followed by the other. She crouched low, then eased the window shut behind her.

The academy grounds were shrouded in darkness, with only strategically placed streetlights illuminating the paths.

However, the reality of her situation hit Violet with full force. She was standing alone, outside, at the witching hour. The world around her was vast and silent, and every nerve in her body was tight with fear and tension. Only the gods know what Asher would do to her if he learns of this. But then, this was a risk she was willing to take.

This was it.

It was now or never.

Violet began to walk, choosing to stay beneath the towering trees lining the West House. Their dense canopy offered some protection, at least from prying eyes. The cool air bit at her cheeks, but Violet barely noticed. Her feet were moving quickly, and her ears strained for the slightest sound of pursuit.

Perhaps her luck was holding out, since she didn't encounter any guards or their friendly neighbors, the wolves. As a result, she managed to make it to the woods. For once, Violet was thankful for her map, which guided her path through the darkness, showing her the route.

Although every crunch of leaves or snap of a twig made her freeze, so far things seemed to be going smoothly.

Or so she told herself.

Violet wasn't sure when it started, but a persistent sensation of being watched crept over her. She tried to chalk it up to her nerves, yet the feeling clung to her, refusing to fade.

Chapter 54: True Instincts

She should have known that fate had never been good to her and would not start now. It took Violet approximately fifteen minutes later to realize she was fucking lost. She was a fool to have trusted the map. Whether it was the network that wasn't good or the coordinates were totally wrong, it didn't erase the fact she had no idea where she was.

As if that wasn't enough, the intense feeling that someone or rather something was watching her had not subsided one bit. So when she heard a sudden howl in the distance, she froze up.

By chance, had they discovered her disappearance? No, that was not possible. No one had seen her leave. Not even her own roommates would discover she was gone until morning.

But Violet was not ignorant to think aside from the security men at the entrance, there weren't werewolves patrolling the territory. This was a huge school after all, and the walls stopping her from escaping seemed to stretch on forever—if only she had gotten to them.

So Violet calmed her breathing in case someone was there, knowing Werewolf hearing was sharp, and even the smallest sound could give her away. She remained crouched in one of the darkest corners, sheltered beneath an ancient oak tree and surrounded by thick bushes.

Unlike the dormitory ground, there was no light in the silver glade, and Violet was both happy and unhappy for it. This way, she couldn't be spotted easily, but at the same time, she couldn't see well, not without her phone's torch on. Neither was there a moon in the sky to illuminate the path. And it just unsettled Violet the more, knowing wolves had better eyesight. So yes, she was in deep shit.

As much as time was running out for Violet, this was not the time to be hasty. Violet wasn't even sure that she was breathing anymore as she waited and waited.

Not long after, a wolf emerged from the shadows and her heart nearly stopped dead.

Violet couldn't see much since it was dark, but the low, guttural growl and the pair of glowing gold eyes were unmistakable, freezing her on the spot. The sound from its throat was deep and menacing, such that it seemed to rumble through the very ground beneath her.

It began to sniff around, and the hairs on her arms stood on end as a chill coursed down her spine. Violet knew at that moment that it was tracking her by scent. So this was what all the scenting was about. They could uniquely identify her, and the fact she was trying to escape the academy ground.

As quietly as she could, holding her breath, Violet reached for a nearby rock and hurled it in the opposite direction. The wolf's head snapped toward the noise, and it bolted off, chasing after the distraction.

Violet seized the moment and ran out, her legs burning as she pushed herself faster and faster, knowing the wolf must have heard her by now.

However, as if it couldn't get any worse, from her left, another snarl erupted, closer this time, sharper and angrier.

Oh God, no.

Her stomach dropped as she realized what she was hearing. It was not just a wolf, but wolves.

The gods help her!

From the way they growled, Violet could tell they weren't just tracking her. They were hunting her. They were the predators while she was the unfortunate prey.

Violet had no idea what they would do to her, but something told her she didn't want to find out. She had underestimated the academy's defenses, and now she was paying for it.

The wolves' growls grew louder, closer, their heavy footsteps crunching through the underbrush as they gave her a hot chase. If anyone had told Violet she would be running through the woods this early morning, she would not have believed it.

The branches tore at Violet's jacket, leaves and dirt scattering as she pushed herself faster than she thought possible. She didn't dare look back, not when she could feel them closing in, hot on her heels.

Perhaps it was a cosmic joke from the gods, because Violet managed to see the West House from a distance. She followed it out of the woods, the light from her way illuminating her path enough to spot from the corner of her eyes she was being chased down by about four wolves.

Violet ran more strategically this time, deliberately heading toward obstacles only to swerve at the last second, forcing the wolves to adjust course and buying her an extra breath of escape.

Although a niggling feeling told her if the wolves truly wanted to capture her, they would have done it already. Violet had seen uncountable times they had the opening to do so, but they only seemed content with giving chase.

In truth, they had only chased her back in the direction of the West House. But the fear of those wide jaws with frightening teeth left Violet no room to pause or question their motives. Instead, fear propelled her onward, driven by instinct rather than reason.

