

## Defy 541

### Chapter 541: Run With Violet

"Because it wasn't the first time we've fought them. In case you don't remember, we were the ones to rescue those pack members before any of your people could do anything." Griffin said boldly, letting the insult land clean. "Moreover, they were dressed thoroughly and used sophisticated weapons not even your department could get your hands upon. So instead of questioning us like criminals, you should be thanking us for doing a job your people should have handled already."

Vincent answered flatly, "We are pouring our resources and doing everything we can to find Patrick Vale right now."

"Hmm," Micah spoke for the first time, his voice cool, "I wonder how long that would take? When the heirs are attacked a third time and Patrick finally succeeds?"

"We are handling that." Vincent gritted out.

Roman chuckled. "Someone doesn't like being investigated."

The glare Vincent sent Roman's way should have been enough to vaporize him on the spot if he could fire lasers.

"Let the man do his job," Elijah said lazily, as if enjoying the show, but the message had been passed.

Vincent's voice was tight with annoyance when he asked, "When did you see Henry Nightshade?"

"Toward the end," Griffin answered curtly.

"And?"

"And I don't know what else you want to hear?"

"Perhaps details of what he looked like? How did he die exactly, without vague answers?"

"I'm sorry, but we were outnumbered and fighting for our lives," Griffin said with biting sarcasm. "So forgive me if my memory isn't picture-perfect toward the end."

Vincent's eyes narrowed. "All of your memories aren't solid toward the end, I see. But thank the goddess Violet was with Henry at that moment, so perhaps I'll get something real from her now." His tone carried finality.

He flipped to the next page, raising his voice just slightly. "Finally, the famous human among you, Violet Purple."

When Violet lifted her head to meet his gaze, the fears were gone. Griffin had bought her enough time to calm her emotions. Moreover, she could tell from the smug look on Vincent's face that Vincent considered her the weakest link.

Unfortunately, if there was anything Violet hated, it was being called "weak" because she was far from one. Not to mention, she won't be the one to drag her men down after their hard work.

"Commander Vincent." Violet said, "Let's begin now, shall we?"

Vincent's brow lifted in surprise. That was not the reaction he had been expecting. He expected her to be nervous and quivering in her seat now it was her turn. After all, he had smelt it like a shark locating blood, she was hiding a secret and he'd find out.

Fine, let's play.

"You were there that night at Pine lodge, weren't you?"

Violet's breath didn't hitch one bit. "Yes, I was."

"How are you alive when most aren't?" Vincent continued, "It sounds convenient, don't you think?"

"I'd say I'm lucky." Violet replied.

"What?"

"Lucky enough to have people who protected me to the point of death. Write it that way."

Vincent stared at her for a moment too long and then did exactly as she had said, he wrote it down. However, the next second, he put down both the book and pen saying, "Now, let's talk about the one question everyone has been dancing around. Henry. How, exactly, did Henry Nightshade die?"

Violet's fingers stayed laced on the table. She didn't look at Roman or Griffin. "He died fighting. That is all I will say."

Vincent's jaw ticked. "Don't fuck with me, Violet."

"Why would I when I have two mates? That's an orgy already."

This time Roman couldn't help it, he laughed so hard that tears escaped his eyes. "And I wouldn't have it either way, baby. "

"This is an official interrogation," He reminded her as if trying to scare her into submission with that information.

"Then forgive me if the questions sound like a clown show." Violet was glaring at Vincent now, her voice rising dangerously. "If you're here to write a story where we're responsible for whatever twisted imagination you're having, try a different garden. You won't like the ending of this one."

Vincent leaned in. "Are you threatening me, Violet Purple?"

"Do you feel threatened, Commander Vincent?"

As if to punctuate her threat, there was a strange pressure in the air and it made breathing difficult. The sensation was almost similar to an Alpha's aura.

Violet's aura.

It was raw, untamed, and spilling from her in waves she couldn't fully control.

Even Elijah froze, his wine glass pausing mid-air. His gaze narrowed with dangerous interest, watching her the way a predator studies prey. Roman noticed it too.

His hand slid beneath the table, finding the cut-out in Violet's dress, his palm brushing her bare skin. Violet's breath hitched, but the pressure around them began to ease. Slowly, the suffocating weight lifted.

Violet exhaled slowly, coming back to herself.

Roman's gaze snapped upward and collided with Elijah's. For a moment, the garden felt colder. Elijah's eyes gleamed with sly amusement, that cunning glint of an old fox who had just sniffed out a hidden truth.

Roman's hackles rose instantly. His wolf stirred, bristling with a silent snarl. His mate was in danger. This wasn't about Henry Nightshade at all. Elijah was probing Violet. Testing her.

Roman didn't know what to do. Should he grab Violet and make a run for it? But where would they run? This was the Alpha King's palace—there was no escape here.

And even if they did, they couldn't stay on the run forever. Perhaps he was moving ahead of himself. Maybe he needed to calm down and see how this played out. One thing was certain, though: before Elijah ever laid a hand on Violet, he'd have to get through him first.

"Fine," Vincent said, his voice clipped. "Let's talk about the blast then. Forensics prove Pine Ridge wasn't hit by any traditional explosive. We've got crater geometry, thermal signatures, melted silica. Trees

blown outward in a perfect ring, then a secondary scouring. And electromagnetic interference recorded miles away. You want to revise your statements now? Because you and I both know no ordinary bomb does this."

Chapter 542: About Violet

Violet stood her ground. "No, I don't need to revise a word I uttered."

"Then you'll indulge my creativity." Vincent slid a photo across the table, the grainy drone shot showing nothing but a pale crater and smoke curling from the wound in the earth. "Explain this without lying."

"You mean explain it without the weapon you didn't find?" Roman countered.

"We didn't find a weapon because it wasn't one. This was obviously an energy event. One we don't have a file for."

"Then start a new file," Violet said coolly.

"That's what I'm doing," Vincent replied, "but none of you seem willing to cooperate."

"Cooperate on what? An energy event?" Violet told him. "What's that got to do with me, a human? Do I look like Patrick, the scientist?"

"Good one, little mate." Griffin complimented her, only to turn and glower at Vincent. The man was beginning to get on their nerves.

Vincent shifted his attention immediately.

"His Highness, Micah, you rescued them. What did you see?"

Micah answered without emotion. "I didn't see anything. I only felt the heat rising fast and did what I had to do, Commander."

That response irked Vincent and his voice rose. "Then tell me this, if you did what you had to do, why didn't you rescue Henry?"

The air went taut.

Fire flashed in Micah's eyes. "Excuse me?"

"You saved them," Vincent pressed, "Dragged them out before the blast. But not Henry Nightshade. Why? You had time for the others, didn't you? Doesn't that seem a little too convenient?"

Micah's hand twitched, and in the blink of an eye, dark shadows lashed out from his palm. They slammed against the table and snapped toward Vincent like a whip.

