

Defy The Alpha(s) - Chapter 851: The Queen Is Dead[1,515 words]

Chapter 851: The Queen Is Dead

"Alaric?"

Lila wasn't sure what she had just witnessed. So she turned to the others to confirm if they had seen it too.

Not surprising, Taryn and Hannah had the same bewildered expression as her.

Alaric then blinked, his eyes returning to that familiar, striking blue, and he sucked in a sharp breath, like someone who had been held underwater and had finally broken the surface.

"I saw them," he said with a rough voice.

Then again, more firmly this time, like he needed them to understand, "I saw them."

"Saw who?" Lila asked, though she already had an inkling.

"Asher and Violet," Alaric said, awe and relief flooding his expression. "We're bound as one. Our circle is complete. Although..." his brows pulled together slightly, his focus drifting as if he were listening to something far away. "Asher is more bound to her than the rest of us."

Taryn exchanged a knowing look with Lila. "They're tied telepathically now. All of them."

Alaric said. "Asher wants us to find the Queen and handle things here. He'll keep Violet safe."

"You mean the same Asher who hurt—" Lila started, her tone rising with lingering distrust.

Taryn cut her off. "If he's finally mated with Violet, then she's safest with him. You know that." His voice dropped a bit. "And you also know what comes after. We shouldn't interfere unless we want him ripping our heads off."

He didn't need to say it outright. The mating frenzy.

Alaric flushed red, confirming it without words. Then he looked around, his expression hardening as he took in the devastation around them.

"Where's the Queen?" he asked.

Before anyone could answer, a shout cut through the air. One of Baron's Fae came out of nowhere, hurling a massive blast of fire straight at them.

Lila reacted quickly, her hand slicing through the air as she stripped the oxygen from the flame. The fire sputtered violently and collapsed into nothing before it could reach them.

The Fae prepared to attack again but Alaric made his move. This time, he didn't call the sky or summon lightning. He didn't need to.

Alaric could feel the change. The completed bond had done something to him, and now, he was stronger.

Every living being carries energy, human or supernatural. Electrical signals firing through nerves, controlling movement, and heartbeat. And now, he could feel them.

He had dreamt of reaching heights like this with his ability, and now it had finally come to pass.

Not just the Fae, he could feel it in everyone. The tiny electrical currents that kept their bodies alive. Lila. Taryn. Hannah.

Each of them. If he just tugged a little, he could manipulate them all without breaking a sweat.

The thought was intoxicating, tempting and dangerous. For a moment, it thrilled him, then he forced himself to focus back on the enemy.

Alaric reached out, instinctively with his ability and found the electrical impulses running through the Fae's nervous system. He grabbed hold of the signals and pulled.

The Fae froze mid-motion.

A strangled sound tore from his throat as his body convulsed, his muscles seizing violently as the signals misfired all at once.

His hand flew to his chest, it was pumping so fast it wanted to burst from his chest.

But Alaric tightened his hold, pulling harder until the rhythm broke.

The Fae gasped, blood spilling from his mouth as his body failed him from the inside out. Then he fell, dead before he hit the ground.

Silence fell in the sacred groove.

When Alaric turned back, he found Lila, Taryn, and Hannah staring at him wide-eyed, shocked. Not just that, there was a new kind of fear in their gaze. Alaric Storm was a different kind of predator now.

Alaric glanced at his hand, flexing his fingers slightly as if testing the new sensation humming beneath his skin.

"Leveled up," he said callously, like his transformation was completely normal.

Before any of them could move on, the air rippled. Alaric felt the shift, his body already shifting into a defensive stance, lightning flashing in his iris as his senses locked onto the disturbance.

Then Annequin stepped out of thin air.

Queen Seraphira was draped against her, barely conscious.

"Baron's killing her!" Annequin shouted.

Lila rushed forward and shoved Annequin hard, ripping the Queen from her grasp. "Get your damn hands off her, you betrayer!"

The Queen tried to speak, her lips parting, but instead, a cry of pain fell from her throat. Her body folded inward, trembling.

"Alaric!" Lila yelled, panic breaking through her anger.

Alaric caught the Queen before she collapsed completely. He lifted her carefully, his jaw tightening.

"Find Zuru," he ordered.

But Annequin said to them, "If you mean the Queen's healer, Baron had her killed already."

Silence hit them like a blow.

"He knew your plan," she continued. "Every step of it. So he made sure there would be no one left to save her."

Lila's head snapped toward her, fury blazing in her eyes. "You mean the plan you helped him ruin."