The West House came right into view, and Violet barreled toward it, her lungs burning and her legs screaming in protest. Somehow, she reached the safety of the house, slamming the door shut behind her and collapsing against it.

Her chest heaved as she struggled to catch her breath, her heart hammering against her ribcage. At that moment, Violet didn't care if the house prefect caught her. The fact she was back here was a sheer reminder of her woeful failure to escape.

Violet sat there, trembling, listening for any sign of the wolves outside. But there was nothing. No wolf barreled into the door aggressively, wanting to storm in. There was nothing at all. Just silence. An odd one.

Perhaps it was some unspoken boundary or a fear of the Alpha within; she didn't know. All Violet knew was that she was safe. Not that it comforted her in the least. By tomorrow, Asher would know what she had done, and that alone scared her as shit.

With that fear still lodged deep in her bones, Violet rushed back into her room. As soon as she shut the door, she stepped away from it, watching it as if expecting wolves to barge in at any moment. When nothing happened, Violet released a sigh. That was a close one.

Dragging her weary body toward her bed, Violet stopped suddenly.

The room had changed. She couldn't exactly explain or point to, but the air felt different, and carried a strange charge.

At once, Violet's skin pickled, her instincts screaming at her that she wasn't alone.

Chapter 55: Punish The Queen

Violet's gaze danced around the room, her heart pounding as it had done minutes ago during the chase from the wolves. Perhaps it was her imagination but the darkness in the room was seemed almost alive.

Nonetheless, her muscles still locked up in fear. Her roommates were still motionless in their beds, undisturbed. Yet her gut told her someone was here with her.

Swallowing hard, Violet took another cautious step, her eyes never leaving the darkest corner of the room.

"Who's there?" she whispered, trying to be brave.

But there was no response. Just the suffocating silence and her racing heart.

Violet had no choice but to reach for the lamp on her bedside table, her fingers fumbling for the switch. The light flickered to life, casting a soft glow across the room.

And there he was. The Alpha of chaos.

Asher Nightshade.

He sat casually in her own desk chair, his long legs stretched out in front of him and his arms crossed lazily over his chest. Those piercing gray, slitted eyes glinted in the light of her bedside lamp, holding her frozen in place. There was a casual ease to his posture, but the intensity in his gaze made her blood run cold.

Fuck her life.

"Welcome back, little purple queen," he drawled, his tone low and mocking. "How was the run? I bet you had a good time out there." A smirk tugged at the corners of his lips, and Violet's stomach churned.

She froze, her heart plummeting into her stomach. She had no idea how long he'd been sitting there, waiting. Watching her.

Asher must have had his eyes the whole time she came into the room because there was no way she would have missed those eyes that glowed in the dark. He must have done it intentionally so she could get into the room and not escape earlier.

Asher's eyes roved over her, and Violet felt exposed under his scrutiny, her damp hair clinging to her face and her clothes still slightly disheveled from her failed escape.

"And those clothes," he continued, "Not exactly running gear, are they? Especially that bag. If I didn't know better, I'd say someone was trying to escape."

Violet's blood ran cold. He knew. He fucking knew and was toying with her.

Well, fuck this!

Violet spun on her heel. Or atleast, attempted to. Because it seems Asher must have seen the decision in her eyes and he commanded right at that moment. "Don't run."

Violet gasped as the words hit her like a wall, and her muscles seized, her legs refusing to move no matter how desperately she wanted to flee.

Panic filled Violet when she realized her plan had been foiled by Asher. But not all of it. Surely, he couldn't hurt her in the presence of her roommates.

So with the glow of the light guiding her, Violet rushed to Lila's bed, shaking her friend by the shoulders.

"Lila, wake up!" she hissed, but Lila didn't stir. Her breathing was even, her face peaceful as if nothing could rouse her.

There was a niggling suspicion in her mind yet Violet didn't dare to acknowledge her. No, that would only mean he out bested her. Perhaps, Lila was a heavy sleeper after all.

So with anxiety gnawing in the pit of her belly, She moved to Ivy's bed next, shaking her vigorously. "Ivy, come on, wake up!" But Ivy remained motionless, her chest rising and falling in a steady rhythm.

Yet Violet wouldn't give up. No, she couldn't give up. That would mean admitting defeat to Asher and she couldn't do that. He didn't control her fate, she did.

Finally, Violet made her way to Daisy's bed with desperation now, praying against all odds that her case was different.

"Daisy! Please, wake up!" She shook her with all her might, but Daisy, too, remained unresponsive, as if locked in some unbreakable sleep.

Violet had no doubt if she put a knife to her throat, the girl wouldn't even feel the pain as she died in her sleep.

Violet strode toward Asher, her hand flying before she could think, and slapped him hard across the face.

"What the hell did you do to them?!" she shouted, her voice shaking with rage. "Don't tell me you hurt them, you psycho!"

Asher's head turned slightly with the force of her slap, and for a moment, he froze, touching his cheek as if stunned by her audacity. Then he slowly turned back to her, his expression unreadable.

Violet knew she was dead meat for slapping him. But she didn't care. No one hurt Lila and went scot free. His tyranny couldn't go unanswered.