Commander Vincent jolted from his chair with a curse, his pen clattering to the floor as he staggered back in defense mode. His wolf flared instinctively, hackles raised, and teeth clenched like he expected a fight.

"Relax," Micah said coolly, drawing the shadows back into his skin like it was nothing. "That's just a harmless projection of my teleportation power. Nothing more. However, one move was all it took for you to defend only yourself and not even his majesty, King Elijah. Yet you expect me to save all seven people in the middle of an ambush and come out in one piece?"

One look at Elijah told Vincent he'd just fucked up.

Micah's smile sharpened. "Fine. If you think you can do it, Commander, raise your hand." His eyes flicked deliberately to Vincent's still fingers. "Oh, you can't. Why? You already failed."

The silence that followed was merciless. Vincent's jaw worked tight, but his hand never moved.

Violet snickered under her breath, failing to hold it in, while Roman looked like he was trying not to clap. Griffin nodded, impressed at how easily Micah had effortlessly put the Commander in his place.

Vincent's face burned with humiliation, his jaw working, but still he couldn't counter. Anything he said now would sound like a pathetic excuse.

Micah finally straightened, turning to Elijah with a half-bow. "Forgive me, Your Majesty. My temper was misplaced. I only meant to prove a point."

He stepped back, calm once again, though his eyes still gleamed with defiance. "But I'll say this, I came here for a party, not an interrogation. So I'm done."

Elijah didn't even hesitate. With a flick of his hand, he dismissed Micah as though he were nothing more than an annoyance.

Micah gave a shallow bow, his expression unreadable, and left without protest.

With Micah gone, it was back to them again. Before Vincent could recover, Griffin told him. "Commander, you came here for our statements. We've given them. We were attacked. We survived. Henry died fighting. Adele healed me. Micah extracted us. We came home. Is there a question in particular that you haven't yet dressed in different clothes?"

From the way Vincent's eyes slid to Griffin, it was obvious the man was still seething from Micah's little display. His voice was gruffly when he spoke.

"So far, your testimonies line up well enough. The timelines match and the details overlap. But there are crucial gaps and evidence missing where it shouldn't be. And I'm logging those."

"Missing evidence doesn't mean guilt, Commander. It means you're not as thorough as you claim," Griffin retorted.

Vincent gave him a long, measured look before scribbling something down. "And you claim the reason you left the scene was because a matebond snapped during the incident."

Roman lifted Violet's hand, their fingers intertwined, and kissed the back of it with a grin. "The evidence is sitting right in front of you. I don't know what else you need."

"Congratulations," Vincent said, the word more knife than toast.

"Send a card," Roman shot back.

Vincent's gaze slid to Violet. "You confirm?"

Violet rolled her eyes. This man was unbelievable. "Yes."

Vincent adjusted in his seat, turning his pen toward Griffin. "Griffin Hale—"

"Don't even push it," Griffin cut in, his tone edged with warning. "We're a bonded trio."

With a tired sigh, Vincent shut the book and turned to Elijah. "That will be all for now."

"Thank the gods." Roman let out an exaggerated breath of relief.

"Now go, kids. Eat, drink, kiss, and be merry. It's your party after all." Elijah lifted his glass toward them as though to toast.

Though his words sounded cheerful, goosebumps prickled along Violet's arms. Griffin and Roman exchanged wary looks. What was the man up to now?

Still, they stood and left. Yet every step felt heavy under Elijah's gaze, and it was a miracle they didn't trip on the way out.

Once they were far enough, the atmosphere shifted as Elijah dropped the pretense.

"What's your verdict, Commander?" he asked quietly.

Vincent didn't answer right away. His eyes stayed on Violet Purple and the two heirs who had flanked her like guards. There was no smile on his face, no anger either. Just scrutiny.

Finally, he said, "I can't tell if they're lying outright. But one thing is certain—" he looked Elijah directly in the eyes, "—they're hiding something. Especially the girl, Violet Purple. My instincts have never burned this hard over someone."

Elijah hummed low, noncommittal. "Mmhmm."

He raised his glass again, and beneath its rim, his eyes gleamed with a sharp and calculating emotion.

Chapter 543: Confess To Elijah

"Don't turn back," Violet said quickly when Roman started to glance behind them.

Roman obeyed without a word, sliding his arm across her shoulders and making it look natural.

"There's the banquet table," Griffin said, and they understood at once.

The three of them moved together in that direction. The table was already crowded since wolves always ate plenty, their higher metabolism demanding it. Some of the guests ahead noticed them and immediately stepped aside, smiling as they gave them space.

"No, you don't have to—" Violet began bashfully. They were older, and had come first. She wasn't even here for the food. But the sight of the richly prepared dishes, especially the glistening meats had her mouth watering before she could stop herself.

"Having two mates is a miracle," one elderly woman said warmly. "You're goddess-blessed, child."

"Oh..." Violet blinked, intrigued. So having more than one mate came with privileges. Nice, she'd remember that next time.

She went ahead, choosing mostly meat dishes despite herself. Griffin and Roman noticed too because their plates ended up nearly identical.

"I think your wolf side is stronger," Griffin muttered under his breath once they were away from the crowd.

They chose a table tucked near the hedges, far from the center. Yet still, people's eyes flickered toward them, heavy with curiosity and awe.

"You think so?" Violet asked surprised because she didn't feel that way. Yes, her wolf stirred restlessly inside her, but there was also a vortex of magic whirling inside of her, untamed. And it was harder to control than the wolf. The wolf had its own mind, but the magic felt like a storm waiting to break with the wrong move.

"That should be the least of our problems right now. We've got a much bigger issue at hand," Roman said, his tone unusually grave.

For the jester of the group, the shift was unsettling.

Roman leaned closer, locking eyes with Griffin. "I think Elijah knows about Violet."

The breath left Violet's lungs in a rush. Her gaze snapped to Roman, voice dropping low. "I thought I was the only one who noticed he was baiting me from the very start." She scratched at her head nervously. "I think I slipped enough to confirm his suspicion."

Griffin's frown deepened. "You think he knows a piece of it, or the whole thing?"

Roman's expression darkened. "I wouldn't be surprised if he's always known Angus was alive. The elders couldn't have covered up his brother's death and crowned him king without his blessing."

"And now he suspects Violet is his brother's heir," Griffin added, the realization fitting together too cleanly.

Roman nodded, his voice hush but edged. "At the very least, he doesn't know what Violet really is. He probably just suspects she's an imp."

Since the emergence of interbreeding between werewolves and humans, different names have been used to separate the kinds of wolves that exist.

The purebloods were the de la crème of werewolf society — untainted lineage, possessing full traits and abilities. They stood as nobility among the packs, holding power and maintaining traditions.

Then came the half-bloods or hybrids — though there were uglier names for them, often racist. As the offspring of a human and a werewolf, they often carried mixed traits. Depending on which parent's genetics are dominant, they might have limited transformation abilities or diluted werewolf strengths. They are often caught between both worlds, never fully accepted by either.