Her power billowed without warning. The ground trembled, and the air thickened as Lila lashed out, sending a blast of wind and earth straight at Annequin.

But Annequin was already gone. She reappeared a few steps away, untouched, her expression unreadable.

"You're wasting your energy," she said calmly.

Lila didn't stop, releasing another strike, and again, Annequin slipped through it like smoke.

"Asher was the one who told me to align with Baron," Annequin revealed at last with a note of frustration. "He wasn't satisfied with your poorly fashioned plans against Baron. So he came to me and ordered me to. That way, I could get close, gain leverage and turn the tide. Baron needed an ally and he fell easily when I pitched in my offer to him."

Lila froze for half a second, disbelief running across her face.

"If you didn't have my help," Annequin continued, her gaze sweeping across them, "do you really think you would still be alive right now?"

"That doesn't absolve you," Lila snapped. "If you think this is enough to redeem yourself, then you're more delusional than I thought."

Before the tension could snap, Taryn stepped in.

"Enough," he said barked, placing himself between them. "She made her own moves, yes. But she also saved us."

Lila didn't respond, her chest rising and falling with restrained anger. Behind them, Alaric tightened his hold on the Queen.

"There's still a way," he said, his voice cutting through the tension.

All eyes turned to him.

"Zuru documented the transfusion process," he continued. "Everything we need is there. A compatible body and the spell."

Lila's eyes widened suddenly as realization struck.

"A priestess," she said quickly. "A priestess is powerful enough to handle the spell. And we had several present for the trial."

Her gaze swept across the sacred Grove except it was nearly empty. Most of the Fae had fled for their lives.

"We just need to find one," she said, more to herself now, urgency in her voice. "Before it's too late."

"I guess one of us would have to be quick enough." Annequin's voice carried a quiet challenge.

Lila turned, and their eyes locked in a long, silent stare. Neither yielding nor trusting, however, she needed as much help as she could.

"We'd see then."

Lila took off unlike Annequin who simply vanished. To think she had such an ability and had been hiding it. Lila just couldn't trust her.

"We're headed to Zuru's workshop." Alaric informed Taryn and Hannah who nodded in unison.

They fell in line behind him. Although no one came out to attack them again, none of them relaxed. Around them, the palace was in chaos.

Fae ran in every direction—some fleeing, desperate to escape, while others stayed behind, trying to heal and keep their injured kin alive.

They reached Zuru's workshop. Alaric stepped in first and froze. For a split second, his mind refused to process what he was seeing.

Zuru's body was pinned to the wall.

A sword was driven straight through her stomach, the blade embedding deep into the stone behind her. Her head hung forward, her body slumped unnaturally around the weapon that held her in place.

Beside him, Taryn let out a low, guttural sound, something between a curse and a growl, spoken in the Fae tongue.

He stepped forward, gripping the sword, and pulled it free in one swift motion. Zuru's body dropped into his arms, and he lowered her carefully to the ground.

Then he bowed his head and began to murmur prayer for her soul to find peace.

Alaric looked away, a tightness forming in his chest. He and Zuru had worked together and she didn't deserve this. None of them did. But there was no time to linger on that.

He carefully laid Queen Seraphira onto the worktable, and stopped.

The queen was pale as hell and she was no longer breathing.

Fuck. Realization dawned on him.

The Queen of the Free Fae was dead.

Defy The Alpha(s) - Chapter 852: Kill The Body[1,032 words]

Chapter 852: Kill The Body

"That bastard has finally done it!" Alaric cursed Baron as he urgently pressed down on the Queen's chest, trying to resuscitate her.

They needed her dead, yes, but without a priestess and a compatible body, she was as good as gone. He needed more time.

"Your Majesty!" Taryn shouted as soon as he noticed what was going on.

Although he was aware of the plan to revive the Queen in another body, it didn't mean he wasn't wrecked seeing her unmoving form. He wasn't even sure the transfusion would work.

Taryn was at her side, nearly shoving Alaric out of the way as he took the Queen's hands in his, shaking her vigorously as if that would wake her.

Many would assume he hated Seraphira. After all, she had practically caused Poppy's death. He had blamed her at first, but she was all he had left as a reminder of Poppy. Though Seraphira was a bit naive, she loved her people and did everything for them. Perhaps a little too much, spoiling them in the end.

"Come back, Your Highness!" he moaned, willing the Queen to wake. She didn't.

"Out of my way," Alaric nudged him. "Right now, you're more of a hindrance than a help."