"You think I hurt them?" he asked, his voice almost... hurt?

Violet was taken aback by his pained expression. She had not been thinking, she only acted based on what she had seen.

Asher continued when she gave no answer, asking, "Why would I hurt them? They're your friends after all."

But just when she had begun to feel guilty for her action, a dark smile spread across his face, chilling her to the bone.

"Although," he added, "I did get into their heads and command them not to wake, no matter what they heard."

Her stomach sank.

Asher stood, his tall frame towering over her as he stepped closer, his presence overwhelming.

"Don't tell me you haven't figured it out yet," he whispered, carrying the weight of a threat.

"Figure out what?" Violet asked nervously, her heart racing.

His grin widened, his eyes gleaming with malicious glee. "How I got into your head that day," he said.

The blood drained from her face as she realized what he meant.

She thought of that day over and over again and nothing made sense. But right about now, she finally knew the answer.

"I was here that day," he said simply, gesturing around her room.

"Unlike your roommates, you have better instincts. You sensed me at once and your eyes opened. Then I get into your head."

He looked her straight in the eyes saying, "All those times we were talking, I was right beside your bed, watching you, my little purple."

Violet went so deadly still it almost felt like a tree was standing. She didn't react not even when Asher closed the space between them as he finished up his confession.

"When I was done, I made you forget just as I stole a lock of your hair." He grinned proudly, as he fished it out from his pocket. Her purple hair was all tied into a braid and he flaunted it almost as if it were his Goodluck charm before putting it back in his pocket.

"But don't worry, I don't need to get into your room to summon you like the first time. I'm already in your head, deeper than you can imagine." His words were so ominous that Violet knew right then and there that she was doomed.

She couldn't even move, too stunned to move, as he stepped closer, his voice dropping to a sinister whisper. "But enough of the past. Now, it's time to punish you for being such a naughty little queen, isn't it?"

Chapter 56: A Plea For Mercy

"Punish me?" Violet said nervously, despite her attempt at bravery.

"Of course, my purple queen," Asher replied smoothly, his tone like silk laced with steel.

He reached out and ran his hand through her hair, the gesture so tender it was almost cruel. The contrast between his soft touch and the darkness in his voice sent chills racing down her spine. "You tried to run away from me, Violet. What queen runs from her king?"

"A king who is a manipulative, psychopathic jerk! And I've told you already, I'm not your queen! Stop calling me that!" she hissed, her golden eyes flashing.

For a brief moment, something flickered in Asher's eyes, an emotion she couldn't exactly name. But then he yanked her hair suddenly and sharply, forcing her to gasp as pain flared at her scalp.

God's damn him!

Asher leaned in close, his breath warm against her ear, and whispered, "I told you, little purple, you're mine."

Violet's heart hammered in her chest, but she refused to back down.

"I'm not yours!" she spat. "I'm not some property to be owned. I'm a person with rights! And if I were to belong to anyone, you'd be the last person I'd choose, you asshole!"

Her words were brave, but Violet knew provoking him was dangerous. Still, she couldn't stop herself. Asher could go to hell for all she cared.

Instead of anger, Asher laughed. It was a low, wicked sound that made her skin crawl. He leaned in closer, his lips brushing her neck so lightly it made her shiver, though she fought to suppress it. No, this was not attraction; it was her body reacting to his nearness. That was all.

Asher smirked, clearly noticing her reaction. "Don't worry, little queen," he said with a teasing purr. "We'll see how long you hold onto those bold words after I'm done with you."

At once, Violet's defiance faltered, her expression replaced by a sudden fear. "What are you going to do to me?" she gulped.

His grin deepened, dark and full of unspoken promises. "Something you're not going to hate."

Violet swallowed wondering what on earth he meant by that.

Before she could question him further, Asher stepped back, sitting down leisurely at the foot of her bed as if he owned the place. His posture was relaxed, but his eyes burned with intensity.

"Take off your clothes," he commanded suddenly, his voice dripping with authority.

Violet's eyes widened in shock, and she opened her mouth to protest, but she felt the force of his power crash over her like a wave. Her body moved against her will, her fingers already reaching for the satchel on her back.

No! She didn't want this! But her hands wouldn't obey her.

The satchel fell to the floor, followed by her dark jacket. Panic and mortification surged through her veins as she reached for the waistband of her black pants. She had no control, her body compelled to obey his every word.

Her pants slipped off, leaving her standing there in just her white tank top and black panties. Violet's cheeks burned with humiliation, her hands shaking as they moved to the hem of her tank top. She wanted to stop, but she was powerless, and completely at Asher's mercy. And it infuriated her so much.

"Leave the rest on," Asher commanded, his voice halting her torment.

She was released from the influence of his control and Violet staggered back a step, clutching at her shirt as if it were armor. Relief flooded her, but it was short-lived. She could feel Asher's gaze raking over her, his gray-slitted eyes devouring her as if she were prey.

Her breaths came in short gasps, her entire body tense. She glared at Asher but the bastard's grin was wide, as if he enjoyed every second of her torment.