Next were the runts, the smaller, and weaker wolves, often born of bad luck, poor bloodlines, or even, anomalies in their nature. Even purebloods weren't spared from birthing runts. They were still wolves, but lacking simply robust werewolf traits.

And then came the imps. Unlike runts, the insult of "imp" wasn't tied to size or frailty, but to appearance. Imps were those werewolves who show more human-like qualities and fewer werewolf traits, regardless of their bloodline.

"He probably believes that's why. Or..." Roman's gaze sharpened. "He thinks she's hiding her ability, which is worse."

Moments like this stunned Violet. Roman might sound foolish most of the time, but he was shrewd as hell and woe to anyone who underestimated him.

"So what do you suggest we do? Run?" Griffin asked.

"That's exactly what he expects," Roman said, stroking his chin.

"Except that's technically what we're doing tomorrow," Violet reminded, thinking of their plan to find Alaric.

Griffin sighed, lifting a hand to ruffle his hair out of habit. His palm hit his buzzed scalp. Right. No hair. Damn.

"This is not going to be easy. I don't even know if my mother would be able to help out. Not to mention, we'd be leaving Roman behind to take Elijah's wrath." He said.

"Elijah won't be able to do much," Roman murmured. "Not while we're in transit, and even less on West Pack soil. But don't fool yourselves, if he puts a hit out, it'll be on you both first."

"What?!" Violet nearly choked. "That's outrageous."

Roman scanned the room before leaning in. "Elijah likes control, and that includes being respected."

"Then why don't I just confess?" Violet whispered. "Maybe he'll understand. I'm his niece after all."

The look both men gave her hit like a slap.

"I'm just saying, it's better than living on tenterhooks," she muttered.

"Micah's his nephew, and he's caged in Lunaris Academy," Griffin bit out.

"I'm a female. Winning over men's hearts is kind of our specialty," Violet argued.

Roman scoffed. "Yeah? Tell me how Elijah explains his lovely niece to the entire werewolf community that believes Angus is dead."

"Oh, shit." Violet face-palmed. She hadn't thought of that.

"Angus loves his throne," Griffin said. "We don't even know how much Elijah knows. Until then, we will play along."

"Not to interrupt your scheming..." a new voice cut in. They looked up to see Micah.

He stopped at their table, not even a smile on his face. "But if you don't mind, I'd like a dance with yours truly."

He didn't say it, but everyone understood. He wanted to dance with his sister.

#### Chapter 544: Hand Her Over To Father

Neither Griffin nor Roman protested as Violet rose from her seat and walked toward her brother. Micah already had his hand out, waiting for her, and she slipped her palm into his. He led her confidently onto the dance floor.

The string quartet built into a romantic piece, the violins carrying a tender, aching melody while the cello pulled deep, mournful notes beneath. It was the kind of music that tugged at the heart, neither too sad nor too joyful, but somewhere in between. It made the chest tighten, like love itself pressed into sound.

Other couples were already dancing, but the moment Violet and Micah stepped in, the spotlight shifted. Their gazes followed them, conversation rising. They were two separately mated pairs dancing together. The goddess was really gracious to them.

They curtsied in perfect rhythm, and then Micah slid his arm firmly around Violet's waist, guiding her into the first sway.

Violet was not exactly graceful, but the weeks at Lunaris Academy had refined her moves. She stepped light and effortless, letting Micah lead as they turned with the music. The crowd soon forgot about them, joining in on the dance as well.

Violet's lips barely moved as she whispered, "I take it something is up?"

Micah's voice was so low it was almost impossible she heard him. "I could have called," he admitted, "but this isn't something for the phone. I said we'd talk face to face but my uncle has had his eyes on me, and this is the only way I could think of."

As if on cue, Micah dipped her low in a dramatic sway. From that tilted angle, Violet's eyes found Elijah across the room. Except he was already staring at her. A knowing smile tugged at his lips and goosebumps erupted down Violet's arms.

When Micah pulled her upright again, she whispered in a shaky tone, "Elijah is playing a strange game. He knows about me."

"What?" Micah stiffened, instinctively trying to look over his shoulder.

"Don't!" Violet hissed, panic flashing in her eyes.

Micah stopped himself mid-motion, seamlessly shifting the dance so it looked natural. He said, turning her with ease. "You're right, he's testing us. Which means we need a distraction. We seriously need to talk, Violet."

Violet bit down on her lip, mind racing. What could they do? Then she caught sight of Roman dragging Griffin—half against his will—onto the dance floor.

"What in the world are those two—" Violet froze. An idea sparked. "Micah," she whispered quickly. "Dance close enough to Roman."

Her brother gave her a questioning brow, but he didn't argue. Together they incorporated sharper spins, longer strides, slowly weaving their way across the floor toward Roman and Griffin.

When they had gotten within ten feet, Violet tugged at the Matebond. The invisible thread between her and Roman flared hot, pulling his attention like a magnetic force.

Roman's head lifted instantly, his keen eyes finding her. Their gazes locked across the swirl of dancers.

Violet mouthed: Do something.

For a moment, Roman's brows furrowed in confusion. Then, as his gaze flicked between her and Micah, realization lit his face. His grin spread wide, cocky and dangerous.

Oh boy. Violet swallowed at the look in Roman's eyes. She hoped to God she hadn't made a mistake here.

For over a minute they danced and nothing happened. Micah leaned down, whispering with impatience. "What now?"

Violet's frown deepened. Maybe Roman hadn't gotten the message after all.

Then it happened.

A shriek split the air. Then another. And another. Soon the entire garden rippled with screams. Violet's head snapped around just in time to see... Rats?!

It was not just one, not ten, but what looked like a hundred of them spilling across the garden like a living tide.

Of course, to Violet, it was nothing. Back in District One, rats were a delicacy, cooked and served without shame. But this was a high-end party full of socialites from all over the world, people who had never seen such vermin in their pristine lives. To them, it wasn't a pest, but a nightmare. She should have known Roman would go over the mile. Not that she could blame him. It was working.

Chaos swept the garden. Screams tangled with the squeaks of the rats. Guests tripped over chairs and each other, gowns tearing, and shoes flying. A woman shrieked as one darted beneath her skirts, while a man stumbled straight into the wine fountain.

For Violet and Micah, it was perfect.

"Sorry, sorry, sorry!" Violet muttered as she stepped on a couple of tails. The rats squealed but scattered, ignoring her.

"Where do we go?" Micah hissed, scanning wildly for cover.

"I know!" Violet grabbed his arm and tugged him fast through the panic. Guards brushed past them, too distracted with the "rat epidemic" to give them a second glance.

She pulled Micah toward the side of the garden where a glass structure loomed, half-hidden by hedges and vines. It was the greenhouse.

It was empty inside, the door creaking as she shoved it open. The whole place smelled of damp earth and herbs. There was no moonlight hence the place was dark, quiet, and secluded. Perfect.