Taryn barely got a hold of himself, watching as Alaric placed both hands on the Queen's chest, lightning flitting around them as he tried to kickstart Seraphira's heart.

When nothing happened the first and second time, a low, mournful groan escaped Taryn's throat. He ran a hand through his hair anxiously. Then a pair of small arms wrapped around him in comfort.

"It's alright, Taryn. Everything will work out," Hannah said, patting his back.

She was so small compared to him that when Taryn hugged her back, he practically swallowed her in those stacks of defined muscles.

"Sorry to interrupt your little lovey-dovey moment, but where the heck is Lila and Annequin? We have a small window before the Queen's soul moves on from this plane," Alaric hissed, urgency in his voice.

Right at that moment, the door burst open, setting off Taryn, who growled threateningly, and Hannah, who already had a weapon at the ready, both assuming it was an enemy.

But to their surprise, it was Prince Lucien, alongside two palace guards. And not just that, he was holding onto a very familiar face.

Celeste.

"She was caught trying to escape through the borders," Lucien explained.

Everyone stared at Celeste, not just because she was an obvious enemy, but because a purple butterfly flew into the room and perched on her shoulder, staying there.

"Sweet goddess," Alaric's lips curved to the side in delight. Right on time.

"She's the compatible body?" Taryn couldn't believe it.

Hannah smirked. "Isn't karma such a bitch."

Alaric commanded at once, "Get her onto the other work table and bind her."

Lucien didn't waste time. He gestured to the guards, who grabbed Celeste on both sides.

"What are you planning to do to me? Let me go this instant!" Celeste shrieked, struggling against them to no avail.

The guards showed no emotion, ignoring her screams as they dumped her onto the table. One of them was clearly an earth wielder, judging by the way vines sprang from the ground and wrapped around her body multiple times, securing her to the surface. They coiled around her wrists and ankles, tightening with no chance of escape.

"I am going to kill you all!" Celeste spat. "You think this is over? Baron will return, and I will enjoy watching him torture every single one of you."

Hannah scoffed from the side. "Yeah, I'd love to see him try, considering he ran with his tail between his legs."

Then her eyes darkened. "Also, you talk too much."

Before anyone could react, Hannah had already stuffed a piece of cloth into Celeste's mouth, reducing her to muffled protests.

Taryn looked at his little monster with pride in his eyes. His idea of human females had always been fragile creatures with no stomach for violence, but not her. She kept surprising him. Then again, she wasn't exactly human.

They were still preparing when Lila and Annequin stepped in, accompanied by two graceful Fae in white ceremonial dresses.

Priestesses. Not one. But two of them.

Although the one beside Annequin looked pale. If not traumatized. Only the goddess knew how Annequin had convinced her.

"We found—" Lila faltered as her gaze fell on Celeste. "What is going on here?" Her questioning look landed on Alaric.

"The goddess delivered the compatible body right on bloody time."

"What?" Lila blinked, then her eyes narrowed at Celeste. "Is that so?" she mused with dark satisfaction. Sure, she wanted to kill the bitch, but this was enough punishment.

Annequin chortled. "The heavens do know how to checkmate."

"You have the priestess. Here's the body. The Queen's already dead. I'd say we get this over with," Alaric said, impatience clear in his tone.

It was only then that Lila truly looked at the Queen and noticed the stillness.

Grief clawed at her chest, wrapping around her like a tightening coil, but she forced it down.

There was still hope.

"You know what to do," she said, nudging the priestess forward.

Annequin released hers as well. Better two than one. Just in case Lila's priestess didn't know her trade—though she didn't say that part out loud.

While that was happening, Lucien moved to Zuru's body and lifted her gently.

"I'll prepare her for the funeral," he said.

Taryn nodded.

As Lucien passed Annequin, she tried to speak.

"I'm sorry, I didn't—"

But he cut her off with a cold, bloodied stare and walked past her without a word.

Annequin sighed. It had been hard enough trying to win him over. But now? Her mate hated her, and that was going to be a problem.

Unfortunately, she was never one to back away from an exciting challenge. Her lovely prince didn't know what was coming.

Game on.

One of the priestesses spoke, her gaze fixed on Celeste. "She needs to die."

Hannah lifted an iron dagger, a slow, dangerous smile forming on her lips. "So... who's doing the honors?"

Defy The Alpha(s) - Chapter 853: Full possession[1,023 words]

Chapter 853: Full possession

Celeste had not known real fear until she heard them discussing her life like it meant nothing.