So Violet decided to change the rules of his game. She shut her eyes at once.

Asher's powers only worked when he was staring in the eyes of his victim. If Asher wanted to compel her, he would have to pry her eyes open by himself. Violet was betting on his supposed affection for her to prevent him from hurting her.

"What are you doing?" he asked in surprise.

Violet didn't flinch, didn't move. "What do you think I'm doing? You might as well render me blind to have these eyes open," she snapped. Her resolve was unyielding.

"And why would I do that, my purple queen?" Asher's voice was suddenly at her ear, so close that she could feel the warmth of his breath against her skin.

Violet gasped, startled. She hadn't even heard him move. How was he behind her already? But she reminded herself with a silent curse: He's a werewolf, idiot. Werewolves were quick, stealthy, predators by nature.

Still, no matter how tempting it was to peek and see what he was up to, she didn't dare open her eyes.

"You think I'm going to hurt my queen?" His tone was layered with disbelief, but it carried a dangerous edge that made Violet's stomach twist.

Before she could respond, she felt the faintest brush of his hand against her back. The contact sent a jolt through her, a thrill she didn't want to acknowledge. Her body betrayed her, almost arching into his touch before she caught herself.

Oh, gods. She was in deep trouble.

Violet had thought that her defiance would force Asher to back off. She'd assumed his pride or reluctance to hurt her would end the standoff. What she hadn't accounted for was his cunning. Asher Nightshade didn't play fair, and she was starting to see just how dangerous that made him.

His hands trailed lightly across her stomach, the brief contact making her breath hitch in her throat. Just as quickly, the sensation vanished, leaving her more on edge than before.

"What are you doing?" Violet asked, her voice trembling despite her attempt to sound steady. Her heart raced, pounding loudly in her ears. She couldn't predict him, couldn't anticipate where he'd strike next. He was like a shadow, moving with a ghostly silence that unnerved her.

"Why don't you open your eyes and find out, my purple queen?" he teased, his voice a silky taunt, now coming from her left.

The temptation to open her eyes was overwhelming. It gnawed at her like an insidious whisper urging her to have just a peek.

But Violet wasn't naive, this was exactly what he wanted. Asher was playing her, manipulating her, pulling every string he could to make her succumb.

Except, she wouldn't give him the satisfaction.

Chapter 57: Consequences Of Actions

Violet had closed her eyes for several minutes, but even though Asher didn't hurt her, the tension in the room had become unbearable.

Her senses were on edge, her awareness of his every movement amplified by her inability to see. The air felt electric, charged with the weight of his presence.

"You don't have to do this, Violet," Asher murmured, his hands finding her hair once again, tenderly massaging her scalp. The gods knew it felt so good, a deliberate move to disarm her.

She almost fell for it.

"I would never harm you," he whispered, his arm slipping around her waist and pulling her against the warmth of his body.

"Really?" Violet retorted coldly. "You would never harm me? You mean the same way you let me get bullied earlier today?" Her voice dripped with venom as she referred to the humiliating scenting ceremony.

She would never forget that incident. Not in the nearest future.

"Oh, that?" Asher replied, his tone devoid of any remorse. He leaned in closer, the proximity making her body shiver in ways she hated. "That was just a little ritual, so every wolf could take in your scent and recognize you as non-threatening in the future. Do not take it to heart."

He buried his face in the crook of her neck and inhaled deeply. "God, you smell so good."

"Really? What a great ritual," Violet snapped, her voice rising with her fury. "An applause for you guys, considering I'm the only one in the history of scenting ceremonies to be urinated on!" She spun around to shove him, but her hands met only air.

The momentum of her actions caused her to stumble, and she nearly fell, only for Asher to catch her at the last second. His laughter spilled out, rich and mocking.

"You're going to hurt yourself at this rate, little purple. Why don't you open your eyes now?" he said, his voice calm, even kind.

"Never! Not until you leave this room right now!" Violet shot back with defiance.

"Nice one, Violet," he replied smoothly, his tone shifting dangerously. "But unfortunately, you still need to be punished. So open your eyes, sweetheart, while I'm still being kind."

"Never!"

"Violet!"

"No! You can't make me, bastard!"

"But I can, can't I?" His dark chuckle sent a chill down her spine. "Fine, let me make you a deal."

A shiver ran down Violet's back as her instincts screamed she wouldn't like this deal.

"Out of your three roommates, which one do you like the most?" His question landed like a blow.

A chill settled in her stomach. No, he wouldn't hurt them. He couldn't. But then again, none of them were his so-called "purple queen."

Damn it.

"What if I walked over to one of their beds right now and woke one of them up? Which one is it? The talkative one? Is she the one you like the most?" he teased.

Violet's brows furrowed as she battled internally, trying to weigh her decision. Open her eyes and save her roommate or stubbornly close her eyes and let Asher do God knows what he intended to do with Lila.

"You like sneaking out, don't you?" he continued with a sinister edge. "What if, like you, she tried it too? Except in her case, she'd jump from the second-floor window instead of the ground floor. She probably wouldn't die, but who knows? She might break a leg."