Both of them adjusted easily with the help of their werewolf sight.

"This will do," Violet said, finally letting go of his arm. "So tell me, what is so important that you couldn't just tell me over the phone?"

For a long moment, Micah didn't answer. He only stared at her, his hazel eyes unreadable, and it dragged on long enough to make her skin prickle.

"We don't have much time," Violet pressed, reminding him.

Finally, Micah spoke. "Remember when you once asked me if you could trust me and I said no?"

"Yes," Violet said slowly. "What about it?"

That uneasy feeling crept into her chest, clawing tighter the longer he delayed. She prayed to the goddess she hadn't just made the worst mistake of her life.

"There's a reason why."

"And?"

"Father contacted me."

Violet's entire body snapped into instinct. Darkness pooled across her palm before she could even think while her stance shifted, ready for a fight.

If Micah thought for one second he could betray her, hand her over to Angus, then he was in for the rudest awakening of his life.

She would die fighting.

Chapter 545: Second Great War

"Whoa, calm down," Micah said quickly, stepping back when Violet's golden eyes flared and shadows coiled around her palm.

He could take her in a fight, yes, he was skilled, trained, and fast on his feet. But one wrong slip, and Violet's power would kill him before he even blinked.

"What do you want?" Violet growled, her voice shaking with rage. "To take me to him?"

"No!" Micah blurted. "I stood my ground, I wouldn't do that!"

Her fury eased, but her guard didn't drop. "Why?" she asked, scrutinizing him.

"Because I'm not stupid, Violet," Micah said. "You're the only chance we have against Angus."

"You want me to fight him?"

Micah shook his head. "Not alone. You can't beat him like that. But Angus is coming for the throne, and you, as his heir, can't let it happen."

"I'm not the rightful heir," Violet replied. "You are."

"They'll never accept me. Not in this lifetime. I'm half demon, you're Fae and strong enough that no one would dare challenge you. You're the perfect heir."

Violet scoffed bitterly. "Perfect heir? Elijah will kill me the second he finds out what I am."

"I don't think so," Micah said firmly.

"Why not?"

"If Elijah knows his brother is alive, then he knows he'll need allies. Angus made him sterile, Violet. He hates him for it. You think that bitterness just comes out of nowhere? He won't kill you. He'll use you. You're a weapon he can aim at Angus. But he'll never set you free. Elijah loves control too much."

"That's not comforting." Violet's chest tightened. The thought of being someone's puppet made her sick. At least Asher had a conscience, Elijah? The man's sheer crazy.

Micah's voice dropped lower. "That's not even why I pulled you aside."

Violet's pulse spiked. "Then why?"

Goddess knows what's next now.

"I didn't tell you everything about our father and that is why you must be careful..." Micah paused, then said. "Because you're not Angus's only living heir."

Her stomach dropped. "What?"

"There are seven of your sisters out there."

Her jaw fell. "What?!"

Violet's eyes locked on Micah. She wished there was even a bit of light to help her study his face properly to see if this was one of his cruel jokes. But the tension in the air told her he was dead serious.

"Nah..." She laughed, but it came out hollow. "That's not possible."

But Micah wouldn't say this without proof. He wasn't the type to spin lies out of thin air. The weight of it slammed into her chest, and Violet stumbled back. All this time she thought she was alone. An only child. Now, to find out she had seven sisters out there?

Was fate fucking with her?

As if Micah could read her thoughts, he said, "Don't get flustered, thinking this would be a sweet family reunion. No. Our siblings are as bad as they come. Why do you think I attacked you the day I found out you were my sister?"

"What are you talking about?" Violet demanded.

"Your sisters are Angus's perfect little soldiers," Micah said coldly. "I've had enough encounters with them over the years to know you should never go easy on them. Don't even let them in." His mouth twisted, remembering something. "Oh, right. It's actually eight of them. Your father killed the third one. She rebelled against him and she paid dearly with her life."

Violet's stomach turned. Just when she thought Angus couldn't sink lower, he proved himself a monster. Not only had he killed his own child, but he had roped her other siblings into his madness. A family she might have had was now twisted beyond recognition.

Violet narrowed her eyes. "How do you know about this? Last time I asked, you claimed you had no idea where Angus was. And now suddenly, you're telling me all this? Why? What's your real motive?"

This brother of hers was not reliable. But then again, he was a demon.

No, don't do that, Violet. She scolded herself. She couldn't stereotype him because of what he was. But still, she had to be careful.

"I'm telling you because you're the only one I can even consider an ally among our father's children. And I wouldn't want anything to happen to you..." Micah trailed off, clearing his throat, his gaze shifting away from hers.

Violet blinked at him, startled. Was he indirectly admitting he cared about her?

Before the awkwardness could linger, he went on, "As for my sources, don't forget, I'm still the oracle. There's no secret safe from me."

But Violet said flatly, "Really?"

Micah let out an exasperated sigh. "Fine. I get my information from both the living and the dead."

"Huh?"

"People die every day," Micah breathed. "And souls in hell confess plenty when they're screaming in torment."

Figures. Violet reasoned. The amount of information this guy had was terrifying at times.

"If there's anyone among your siblings you need to watch out for, it's Ziva. She's the most ruthless, the most devilish. The temple attack? Probably her work. Thank the goddess you didn't fall for that."

Thank the goddess indeed. Right now, that familiar anger was back, and it was because of Ziva. Sister or not, that bitch had crossed a line. Goddess help her the day they meet.

"I think this is it."

"What?"

"The second great war."

Violet swallowed hard, dread curling in her stomach. It wasn't just the idea of war — it was the feeling she would be tangled right in the middle of it. She didn't want to carry the weight of hundreds of deaths, human or werewolf. That was a guilt she could never live with. If anything, she had to find a way to stop it.

"Angus said something that unsettled me," Micah went on. "He talked about ruling 'them.' At first, I thought he meant wolves. But that was a question I asked about the humans. That stuck with me. Do you know it's the presidential elections this year?"

"And?" Violet frowned. She didn't see the link.

Micah's eyes darkened. "There's a strong chance Angus is backing one of the candidates. If that man wins, he's nothing but Angus's puppet. And whoever becomes president of Dorminia—"

"...Has control over the humans, and the fate of wolves," Violet finished, realization dawning on her.

"Exactly."

"My God." A shiver ran down Violet's spine.

Her eyes sharpened with calculation. "If Angus's man takes power, he'll shield him. He'll support him in secret and turn a blind eye to everything he does after. Angus would be untouchable." She bit down on her nails without realizing it. "This is bad," she whispered, shaky.

Chapter 546: Roman and Violet Sitting On A Tree....

Violet asked, "What do you think we should do, Micah?"

Micah's expression was thoughtful, his eyes half-lidded like he was weighing too many things at once. "For now," he said, "I'll try looking into the presidential candidates and flagging down whoever Father is sponsoring. But knowing Angus, he'll be careful. He doesn't make mistakes unless his ego blinds him, and that day we met, I think it did. Good thing about confidence, it makes people slip."