She screamed, though it came out muffled, her body thrashing wildly against the bindings.

That stupid bird prince had forced a nullifying elixir down her throat before dragging her here, hence her powers was useless, no matter how hard she tried to reach for them.

Before anyone could ponder over the issue,

Lila snatched the dagger from Hannah's hand, and in a blur of motion, she was already beside Celeste.

"May you never rest in peace," Lila spat, her eyes burning with raw hatred. Then she drove the dagger straight into Celeste's chest.

Celeste's body jerked. Her muffled scream broke into a strangled gasp as the blade pierced deep, right where her heart beat erratically beneath her ribs.

Her breath came in short, wet bursts as

pain exploded through her, consuming everything. She fought to stay alive, but it was too late. Strength was already leaving her.

Her vision blurred and the faces around her distorted, while the room tilted. A choking sound forced its way out of her throat as blood pooled in her mouth, spilling past the gag in thick, slow drips.

Her eyes remained open, frozen in that last moment of disbelief. Silence settled over the room.

Lila pulled the dagger free without a word, stepping back as if the act had cost her nothing.

"You can start now, there's no more time."

With more time wasted, the Queen's soul would wander away from this realm. And now Celeste's.

The first priestess nodded, her expression solemn, gaze fixed on the now lifeless body.

She commanded, "Align the bodies side by side."

Taryn moved into action, pushing the wheeled table so that the Queen's body and Celeste's lay side by side with barely any space between them.

The second priestess ordered, "Give us room. Your living essence cannot interfere with this ritual. You in particular..." she said to Annequin, "your aura is too heavy. It might disrupt the process."

Whether she was telling the truth or simply seeking revenge for earlier, Annequin lifted her hands in mock surrender. "Have at it then."

She left the room entirely.

Annequin was smart. If the ritual failed, no one would say she had interfered. Moreover, she could use this time to go comfort her grieving mate.

As for the others, they stepped back as far as the room allowed. Thankfully, it was enough.

The first priestess turned to the other.

"Let's begin."

The second nodded. "I'll lend you as much energy as I can."

"Thank you," the first replied.

The first priestess brought out a red string which she used to bind Queen Seraphira's hand to Celeste's. She then turned Seraphira's head and Celeste's so they faced each other.

Then she straightened, her eyes fluttering close. "Fuil go fuil. Anáil go hanáil..." the priestess began with a low voice, the words heavy with meaning.

Almost immediately, the second priestess joined her, her voice layering beneath the first, strengthening it.

Just like that, the room pulsed with power, a sharp static charge like Alaric's lightning crackling through the air, every hair on their bodies standing on end.

Seraphira's body was the first to begin to glow. It was small at first, then glowed brighter.

"It's working." The second priestess informed the first one who kept chanting.

Like a spreading current, the glow traveled from Seraphira's body, seeping into Celeste's through the red cord like liquid light.

Then it flickered and the first priestess stiffened slightly.

"I feel resistance," she whispered with a tight voice.

"Celeste's soul must be resisting. Push through, do not let the soul drift." the second priestess urged her.

Then she placed her palm on the body of the first priestess, beginning to share some of the energy as promised.

"Do we need to do anything?" Alaric couldn't help but ask. He hated the fact he just sat there, doing nothing.

"There's nothing we can do except disrupt them. All we can do is hope." Lila said, her heart racing amid the calm she betrayed.

"Come on, you can do this, your majesty." She prayed in her heart.

The temperature in the room dropped drastically, their breath turning visible as something unseen stirred between the two bodies. Even greater chills broke out on their body.

The chanting from the first priestess grew louder and stronger.

"An té a éilíonn thú, diúltaím dó.

An rud a choinníonn thú, brisim é..."

Suddenly, Celeste's body jerked violently as if something foreign was trying to force its way inside. The glow had now enveloped her body, flaring brighter.

The room pulsed with energy and the walls groaned, as if even sesame was sensing and obviously being affected by the unusual magic trying to be contained. Outside, thunder rolled and clapped loudly, heralding the supernatural occurrence.

A wisp of light entered Celeste's body and a choking sound tore from her throat right before silence fell. The glow vanished just as well.

The priestess staggered back, the second one catching her before she collapsed completely.

For a moment, nothing happened. Then they watched with startled gasps as Celeste's once dark hair changed entirely to purple, just like Queen Seraphira's.

What the—?

Celeste's eyes snapped open, her irises completely purple as she gasped like a drowning victim coming back to life. She began to thrash violently against the bindings, struggling to break free.