Violet's blood ran cold. The thought of Lila breaking her leg because of her made her stomach churn violently. At that moment, she made her decision.

Violet opened her eyes.

Her gaze collided with Asher's, who was now seated back on her bed, a smug smile lighting his face. "You made the right choice, my purple queen."

Rage burned within her, her hands clenching at her sides. "One day, you'll know what it's like to love someone, only to have them snatched away from you," she spat, her voice trembling with fury.

For a brief moment, Asher seemed taken aback by her words. Then his devilish smile returned. "It's quite unfortunate that I live in the present," he replied smugly.

Violet stared at him in disbelief. How had she ever thought this man had an ounce of decency in him?

His expression darkened, and his tone turned commanding. "Now come here, Violet."

There were no pet names or teasing words this time, which could only mean Asher Nightshade was utterly serious. Though there was no compulsion in his voice, Violet found herself obeying, walking toward him despite every instinct screaming at her to resist. But it wasn't just about her anymore, her roommates' safety was involved this time.

As she approached, Violet glared at him defiantly. She could guess where this was heading, especially since she was only in her underwear. He would likely humiliate her further, perhaps force her into something sexual like having her suck his dick or something.

Good. Her teeth were aching and if it came to that, she would bite him and make him regret it.

Hence, Violet had already mentally prepared herself for the torment she would put Asher through only to hear. "Bend over."

"What?" she asked, startled. Surely she hadn't heard him correctly.

"Bend over, Violet," he repeated impatiently, this time compelling her.

The power behind his words overwhelmed her, and before she knew it, she had bent over his knees. Realization hit her a second later, and her heart nearly leapt out of her chest.

The reality of the position struck her like a thunderbolt. No. This couldn't be happening.

Violet tried to push herself up, but Asher was strong and he pressed her down, keeping her in place.

"Get off me, you psycho!" she growled, her fists clenching against the bedspread.

"I wish I could, but I did tell you, dear purple queen, you need to be punished. You tried to run, and there are consequences for disobeying your king. Consider this your lesson."

Violet's heart dropped. This had to be a fucking nightmare.

Chapter 58: A Queen's Apology

"You're insane! Let me go, Asher!" Violet struggled fiercely against him, her frustration boiling over. But her struggles were futile because Asher's grip was like iron, firm and unyielding.

"You brought this upon yourself," Asher replied calmly, his voice devoid of malice but filled with that maddening air of authority he wielded so effortlessly. "Every action has consequences. Blame yourself for this one, little purple."

"Stop this now! Have you entirely lost it, you psycho?" Violet growled, wriggling furiously in an attempt to break free.

Asher leaned down, his breath hot against her ear. "Psycho? Maybe. But what does that make you when you deliberately disobey my orders? When you try to leave me behind? We're supposed to be a team, who does that?"

Her skin prickled as his words sank in. Surely, he wasn't serious. He couldn't be. Did he genuinely believe she was bound to him?

The way she had left after his ridiculous proposal should have been answer enough. But no, this was Asher. He heard only what he wanted and discarded the rest.

Deciding force wouldn't work, Violet switched tactics, her voice softening. "Fine, you've made your point, Asher. I won't try to run again. I wouldn't leave you, my king." She played into his delusions, hoping it would change his mind.

But Asher merely shook his head. "That's where you're wrong, Violet. I'm not doing this just to make a point."

"Then what?" Violet snapped, her patience fraying. "This is pathetic, Asher. What do you think this will accomplish? Do you think I'll bow to you? Fear you? Never."

"Fear me?" Asher repeated, his voice dropping to a chillingly soft tone. "No, Violet. I don't want you to fear me. That's what makes you different. You challenge me, and I enjoy that. But," he paused, his tone darkening, "I want you to remember this moment every time you think about running. Every time you think you can defy your king."

Before Violet could respond, his hand came down sharply against her backside. The sound was deafening in the quiet room, the sting immediate. Violet's eyes widened as she gasped, the sensation both shocking and humiliating.

"What the—!" she began, but another slap landed, harder this time, cutting her off. Her body jerked at the force, her cheeks burning with pain and embarrassment.

"Asher, you bastard! You're really spanking me?!" she yelled, disbelief and rage coloring her tone. What the hell was wrong with him?

Asher chuckled, infuriatingly smug. "Of course. A punishment befitting a naughty queen."

"You're fucking mad!" Violet hissed, her voice trembling with indignation as she squirmed against his hold.

"Language, my dear," he chided, his hand coming down again, the sting sharper than before. Violet bit her lip, determined not to cry out and give him the satisfaction.

"You'll regret this," she growled through gritted teeth. "I swear, Asher, I'll make you regret this."

He paused, his hand resting lightly on her back as he tilted his head, a mockery of thoughtfulness. "Perhaps," he mused. "But right now, I'm enjoying myself far too much to care."

Another slap, then another, the sharp sting lingering longer each time. Violet wanted to claw his face, to scream at him, but all she could do was endure. The smug satisfaction radiating from him was what hurt most, and she vowed then and there that she would surely find a way to turn the tables on him.