He shifted, straightening his jacket as though signaling the conversation was over. "That'll be all for now. I'll keep in touch. Should you ever need my help, don't hesitate to ask."

Almost immediately, the words tumbled out of Violet's lips. "About that, I need your help with something."

Micah's brows rose. "What is it?"

Her throat tightened, but she forced it out. "I don't think Alaric is safe. We plan to go rescue him tomorrow."

Micah's sharp inhale told her he hadn't expected that. His gaze flicked toward the garden beyond, as though thinking over every possible consequence. "Escaping under Elijah's nose is going to be difficult," he admitted. "But not impossible. What do you need from me?"

"I don't need you to do anything reckless," Violet said firmly. "The Cardinal heirs have leverage. Elijah won't move too hard against them, they're his 'heirs,' and saving face matters more to him than killing them. But you..." She met Micah's eyes. "He has no reason to spare you. All I want is information. I just need to know how Alaric's holding up. Surely you've got contacts in the North—"

Then, trying to lighten the conversation, she added with a small grin, "Or maybe you can make a trip to hell and find out if someone from the North Pack died with news about him."

Micah's lips quirked, the faintest smile tugging his features. "I have contacts in the North," he said evenly. Then, with a dryness that made Violet pause, he added, "And trips to hell aren't exactly fun."

The clipped edge in his tone hinted there was more behind those words than he wasn't willing to share. Violet sensed it, but she didn't push. They were only just beginning to trust one another; she wasn't going to ruin it with pressure.

To clear the air, she forced a small laugh. "I bet the rat epidemic is over by now. I'll wait for your news, then."

"Sure." He replied casually.

"See you later, brother."

Violet didn't know what possessed her to call him that, but the word was already out before she could stop herself. Micah froze mid-step, clearly caught off guard. Then slowly, a huge grin broke across his handsome face.

"Brother, huh? That's a dangerous promotion." His grin turned sly. "See you too, lil' sis."

Violet rolled her eyes, but the warmth in her chest betrayed her. She actually liked the sound of it—though she'd never admit that to his face.

And just like that, they stepped out of the dark glasshouse together, the faint hum of the party reaching their ears again. But when they reached the garden path, they split without a word, each of them headed in different directions.

Violet had braced herself for tension the moment she returned to the garden. She imagined walking into the scene of Elijah's wrath bearing down on Roman after that reckless stunt earlier. Instead, what greeted her was laughter, glasses clinking, and couples spinning to the rhythm of live music.

Huh? Violet blinked, confused. Where was the punishment? Where was Elijah's fury?

But her thoughts shattered with a scream.

Violet yelped as her feet left the ground and the world spun around her. Strong arms had hooked her waist, twirling her up like she weighed nothing. The Matebond thrummed, buzzing with recognition through her veins.

"Roman!" Violet shrieked, her voice half outrage, and half laughter, as her vision blurred with dizzy circles.

Roman only chuckled lightheartedly, his grin wide and infuriating. "You love it."

"I'm going to kill you when my feet touch the ground!" she promised, though her laughter betrayed her threat.

Almost at once, Roman lowered her, setting her gently back on her heels. Violet stumbled, but his hands tightened around her waist, catching her before she could fall. Instinctively, her own arms looped around his neck, clinging to him, her chest rising and falling with sharp breaths.

Her heart was pounding, not just from the spin but from him.

The corners of Roman's eyes crinkled as he looked at her. His green eyes shone with such unguarded joy that Violet forgot about everything.

God help her. Roman didn't even realize it, but he lit up her whole world like no other.

The two of them were locked in a stare now, the air sizzling with raw tension. Violet couldn't even tell who moved first — all she knew was that their mouths crashed together halfway, and a deep, appreciative moan slipped from her lips as the bond exploded to life like fireworks under her skin.

Roman hauled her closer until she was pressed flush against him. The hard wall of muscle beneath his shirt flexed, powerful enough to crush her if he wanted but Violet didn't care. She wanted to be consumed.

Their mouths worked against each other with both hunger and sweetness, a push-and-pull that left her dizzy. Roman dragged her bottom lip between his teeth, pulling until it hurt, then smashed his mouth back down on hers in a fevered rhythm. Again and again.

Their hot and slick tongues tangled, tasting, sucking, and demanding more. Each time they shifted, their mouths angled differently — tilting, sliding, and finding new ways to deepen the kiss, as though trying to map every last inch of the other.

For those burning seconds, the rest of the world had long since faded into nothing. There was no garden, no guests, and certainly, no king. Only them.

Then the world crashed back with a roar of applause.

They broke apart, startled, and only then did Violet realize every guest was watching, clapping like they'd just been entertained on stage. Heat flared across her cheeks, not from the kiss but from the crowd's shameless approval.

"Gods," Violet muttered under her breath, "can't a girl get some privacy around here?"

#### Chapter 547: Luck For Tomorrow

It turned out Roman had somehow managed to turn the "rat epidemic" around in the most bizarre way imaginable. While the commotion had been breaking out earlier, he had subtly taken control of the swarm. Instead of scattering wildly, he made the rats line up neatly at the front of the garden like a well-trained army awaiting orders.

Then, to everyone's bewilderment, a chorus of squeaky sounds began to rise. At first, it sounded like ordinary squealing, sharp and high-pitched. But slowly, the tones began to blend together, weaving into an oddly harmonious melody. It was a song. A rat rendition.

The guests were still pale and traumatized by the earlier sight of hundreds of rats flooding the garden. But when a few of the rats broke formation and began dancing, with one spinning into a flawless moon slide, and another flipping into tiny breakdancing moves, the fear immediately turned into stunned silence.

And then, all at once, screams broke out. Except this time, it was not from terror, but from awe and sheer delight. Phones appeared in hands instantly, recording the surreal performance. The sound of laughter and gasps of amazement rose as the rats twirled and performed perfectly timed choreography. It was ridiculous yet mesmerizing. It was completely Roman.

By the time he ended the performance with a dramatic bow, the applause was deafening. The guests whistled, clapped, and even shouted for an encore. Roman grinned like the devil himself, soaking up the cheers as if he'd just performed a grand concert instead of orchestrating a nightmare made adorable.

Unlike their chaotic entrance, the rats exited in perfect order, scurrying away as if they had simply melted into the night. Then Staff members rushed in immediately, cleaning up the remnants of chaos.

And that was the scene Violet walked into, as if nothing had ever happened.

Roman, however, hadn't exactly gotten off scot-free. Even though he'd redeemed himself with his ridiculous performance, Elijah still slammed him with punishment: cleaning up the entire place once the party was finally over.

Except when was the party going to be over?

The guests showed no signs of slowing down. They were drinking, laughing, and dancing like dawn didn't exist, unlike Violet and her mate who wanted the circus to be over already.

They all needed rest. Most of all, they needed their strength for tomorrow because their escape had to be perfect. There would be no second chances.