Hannah frowned. "Are you sure that's the—"

But there was no room for doubt when the Queen's magic tore through the bindings like they were paper. Then she sat up, coughing harshly.

Lila stepped forward hesitantly. "Your Highness?" she asked, unsure.

Then the Fae turned and Lila gasped.

The face staring back at her was no longer Celeste's. It was the Queen's.

This was not just a soul transfusion. The Queen had completely taken over Celeste's body.

But Seraphira paid them no mind. She stared down at her hands, flexing her fingers slowly as if trying to understand this new form.

Then she spoke, her voice rough, and scratchy, "Where the hell is that bastard, Baron?"

Defy The Alpha(s) - Chapter 854: Games played By Wolves[1,576 words]

Violet blinked awake slowly, her vision swimming before settling on the gilded ceiling above her.

Her brows furrowed. Where the heck was she? The last thing she remembered....

"You're awake."

Violet sat up with a jerk at the familiar voice in her head.

Wait a minute—In her head?

The sound of Asher's rich, amused laughter followed almost immediately. *"You should see the priceless look on your face trying to figure it out, love."*

Violet let out a sharp breath as Asher stepped out from the shadows gathered at the corner of the room, where the moonlight couldn't quite reach.

"It's me, my purple queen," he said aloud this time.

For a moment, Violet simply gawked at him, her mind struggling to catch up with what she was seeing.

Asher stood there like he had stepped straight out of a fever dream.

He was dressed in a black linen robe paired with matching trousers, the fabric loose on his frame. The robe hung open untied, revealing the hard lines of his chest and the toned planes of his stomach.

The darkness clung to him, brushing against his skin, making the sharp cut of his jaw and the dark fall of his hair look even more dangerous. Even his familiar slitted eyes seemed deeper now like something about him had changed.

Violet couldn't help but practically drool over him, until she remembered that wasn't the most important thing right now. She immediately got out of the bed and ran toward him, slamming into him as she hugged him.

"Tell me I'm not dreaming right now," Violet said with sudden desperation, hugging him tightly, afraid this might all be a dream and he'd vanish if she dared let go.

Asher smiled down at her. "You're not dreaming, my purple queen."

Violet let out a shaky gasp. "It worked," she muttered.

It was true. She wasn't dreaming. Asher was standing right in front of her.

She reached up tentatively, her hands brushing his face, then his neck, down to his chest, and back to his face again, as if confirming he was real.

"I watched you die," Violet's voice cracked, tears gathering in her eyes. "I watched you die, Asher."

"And you brought me back," Asher said, pride lacing his voice. "You're a stubborn woman, aren't you, Violet Purple."

At first, the relief had been overwhelming, but now that she knew he wasn't disappearing, anger took over.

"You fucking maniac!" She hit him hard in the chest.

"Ow," Asher winced.

But Violet didn't care. She hit him again, harder this time, both hands striking his chest. "How could you do that to me?! You fucking slit your throat right in front of me?!"

"I know," Asher sighed. "But it was the only way. You don't understand, that thing was in my head and I could have hurt—"

"I don't care!" Violet screamed.

For a moment, her chest rose and fell heavily as she glared at him. Asher said nothing, his lips pressed into a tight line.

Then the floodgates broke. Every emotion she had buried in that helpless moment came rushing back.

"I thought I lost you forever!" Violet sobbed, the tears spilling uncontrollably.

"Goddess, no." Horror filled Asher's expression, his chest tightening painfully at the sight of her breaking. That had never been his intention.

"Baby girl, no," he tried, reaching for her, but it was too late.

"You don't know how scared I was," Violet cried. "It hurt so much I felt like I was dying. I can't live without you, Asher Nightshade."

"Fuck," Asher muttered, pulling her into a tight embrace, holding her so close it was hard to breathe.

But neither of them cared.

"I'm so sorry, Violet. I'm so sorry," Asher repeated, his voice breaking as he held her. "It's never going to happen again. I swear it. Not even death will separate us again."

This time, he meant it. Because now, his heart would only stop beating when hers did. They were bound for life.

Asher's hand moved slowly over Violet's back in steady, grounding strokes, never rushing her, never pushing her to stop.

"Let it out," he whispered. "It's okay, I've got you."

And she did.

All of it spilled out, every ounce of frustration, fear, and desperation that had once choked her. Asher simply held her, steady and unyielding, letting her fall apart in his arms without a word, until the storm raging inside her eased and her sobs gradually turned into uneven breaths.