It wasn't until the sixth spank that Violet stopped counting, unable to keep up with it anymore. Her butt felt like it was on fire, and she was on the verge of tears as he kept spanking her relentlessly.

Asher leaned closer, his tone mocking. "You could cry, you know. Nobody would hear you. Your roommates are sound asleep."

"You're sick," Violet spat, her voice shaking with fury. "You're a sick, twisted bastard."

"And you, my purple queen, are far too stubborn for your own good. But don't worry," he said, his lips curling into a wicked smile. "I'll break that stubbornness eventually."

The next slap was so hard that tears finally spilled down her cheeks. "I hate you, Asher! I fucking hate you!" she cried out.

"It's such a good thing," he said smoothly, delivering another slap, "that hate is just a thin line away from love."

"Ahh!" Violet cried out, clutching the bedsheets as tears flowed freely. She wasn't as tough as she wanted to believe.

"Just say you're sorry, little purple. Promise me you won't try to leave again, and we'll be good."

"Fuck you!" Violet spat, her voice filled with venom.

Pah!

Another slap.

"Don't worry about the fucking part," he said with a smirk. "We'll get to that eventually. For now, let's enjoy this romantic moment."

Romantic moment? Wait—what?!

Pah! Pah!

"Fine, I'm sorry!" Violet finally shouted, her voice cracking.

Asher scoffed. "Twenty spanks to get an apology? You're a tough one, my little purple."

He began to massage her sore, reddened skin, and she flinched at the sensation. "So, say it properly. Sorry for what, my purple queen?"

"Sorry for running away," Violet muttered, refusing to meet his eyes.

"And?" he pressed, waiting for her full admission.

But Violet clamped her lips shut. She would never agree to be his queen.

"You're sorry for what, my queen?" he repeated, his voice steely.

Pah!

Another slap, harder than before. And to her horror, a strange wetness pooled between her legs. Violet realized she was aroused and cursed herself for her body's betrayal.

"Cat got your tongue, little purple?" Asher taunted, delivering another slap. This time, to her utter mortification, a small moan escaped her lips.

Asher leaned in, his voice a seductive whisper. "Say it, Violet. What are you sorry for?"

"Please," she whimpered, her voice barely audible.

"Please, what?" he asked, his tone maddeningly calm. Then, with another sharp slap, Violet buried her face into the mattress, her muffled moan escaping into the room.

Asher had done this on purpose. And Violet hated him all the more for it.

Chapter 59: Burn For Your King

"She will not say it. She will not say it," Violet chanted the words in her head like a dark mantra.

But when another slap landed on her already tender butt, a sound of pain and pleasure escaped her lips, and Violet couldn't hold it back any longer.

"Fine! I'm sorry for abandoning you, my king!" she finally capitulated, her voice carrying a tone of defeat.

A victorious smile lit up Asher's face, bright and smug. There it was. The words he had been waiting for. She had finally admitted he was her king.

With a tenderness that contrasted starkly with his earlier actions, he began massaging her reddened cheeks. His voice softened as he murmured, "Say it one more time, Violet. I want to hear those words again."

With her cheeks aflame with humiliation, Violet had no choice but to comply. "I'm sorry for trying to leave you, my king," she repeated hollowly.

After all, they were just words. Saying them and meaning them were two different things. Right now, all Violet wanted was to escape this humiliating ordeal. It had lasted long enough already.

Asher's chest seemed to swell with pride, his eyes gleaming with a chaotic mix of emotions. Then, with deliberate slowness, he leaned down and pressed a lingering kiss to one of her sore cheeks.

Violet froze, her mind scrambling to process what had just happened. Asher's touch, though passionate, carried an undeniable claim of possession that blurred the lines between affection and obsession. If this could even be called affection.

Yet, against her better judgment, she couldn't deny the thrill that raced through her when his lips trailed gently across her skin. A deep throbbing sensation began to stir low in her belly.

"Asher..." Violet's voice trembled, caught between telling him to stop and daring him to continue. She hated the way her body betrayed her, hated the way his touch ignited sensations she wasn't ready to face.

Asher finally lifted his head, his darkened eyes locking onto hers. The intensity of his gaze made her breath catch, his looks smoldering.

"You don't know how beautiful you look right now, my little purple," he said with his silky and smooth voice.

She wanted to reject his words, to throw them back in his face, but they wormed their way under her skin, making her heart stutter despite the walls she put around herself.

"You look so good," he continued, his tone as seductive as a spell, "I can't help but want to take a bite out of you." His words sent a shiver down her spine, punctuated by the sharp sting of his teeth as he bit her on the buttocks.

"Ahh!" Violet yelped, the pain shocking her system. "What the hell, Asher?!"

Ignoring her protests, he leaned down and bit the other cheek. The first bite had stung, catching her off guard, but the second sent an intoxicating wave of pleasure-pain shooting through her.

"I'm going to put my marks on you, my little queen," Asher murmured low and possessively. "So the world will know you're mine."