Thankfully, a few minutes after midnight, King Elijah finally stepped forward, commanding the entire garden with his presence. His towering figure was bathed in golden light as the music quieted and all eyes turned to him.

"Tonight," Elijah began, his voice smooth and powerful, "I want to thank each and every one of you for honoring my invitation and joining me in celebrating the newest blessed wolves in our midst."

Polite applause rippled through the crowd while dozens of gazes turned, lingering on Violet, Roman, and Griffin. The attention was suffocating, but Violet forced herself to smile politely. Unlike them, Micah sat at the end, hands tucked behind his back, and looked bored as hell.

Elijah's tone warmed as he continued, "The Matebond is a sacred gift. A sign of the goddess's favor. To witness not one but two bonds among my heirs fills me with pride and gratitude. It is proof that the goddess herself has taken an interest in their future."

The crowd clapped again, louder this time.

Then Elijah's gaze slid to Micah, and his next words were intentional. "The goddess is gracious, even to those we might deem... undeserving. Nonetheless, a Matebond is a Matebond, no matter the vessel, and tonight, we celebrate them all."

The applause returned, but Micah didn't so much as flinch. His expression remained stone-cold, though Violet noticed the slight twitch in his jaw and the way his eyes locked onto his uncle's. Elijah didn't even seem bothered by the silent defiance; if anything, he seemed entertained.

Suddenly, Elijah's voice changed, taking on a mournful edge. "But some blessings unfortunately walk hand-in-hand with sorrow. Tomorrow, we journey to the West Pack to mourn one of our very own, Alpha Henry Nightshade."

He paused, letting the murmurs sweep through the crowd. "He died heroically, defending the next generation from the vile terrorist Patrick Vale and his followers. Alpha Henry gave his life in the most honorable way an Alpha can, and that is protecting his pack."

Violet's mouth twitched. If only they knew the truth.

"Henry's courage will not be forgotten," Elijah declared. "And that is why after his burial, a monument will be erected in his honor, forever standing as a reminder of his sacrifice."

"Oh boy," Violet breathed. Trouble was brewing in the air.

Griffin cursed under his breath while Roman said. "Asher's going to lose it."

And he wasn't wrong. It was bad enough that Asher had to spin Henry's last moments into a hero's tale to protect them all. Now Elijah was ensuring his legacy would be carved in stone for everyone to worship—a constant reminder for Asher to choke on every single day.

The clueless crowd broke into applause, reporters snapping photos as Elijah basked in the glory, his smile triumphant, and posture regal.

Elijah was doing this on purpose, Violet could tell. Everyone knew Henry was a horrible person. Saving them? That was the joke of the century. This was Elijah's way of letting them know he was onto them. He didn't have the evidence, so he was punishing them instead. Punishing Asher.

But no matter what, their secret would stay buried. Forever.

"And now," Elijah said, his voice returning to its usual warmth, "let us drink, dance, and be merry. Tomorrow, duty awaits."

With that, he turned and swept away, his beta, Christian, following close behind.

The moment he left, the crowd relaxed, the party springing back to life. It wasn't long before Irene rose to her feet and approached them, her expression unreadable.

"I'll pray for you tonight. Best of luck tomorrow."

And then she left too.

Violet let out a shaky breath. Indeed, they would need all the luck they could get.

Chapter 548: A Better Rain

After Irene left the party, the other Alphas followed one by one. They all knew tomorrow would be a long day, and with the responsibility of leadership weighing on their shoulders, rest was non-negotiable. Wolves might be stronger and more resilient than humans, but even their bodies needed downtime.

The humans, however, were another story.

Most of the high-ranking dignitaries had retreated for the night, but plenty of others stayed behind. Right now, they were drunk out of their minds, laughing too loudly, swaying on their feet, and making an absolute spectacle of themselves.

Violet, Roman, and Griffin sat at their table, quietly watching them with growing annoyance. Even though the punishment was given to Roman, there was no way on earth they were leaving him to deal with the mess alone. They were in this together.

"I wish Alaric was here," Violet said. "He'd just make it rain on them and clear this place out."

"Same," Griffin sighed, rubbing his temple.

But Roman perked up suddenly, his grin spreading wide and positively sinister.

"Don't worry," he said, leaning back with that glint in his eyes Violet never trusted. "I can make it rain something else."

"Roman?" Violet asked, suspicious.

He grabbed her hand and pressed a kiss to her knuckles, speaking in an exaggerated, fake accent. "Don't worry, mademoiselle, it will be harmless fun. Absolutely magnifique."

Violet groaned. That didn't reassure her at all, but she let it go.

Roman released her hand and focused forward. The next moment, the black of his eyes shifted, twisting unnaturally until they mirrored the glossy pupils of a bird. It was startling, but Violet didn't flinch. She just held her breath, and watched him, intrigued.

Roman's gaze went distant, as if he were seeing through someone else's vision. Then came the first sharp caw. Then a second. And a third.

At first, the guests ignored it. The music was still going, and the dancing didn't stop, not until a single bird swooped low and plop! It dropped poop on a man's suit. The poor victim screamed, spinning in a circle as his friends laughed mercilessly.

And then came the second bird. The third. The fourth.

Heads turned upward, and dread dawned on every drunken face as nearly fifty birds darkened the sky.

As if Roman had given a silent command, the birds dove as one. What followed was a rain of bird poop pelting the guests like nature's cruel joke.

Chaos broke out. Guests and reporters shrieked and scrambled, shoes flying, dresses torn as they tripped over each other in blind panic. This wasn't like the rat epidemic — no one was sticking around this time. They bolted, fleeing the garden entirely.

In less than two minutes, the once-packed garden was deserted.

From behind a hedge, Violet, Roman, and Griffin came out.

"Viola!" Roman shouted with glee, throwing his arms wide triumphantly. "It got the job done!"

But Violet's smile vanished when she noticed the streak of blood trailing from Roman's nose.

"Roman!" she gasped, rushing to his side. Without hesitation, she wiped the blood away with her thumb, her face etched with concern. "Enough animal control for today."

"Aww, she's worried about me," Roman teased her.

"Of course I'm worried about you, idiot!" Violet snapped. "For a skill you haven't trained in years, you're pushing yourself way too far."

Roman smirked, though it was tired around the edges. "You know what would make it better? A kiss or two." He waggled his brows playfully.

To be honest, he hadn't expected her to take him seriously. So when Violet cupped his face and kissed him square on the lips, Roman froze.

It was a warm, lingering kiss, and his only regret was that it didn't last longer.

"Better now?" Violet asked softly when she pulled back.

Roman's grin spread so wide it was ridiculous. His cheeks burned red. "Yeah, more than better."

Griffin's dry voice cut through the moment. "The same can't be said for the garden."

They turned to look, and sure enough, there was bird poop everywhere.

"You've officially increased the workload," Griffin deadpanned.