Only then did Asher pull back, tilting her head so she met his gaze as he said through clenched teeth, "Cursed be the day I'm ever the reason a single tear falls from your eyes..."

He completed it not just in the Fae tongue, but in her head.

"Mo bhanríon chorcra."

My purple queen.

Violet's eyes widened in surprise.

"Since when have you been learning the Fae tongue?" she replied mentally, taken aback by the ease of the communication.

Asher grinned. "You'd be surprised the lengths I can go."

"No, I'm out." She rebutted.

The meaning was clear. He had gone as far as slitting his throat to protect her, nothing else could compare.

Then Violet stepped back, finally taking in their surroundings. Though it was dark, she saw clearly with her Fae eyes, taking in the spacious expanse of the luxurious room before her.

It had large, arched windows where moonlight spilled through in silver streams, casting soft patterns across the polished patterned floors, and a connecting balcony where most of the light filtered in.

The room itself spoke of wealth with the carved pillars lining the walls, their surfaces etched with Fae runes, and rich drapes hung untouched by dust. It would have felt like the palace except she had never seen this place before.

"Where are we?" Violet croaked.

Asher replied, "The pixies led us to an unoccupied Fae manor. Somewhere we could... bond properly."

It was the way he said it that made Violet suddenly feel parched.

She had tried to ignore the heat simmering beneath her skin but the shock of seeing him alive had drowned everything else out. Now, with nothing left to distract her, it came rushing back stronger and hotter. Her skin burned with it.

Only then did Violet glance down and froze. She was dressed in a white, sheer nightwear. That was not what she had been wearing.

Her head snapped up to Asher, alarm flashing across her face. "Who undressed me?"

Asher looked at her, almost lazily. "Is that what you should be worried about...?"

Violet held his gaze and got caught in it. Those slitted gray eyes had darkened, something dangerous and consuming flickering within them, and her heart stuttered.

He tilted his head slightly, voice dropping.

"...especially knowing I'll tear them off in our frenzy-induced mating."

Violet swallowed. Hard.

"You know how long I've waited for this moment, my love," Asher murmured, stepping toward her, slowly and deliberately like a predator that already knew there was no escape.

Badum. Badum. Her heart pounded wildly in her chest.

Violet didn't know why she was stepping back, only that the look in his eyes promised destruction. And somehow,

that both thrilled and terrified her.

Violet's eyes flashed as Thalia surged forward, her presence swallowing Violet whole as her voice slipped into the bond, smooth and dangerous.

'Then let's make it a game, mate.'

Across from her, Asher stilled and then his own eyes flashed too as his own wolf answered.

Wraith. She finally knew his name.

'As you wish, my queen.'

The response wasn't playful and was full of dark intent. Inside, Violet's panic spiked.

What the hell are these animals doing?

But she couldn't move or speak, not to mention stop their morbid plan. Her body no longer belonged to her.

In her mind, Thalia smiled—a slow, wicked curve of her lips—and Violet heard her voice again, dripping with challenge.

'Catch me if you can... and pour your wrath on me.'

What the—?

Violet was completely thrown.

It was a known fact you did not provoke a wolf like this. Not unless you wanted to awaken their feral side, the one that fed on their most primal instincts.

"Thalia, stop—!" Violet tried but it was already too late.

Her body had already turned and she ran out the door, down the hallway. She was fast like a prey who knew exactly what hunted it.

Behind her was a growl that didn't just echo through the manor, no, it shook it.

Wraith had taken over and he was no longer patient.

The air shifted, thick with intent, heavy with something ancient and territorial.

The hunt had begun.

Violet could feel Thalia's wild and unhinged laughter echoing in her head as she ran through the unfamiliar manor, turning corners blindly with no idea where she was going. And Thalia loved it.

Run, her wolf purred, delighted.

Behind her was the heavy, relentless pounding of footsteps. Wraith was furiously chasing her, sending a shiver down her spine.

Then just at that moment when Violet needed the wolf to take responsibility for the fire she had started, Thalia suddenly receded and control snapped back.

"What—?! No, no, no!" Violet gasped, stumbling before forcing herself forward again.

"That crazy motherfucker," she cursed under her breath, panicking. Now it was just her.

Her body. And the crazy choice Thalia had made.

And unfortunately, a very provoked, possessive, and horny wolf was right on her heels.

Defy The Alpha(s) - Chapter 855: The Mating Mark[1,544 words]

Chapter 855: The Mating Mark

Although Violet searched for an escape, she knew deep down there was no outrunning this. The fever had already sunk its claws into her, clouding her thoughts, leaving her lightheaded and painfully aware of every inch of her body that ached for her mate.