Mortified and overwhelmed, Violet clapped a hand over her mouth to stifle the sounds threatening to spill out. She felt like a stranger in her own body, her responses unfamiliar and unwelcome. If Nancy could see her now, she'd be horrified by the boldness of the boy only to eventually crackle with pride.

Yes. That crazy mother of hers would definitely applaud Asher for punishing her. Violet prayed that Nancy and Asher would never met. That would be a nightmare.

"Aside from your hair..." Asher continued, his hands kneading her butt cheeks as though it were dough, "I think this is quickly becoming my favorite part of your body." His gaze held a wildness that always left her breathless, whether from fear or something else entirely.

"Are you done?" Violet managed to choke out, her face burning with humiliation. All she wanted now was to curl up and disappear. She had failed to escape and now found herself in this humiliating mess.

"Yes, my queen," Asher replied smoothly. But before she could feel any relief, he added, "Although, not entirely."

Violet's stomach dropped. "Are you still going to punish me?" she asked with a shaky voice. The sting on her skin was still fresh, and she couldn't endure more pain—no matter how unnervingly good it had felt.

"No," Asher said with a sly smile. "On the contrary, I'm going to reward you."

Violet shivered at his words. "R-reward me?" she stammered, unsure whether to dread or anticipate his intentions.

"Yes, reward you, my queen."

Before she could process his words, Asher flipped her effortlessly onto her back. She gasped at the sudden movement, landing softly on her back.

Asher's darkened gaze raked over her, his pupils dilated with desire. The intensity in his eyes made her pulse quicken. He looked at her as though she were prey, a feast he was eager to devour.

The dark, smoldering hunger in his expression made Violet's heart race. This wasn't a man. This was something primal, something dangerous. And she couldn't tell whether she wanted to flee or surrender.

Asher spread Violet's thighs apart and wedged himself between her legs. Her heart pounded loud and fast at the action, almost drowning out her thoughts.

His gaze held hers unflinchingly as he leaned over her, the intensity in his eyes anchoring her to the moment.

"You should stop me now, Violet, because once I start, there will be no stopping," he whispered, his voice a dangerous murmur that threatened to unravel her.

Violet knew she should have seized the opportunity to push him away; it was what she had wanted all along. Yet, in that moment, she couldn't bring herself to do it. The truth was that despite everything, Violet hungered for him. She hated herself for this weakness, for this burning desire that she couldn't extinguish or deny.

Her silence was all the confirmation Asher needed. He captured her hands and pinned them above her head, pressing his body against hers until the space between them vanished, their chests touching in an electrifying connection. Violet found herself holding her breath, hyperaware of his body, the heat emanating from him ensnaring her senses.

But just as their lips were about to touch, Asher paused and commanded, "Moan aloud." As Violet opened her mouth to respond, Asher's lips captured hers, cutting off any retort.

The world seemed to spin as a molten fire ignited in her veins. Violet felt like she was burning alive, consumed by a sensation so intense it bordered on the elemental.

Asher kissed her with a ferocity that left no room for doubt. He kissed like a man possessed, like someone starved of this very touch, and now that he had her, he seemed determined to devour her whole.

Asher Nightshade tasted of sin, of destruction and chaos, if such flavors could even be discerned. It was a blend that somehow made perfect sense in the haze that clouded her mind.

In that moment, Violet realized this wasn't just a physical hunger, but something far more profound, something terrifyingly irresistible. Asher Nightshade had marked her not just physically but had staked a claim deep within her, somewhere she couldn't reach, somewhere she might never want him to leave.

As Asher began to move against her, Violet found herself moaning aloud, swept up in the overwhelming arousal. She was so sensitized that even the slightest friction seemed enough to push her to the brink.

Her body burned with such intense desire that it frustrated her not to be able to use her hands, to pull him closer, to eliminate any remaining space between them and perhaps, feel that throbbing member more directly.

Asher seemed attuned to her escalating need, maintaining his tantalizing move, each one sending pleasure coursing through her.

Violet's moans reverberated throughout the room, filling the space with the sound of her escalating pleasure. In that moment, she was acutely thankful that Asher had ensured her roommates would remain undisturbed, asleep throughout her vocal expressions of ecstasy.

"Asher!" she cried out, her voice laden with desire, teetering on the edge of climax.

But just as she was about to tumble over into overwhelming release, Asher halted his movements abruptly.

Confused and frustrated, Violet initially thought he might be changing positions or teasing her further. However, when he stood up and stepped away, the sudden cessation of contact was startlingly clear—he was finished.

"What are you doing?" Violet asked with disbelief and rising panic. She was so aroused she might as well be suffering a blue ball if she had the balls, that is.

With a smirk that seemed both cruel and calculating, Asher responded, "That is my gift, little purple. You will crave, hunger, and burn for me, your king. Only me."

He compelled her.

She was a fool.

A fool to have fallen for that.

Asher's words struck Violet like a cold shower, quenching the flames of her desire with the chilling realization of his manipulative prowess.

Chapter 60: Ladybug

~ Asher ~

His little queen's anguish expression as she realized she had fallen into another of his carefully webbed traps was the last image Asher carried with him as he left.