Roman just shrugged, utterly unapologetic. "Manure's good for the plants."

Griffin sighed, his shoulders sagging in defeat. Roman was absolutely insufferable. There was no point in trying to reason with him.

"Let's just get this over with." Griffin muttered.

They started cleaning with Violet doing her best to keep them focused, while Roman whistled cheerfully as if this wasn't a task at all.

It went smoothly for about five minutes.

Then Roman, with a mischievous gleam in his eyes, scooped up a small clump of wet leaves and tossed it at Griffin's back. The clump hit with a soft splatt.

Griffin froze mid-motion, his spine going rigid. Slowly, he turned his head, his brown eyes narrowing.

"Roman..." Griffin's voice was dangerously calm. "Don't. Do. That. Again."

Roman placed a hand over his heart in mock innocence. "Of course, big guy. I'd never dream of it."

A minute later, splatt.

This time, the clump smacked Griffin right in the chest.

Roman grinned. "Oops."

Griffin didn't even reply. He charged at him.

"AHH!" Roman shrieked, taking off like his life depended on it. He darted between the scattered chairs and half-toppled tables, laughing wildly, but Griffin was surprisingly agile for his massive size.

"Come here!" Griffin roared.

"Nope! Nope! Nope!" Roman cackled, dodging left, then right, until — WHAM!

Griffin tackled him to the ground, his full weight crashing down.

"Oof!" Roman gasped, the air whooshing out of his lungs. Okay, that hurt a little bit. But then, he asked for it.

Griffin straddled him, playfully landing punches to his chest and arms.

"Ahh, yes, Daddy! Harder!" Roman moaned dramatically, wiggling beneath him. "Punish me!"

Griffin's punches grew sharper. "Shut up!"

Violet groaned, pinching the bridge of her nose. "Oh, come on, guys!"

At once, Griffin shot off Roman scowling, while Roman lay there, laughing like a lunatic.

Then Violet froze as a sharp, pricking sensation crawled up her spine. It was the unmistakable feeling of being watched. She turned around, her eyes scanning the hedges and trees surrounding the garden.

But there was nothing, just swaying flowers and still darkness.

"What is it?" Roman asked, his laughter dying when he saw her tense expression.

"Nothing," Violet said finally, though unease lingered in her voice. She turned back to them, forcing a smile. "Let's just get this done. I'm tired already."

Chapter 549: Her Wolf

It was close to three in the morning by the time they finally retreated. Yet, despite being nestled between Roman's and Griffin's warm bodies, Violet couldn't sleep. Her mind was far too restless.

Right now, she wasn't just studying the North Pack but all four packs. Violet didn't want to be a dead weight, not just for tomorrow's mission, but for the future. She needed to know everything there was to learn about the packs—their strengths, their weaknesses, and their secrets

First was the West Pack who thrived on power through discipline and intellect. They were dominant, but their cold order could fracture under pressure.

Core Traits: Disciplined, militaristic, ambitious, cunning.

Economy and Focus: Corporate power, education, strategy, and law.

Culture: Patriarchal to the core, where men ruled and women were silenced. They value discipline and efficiency above all else.

Strengths: Brilliant tacticians, feared armies, and ruthless political players.

Weaknesses: Rigid gender hierarchy creates internal resentment.

Obsessive focus on order makes them paranoid and controlling.

Rivalries among ambitious alphas often cause faction splits.

Violet's stomach knotted at the thought of the west expecting Asher to carry on that legacy. This wasn't going to be an easy battle.

The East Pack was the heart of faith and natural wealth. Noble, fair, and rich in resources, yet too naïve for the wolves waiting to exploit them.

Core Traits: Spiritual, resource-rich, hardworking but simple in outlook.

Economy & Focus: Agriculture, oil, minerals, forests, faith-driven society.

Culture: Deeply religious; women enjoy more rights and influence compared to other packs. They value family and fairness more than greed.

Strengths: Strong moral unity and abundant wealth. Women's voices provide social balance.

Weaknesses: Less focus on education leaves them vulnerable to manipulation by smarter packs. Reliance on faith sometimes blinds them to political reality.

On the bright side, the East were good at heart, even though that very goodness could destroy them if they weren't careful. Good thing they were a team and she would never let that happen.

As for the South Pack, they were the soul of culture and indulgence, often dismissed as lazy dreamers.

Core Traits: Free-spirited, indulgent, artistic, and flamboyant.

Economy and Focus: Tourism, festivals, entertainment.

Culture:

Known for lavish parties and indulgent lifestyles. Rich in art, music, and cultural traditions. Women and men share equal voices here. Outsiders view them as lazy, but they pride themselves on living life fully.

Strengths: Masters of soft power and influence. Flexible and creative, unlike the other rigid packs.

Weaknesses: Vulnerable to war due to lack of discipline.

A small smile touched Violet's lips, knowing this was a pack she wouldn't mind living in one day. However, with Micah whispering about the second great war, she knew the South Pack would be the first to fall if they were ever attacked.

And finally, the North Pack.

The North Pack was the forge of intellect and industry. Their unity was their strength, but also their prison.

Core Traits: Proud, isolationist, industrious, and brilliant.

Economy and Focus: Technology, invention, manufacturing.

Culture: Strong clan bonds; they intermarry to preserve bloodlines. Distinctive blonde hair is their mark of identity. They guard their independence fiercely.

Strengths: Masters of weapons and machines. Strong internal unity makes them hard to infiltrate. Highly intelligent, and quick innovators.

Weaknesses: Pride and distrust kept them cut off from alliances. Inter-marriage leads to stagnation in leadership and ideas.

And there it was again—the marriage part. Perhaps that was what unsettled her the most.

What if, by the time they arrived at the North Pack, Alaric was already married to some pretty northern girl with perfect blonde hair?

No. No. Violet shook her head. Alaric wouldn't do that. But what if he didn't have a choice?

Violet exhaled a shaky breath, trying to calm this tempest inside of her.

A deep voice broke the silence. "Why aren't you asleep yet?"

Violet turned on her side, her gaze meeting Griffin's. "I... I can't just sleep," she admitted.

"You're worried about Alaric," Griffin said, reading her without effort.

Violet nodded, her throat tightening.

Griffin's face relaxed. "Worrying about the future won't stop it from coming," he told her gently. "But tomorrow, we'll have the chance to do something about it, and you'll help him more if you're at your best. You need rest, Violet."

He reached out and murmured, "Come here."

But before Violet could move, a strong arm suddenly shot across her middle and latched onto her waist

Startled, Violet twisted her head. Roman was perfectly asleep, even snoring lightly, yet somehow, in his unconscious state, he clung to her stubbornly like a possessive wolf guarding his treasure.

Laughter bubbled from Violet's lips before she could stop it. "He's so cute," she whispered, her heart squeezing at the gesture.

Griffin gave her an exasperated look but didn't fight Roman's grip. With no other choice, he shifted closer instead, closing the small gap until Violet was pressed flush between both of them.