But not like this. Not when Wraith had taken the reins. If he caught her like this, there would be no restraint, just raw, consuming need –and that was exactly what Thalia, her crazy wolf, wanted.

Sure, Violet was into rough sex, but she sure as hell wasn't about to let her mate reduce her to nothing but something to be claimed. At least, not without a fight.

Violet finally made it down the stairs, but she could feel him right behind her, closing in fast. Asher's breath ghosted against the back of her neck, so close that if she faltered for even a second, he would have her.

With unnatural speed, she vaulted onto the balustrade in one seamless motion and launched herself off it, using the drop to gain distance as she glided down to the floor below, Asher's hand swiping at empty air.

Violet landed smoothly in the living room, proud of herself. She then glanced up to see Asher's nostrils flare, his gaze dark, heated, and locked entirely on her.

A slow, daring smirk curved her lips.

But that was a bad move.

Because the next second, Asher threw himself over the railing, landing hard on the floor below with a thud before stalking toward her without pause.

Fuck her life.

Violet turned to run again, but she had underestimated what Thalia had unleashed. The hunt had taken hold of Asher, his blood thrumming with a primal thrill as old as time itself.

He caught her in seconds, slamming into her from behind and driving them both to the living room floor, the impact knocking the breath from her lungs.

Somewhere behind them, fire crackled in the hearth, casting shadows across the walls where portraits of ancient Fae watched in silence.

But Violet couldn't focus on any of that, not when he was on her, pinning her down. His skin against hers was like gasoline poured onto an open flame, heat pooling low in her belly. His intoxicating scent filled her lungs, dizzying, overwhelming, and though she tried to fight him off, a dark, traitorous thrill coiled inside her when he grabbed both her wrists and pinned them above her head.

Then he snarled in her face. "You're mine, now. All mine."

Goddess.

Violet felt wetness pool between her thighs, her body betraying her completely. She was already aching, already burning, and when he lowered his head, nuzzling into her neck, his breath hot against her skin, she arched into him without thinking, silently begging for his teeth.

She wanted him to claim her. To mark her.

But Asher had already lost patience, swallowed whole by the mating haze. All Violet heard was the sharp tear of fabric. Before she could look to see what that was, he pried her thighs open and then plunged right into her hot wetness, the both of them moaning and gasping at the feeling.

Goddess above. Violet was instantly swept away as her back arched off the floor. Asher hadn't even given her any warning or let her adjust to the sweet stretch of his cock inside her. All he did was wrap her legs around him, locking her tightly around him, and thrusting into her with the pace of a madman.

"Mine. Mine. Mine." He gritted his teeth, fucking her harder.

"Yes... yours," Violet breathed, her voice breaking into a moan as she gave in, relishing the rough, desperate control he had over her.

Snarling and moaning, Asher, or rather Wraith was rutting her like the animal he was right now and Violet loved every bit of it.

"My purple queen," he said with such reverence in his voice, slamming into her with quick, deep strokes like he intended to worship her this way.

The sensation was so overwhelming Violet didn't even feel it coming until it crashed over her, a cry ripping from her throat as she clung to him like her life depended on it, completely lost to the mind-blurring pleasure.

Asher stared down at his mate, mesmerized by the way her lips parted slightly, the flush on her cheeks, and the soft moans that slipped from her as she shuddered beneath him. Then his teeth tingled, those sharp canines descending.

He couldn't help it, no, it was pure instinct when his canines sank into the space between her neck and shoulder.

"Asher!" Violet screamed as the sharp edge of pain laced through the pleasure, and then she came again, shuddering and cursing beneath her breath.

He felt the gush of wetness, her nails digging into his back deeply enough to draw blood. The sting of pain and the way she gripped him tighter made him go rougher, stripping away what little control he had left.

"Asher!" Violet was practically chanting at this point as he pounded harder into her. "Oh my god, Asher!"

Yes, he was her god. He agreed with wraith at this point as they fucked her with careless abandon. They had dreamt for this moment for so long they would make every inch of it count.

So when Violet clenched around him hard, it set him off. Asher groaned, nearly blacking out from the force of it, his body spasming as release surged through him.

He slumped against her, winded, until Violet bit into his neck, and then he cursed as he lost control again, release hitting him for a second time in record time.

Goddess above. She was going to be the death of him.

No, she already was.