He strolled down the hallway with a casual swagger, whistling that gleeful tune and moving in such a way he was almost dancing to it. It was the wee hours of the morning when everyone was fast asleep and spirits roamed the realm, and yet he walked with the confidence of someone who owned the place. Which he technically did.

There was nothing more satisfying than manipulating his victims. This was his game, his world, and everyone danced to the strings he pulled and bent to his will. But this time, the thrill was sharper, more exhilarating because Violet was no ordinary pawn. She was the queen he had chosen for himself. For them.

He loved sex for sure. And Sex with his queen would be explosive. But the euphoric feeling of his victory was heaven at the moment. Asher thrived in his element, relishing the sweet satisfaction of triumph. This was what pleased him most—being in absolute control, just as his father had instilled in him, just as he was trained to be.

He was the king here and no one could replace him even if they wanted to. No one spun the web better than he did. He was the best of the best. The puppet Master.

"Alpha Asher," Benjamin Holden, the house prefect, greeted him with reverence.

Each dormitory was traditionally overseen by a non-academic staff member, tasked with supervising the students and reporting directly to Principal Jameson. But ever since the Cardinal Alphas rose to power, that system had become more of a formality.

Since each had their own prefect, the other Cardinal Alphas also managed their houses in their own unique ways. As for him, he had already secured absolute control over Benjamin.

The man was completely a devoted servant, feeding him every scrap of information about the West House without hesitation. Betrayal wasn't an option for Benjamin, not when he knew all too well the consequences of crossing the Alpha of the West.

"Benjamin," Asher acknowledged, his presence.

"Do you need assistance with anything, sire?" Benjamin asked his eagerness to serve him evident in his voice.

"No," Asher replied with a faint smirk. "Carry on with your duties. I've already caught the little ladybug who thought she could escape earlier."

"What?" Benjamin asked, confused,

but he didn't elaborate. Asher had already turned away, whistling his light tune as if the matter were of no consequence.

Had Asher relied solely on Benjamin, Violet would have long escaped the school. The girl was clever, no doubt about that, but her brilliance was always paired with a reckless streak that teetered on the edge of self-destruction.

What made her think Lunaris Academy, a fortress in its own right, relied on mere humans for security?

The school had its share of enemies lurking beyond its walls—the rogues, the anti-werewolf factions, and countless others who would leap at the opportunity to breach its defenses and capture valuable resources and students for their nefarious purposes.

Lunaris was no stranger to such attacks. Hence it thrived on constant vigilance, its security system meticulous and strong.

Each house provided werewolves to patrol the grounds on strict routines. While they couldn't cover every inch of the sprawling campus, especially the dense woodlands, they were thorough enough to ensure safety. The students, staff, and even visitors depended on them for protection, placing their faith in the power of the Cardinal Alphas.

This unshakable faith elevated them and solidified their rule. No matter what they did, no one dared to challenge the Cardinal Alphas. Their authority was absolute, their influence unshakable. Here, they weren't just leaders, they were gods.

The cool air clung to Asher as he stepped out of the dormitory. His sharp eyes immediately caught sight of the four werewolves prowling near the perimeter. These were the same wolves who had chased Violet back to the dormitory earlier, doing exactly what they were ordered to do.

As his presence became apparent, the wolves stopped in their tracks, their attention snapping to him. Without hesitation, they padded closer silently.

Each of them was a striking shade of brown, with unique patches on their coats that set them apart. The largest of the group, unmistakably their leader, stepped forward. His blue eyes gleamed with recognition and respect as he faced Asher.

There was no need for words. With a silent cue, the wolves began to transform. The sound of bones cracking and reshaping pierced the otherwise quiet night, skin stretching and fur receding. Yet Asher barely flinched at what looked like a painful process, already familiar with it.

In seconds, where the largest wolf had stood was replaced by a striking man with a muscular, powerful build. His curly mop of brown hair clung damply to his forehead, and his chest rose and fell with his breaths.

The man stood confidently, unbothered by his nakedness, not when it was second nature to them. Modesty had no place among werewolves.

"Well done, Jeremiah." He complimented his beta and second in authority after him.

"It was nothing, Alpha," Jeremiah said politely.

"Of course, it was nothing," Asher replied, his carrying an unsettling cryptic tone. "Which is precisely why I need to make it something now."

Jeremiah's brows knitted together, confusion flickering across his face. "What do you mean by that, Alpha?"

"I want eyes on Violet," Asher stated plainly. "There's no guarantee she won't attempt another escape. Select men to handle it..." He paused, his sharp gaze scanning Jeremiah with deliberate intent before adding, "Or perhaps you'd prefer to do the job yourself."

Jeremiah stiffened, his expression hardening. "But Asher, I have far more important matters to deal with than babysitting some human—"

"It's Alpha Asher to you," Asher interrupted sharply. "And you will follow my orders without question."

A low, menacing growl rumbled from deep within Jeremiah's chest, the sound primal and filled with defiance. His body tensed, his wolf stirring just beneath the surface, ready to rise to the challenge.

Asher didn't flinch. Instead, an even deeper, more dangerous growl emanated from him.