"Better," Griffin muttered, his deep voice rumbling against her skin. Facing her, he slid his hand into her hair and began to massage her scalp with slow, firm strokes.

Violet couldn't help the blissful moan that escaped her lips. Her eyes fluttered closed. "Don't stop," she murmured.

Griffin's lips twitched, but he obeyed, his fingers moving with skill. Slowly, the massage shifted into gentle strokes as he began humming a soothing lullaby.

The tension in Violet's body melted away, her breathing evening out. Just like that, sleep finally claimed her.

And the dream came.

Violet found herself lying naked on a forest floor, the earth cool and damp against her skin. A strange weight pressed against her back and she tilted her shoulder, only for her breath to catch at the sight of amethyst wings.

Before she could even process that, a low rustle stirred the trees. From the shadows, a massive wolf emerged, its fur a radiant purple. Its blazing eyes locked on her as it prowled forward, its aura overwhelming.

Yet, Violet wasn't afraid, not even when the wolf stopped directly in front of her, watching, and studying. If anything, the bond inside her stirred to life. Then a name rolled off her tongue like it had always been there.

"Thalia."

Chapter 550: The Plan

Roman shook her gently from sleep. "Violet."

She stirred, slowly sitting up. A strange warmth spread through her chest, a deep sense of completion, as though every scattered piece of her soul had finally been pulled back together.

"Thalia?" she whispered, testing the name on her lips.

Roman tilted his head. "Who's Thalia?"

"My wolf," Violet breathed, awe threading through her voice.

"Yes, call my name with pride, girl. "

A fierce, feminine voice rang inside Violet's head making her eyes widen with wonder.

Violet let out a shaky laugh. "Okay, she's a proud one."

Roman's eyes lit up. He crouched low, hands braced on his thighs, and leaned close like he could see through her. His dimples flashed in a teasing grin. "Hello to you, Thalia."

"Hello to you too, sexy mate," Thalia purred. "Tell him I wouldn't mind him throwing me on my back this morning."

Violet's cheeks blazed crimson. "Alright, that's enough introduction for today." She bolted to her feet, forcing Roman to straighten too.

Roman narrowed his eyes curiously. "What did she say?"

"She said hello," Violet said a little too quickly.

"I said more than hello, human vessel," Thalia snapped. "Tell him to take us to bed. I have needs."

Violet's lips twitched, wondering if the goddess had cursed her with an animal version of her mother, Nancy. That would be a nightmare she wouldn't wake up from.

She shot back in her mind, "First off, I have a name, use it. Second, we have more important things to do than rutting like animals."

"I am an animal," Thalia replied smugly.

"Yes," Violet shot back with sarcasm, "how could I forget?"

"I am a warrior wolf, Violet Purple," Thalia declared with such pride it thrummed in every word.

"And I'm your owner," Violet countered confidently. "Start getting used to it."

"I thought this was supposed to be a partnership, you and me."

Thalia's voice was suddenly small.

"Oh, now it's a partnership?" Violet's eyes narrowed, her voice laced with dry sarcasm as she saw straight through her antics.

While Violet and Thalia were still going back and forth mentally, Griffin stepped out of the bathroom, steam curling out behind him. A single white towel hung dangerously low on his hips, droplets of water trailing down his broad chest.

He stopped short, frowning, when he saw Violet standing stiffly, her eyes unfocused and locked on nothing in particular.

"What's going on with her?" Griffin asked, concerned. That was a first.

Roman, of course, gladly explained. "Finally, her wolf's talking to her."

"Oh." Griffin nodded slowly. "That's good, I think." His brows drew together. "But without control, this might be bad timing. Violet has no experience handling a wolf's instincts."

Before Roman could reply, Violet's gaze suddenly snapped to Griffin like a predator locking on prey.

"Oh sweet moon goddess," Thalia purred in Violet's head. "Look at that man. Those arms like thick, perfect ropes I wouldn't mind being tied up with. And those shoulders? Mountains I could climb all night. And don't even get me started on those abs, sweet heavens, you could grate cheese on them."

Violet's breath hitched. She had always known Griffin was sexy, but Thalia's raw, unfiltered lust slammed into her like a tidal wave, nearly knocking her off balance.

"Mine," Thalia growled possessively. "Ours. I want him now."

"No!"

Violet screamed inside her mind, but her traitorous eyes stayed glued to Griffin. She didn't even realize she was practically drooling until his voice broke through.

"Violet?" Griffin's head tilted, his tone uncertain.

"Huh?" Violet jerked back to reality, only to feel a wet trail at the corner of her mouth.

"What the—!" She swiped at it, face flaming, while Roman doubled over with unrestrained laughter.

"Oh, this is going to be fun," Roman wheezed. "Thalia and I are going to get along so well."

Griffin didn't say a word, but the smile at the corner of his lips was proof enough he was, well, flattered.

Violet groaned, throwing her hands up. "How do I block her out?!"

Griffin said, "As the host, you have greater control here, Violet. The same way you shift into her, you can shift her away—silence that part of her until you're ready to let her speak. But wolves have minds of their own, so it might backfire if she throws a tantrum and refuses to respond. With time, though, your bond will grow stronger, and you'll both learn to balance each other."

Yeah, she would take her chances.

Heart pounding, Violet closed her eyes and focused. It took everything in her, but slowly, the bond with Thalia dimmed until it went completely quiet. She exhaled in relief, sweat beading her temple.

Although, somehow, she could still feel Thalia like an itch beneath her skin that refused to go away.

Violet had never appreciated the silence of her own mind until Thalia's wild energy crowded every corner of her thoughts. Now there was another presence lodged deep within her, and it would take time to get used to.

One thing was certain though, she had to master her wolf before Thalia's instincts consumed her completely.

Griffin's voice was all business. "Violet, go shower. We leave by eight."

As Violet moved toward the bathroom, Roman's voice followed her. "Need some company in there, baby girl?"

Without looking back, Violet raised her middle finger high in answer.

Roman's laugh rang out, rich and unrepentant. "You know I always love fucking you, baby girl."

Violet almost stumbled at the entrance. Goddess, you could never win against Roman. Not with that wicked mouth of his.

Quickly, Violet shoved his nonsense out of her head, showered, and dressed, though she was beginning to get nervous.

According to Elijah's orders, all the Alphas were to travel with him on his private jet to the West Pack. That included not only the ruling Alphas but their heirs as well. And since Violet was now mated to two of those heirs, she was automatically included.

The thought of being trapped on a jet with Elijah was enough to make her stomach twist. Not only was his presence suffocating, but gathering every Alpha and heir into one plane was politically reckless. If anything happened midair — an accident, or sabotage — their entire leadership would be wiped out in one blow.

Which was why they had their own plan.

They intended to slip away before reaching the airport. If they timed it right, Elijah wouldn't notice their absence until it was far too late. By the time he doubled back to hunt them down, they'd already be off to save Alaric.

At least, that was the plan.