For a moment, it was just the two of them, Violet nipping and sucking at his neck while his hands roamed her body, memorizing every inch he could reach.

Asher leaned in, cupped her chin, and kissed her. Violet met him with the same ferocity, feeling him stir inside her. Oh yeah, he was still inside her.

Not that she was complaining. He could stay like that forever, and she would never tire.

His tongue slid in, teasing, claiming, while she tangled her fingers into his hair, and it was that movement that caught her attention through her half-lidded gaze.

She pulled away from the kiss, breathless.

"Holy fuck."

Asher's eyes snapped open, instantly alert. For a second, he thought something was wrong, a growl already rising in his throat at the thought of anyone intruding on them until he saw it too.

The mating rune.

"What the—"

He pulled out of her abruptly, his breath hitching as his gaze locked onto the mark, stunned into stillness.

Their mating rune was etched at the center of their hands. Not just that, it was identical in every way, as though one had been perfectly mirrored onto the other.

The mark itself was a geometric symbol with a straight vertical line through the center, a diamond shape in the middle, and two angled shapes at the bottom.

But what truly made it impossible to ignore was the color. Black and purple. They were not layered or separate, instead the two hues bled into each other seamlessly, flowing side by side, as if they were meant to exist as one.

"Impossible," Asher muttered, his breath stuttering as he stared at their joined hands. He had never seen anything like this before.

Beside him, Violet was just as stunned, her gaze fixed on the mark like it might disappear if she blinked.

"Have you ever seen something like this before?" she asked, her voice laced with disbelief.

Asher shook his head. "Not as far as I know. This is the first time I'm seeing something this unique....and breathtaking."

His fingers tightened around hers, almost reverently. "Perhaps it has something to do with the fact that we're bound together. Your breath is mine. Your life is mine."

Violet let out a chuckle, though her eyes remained glued to the rune. "The goddess sure has a twisted sense of humor," she murmured, fascinated.

Asher intertwined their fingers fully, lifting their joined hands. The mark stood out starkly against their skin, impossible to ignore.

"The others are going to lose their minds over this," Violet said, a hint of amusement slipping into her voice. "Roman especially."

She could already imagine it. If he could, the South cardinal Alpha would have her in low-cut shirts all the time just to flaunt their mating rune to the world.

But Asher's mark didn't need help with broadcasting its existence. Unless she wore gloves—and she had no intention of doing that—their rune would be on display for all to see.

"Good for him," Asher said with satisfaction. "I'll punish him twice for every time he tormented me with the bond."

His gaze darkened as it shifted back to her. "Now, shall we continue?"

Before Violet could ask what he meant, he had already lifted her off the ground.

"Let's take it to the bed properly. Like a queen deserves, don't you think?"

Violet flushed, her breath catching as Asher turned and stalked toward the room they had once ran from.

Defy The Alpha(s) - Chapter 856: Forever[1,605 words]

Chapter 856: Forever

Asher Nightshade never took his eyes off her as they walked back to the bedroom. His gaze was fixed on her with such smoldering intensity that her core throbbed in response, and Violet had to clench her thighs tighter just to ease the ache building inside her.

She almost came on the spot.

Violet was so wet and sensitive, that the slightest movement threatened to push her over the edge. And if Asher kept looking at her like that any longer, she might actually combust.

They finally made it to the room, and he placed her halfway onto the bed, her feet touching the ground. Then he straightened, and Violet peered up to see that the tearing sound she had heard earlier had been him ripping his own pants in his impatience to get to her. Now they hung in tatters around him.

Her impatient savage.

Violet mused, watching as Asher shrugged off his robe entirely, then ripped away what remained of his pants. She didn't think she was into the whole macho display—seriously, why tear it off when you could just take it off?

But fuck her life if it wasn't sexy as hell.

Then Asher stood before her in all his naked glory.

'Oh yeah,' Thalia approved in her head, practically salivating.

Violet didn't blame her, not when she was staring at him like a woman starved. Her mate was her own personal brand of sin.

"Like what you see, my queen?" Asher's voice echoed in her head. "Does this lowly one meet your expectations?"

"Very," Violet purred, not even attempting to hide the hunger in her gaze.

How could she deny such a perfect creature? Those sharp, striking features and exotic eyes that seemed to see right through her, straight into her soul.

And then his body.

Asher wasn't as broad and overwhelming as Griffin, but every inch of him was defined, sculpted with hard, deliberate lines. Muscles coiled beneath his skin, not bulky, but precise and controlled, like a weapon that knew exactly how to strike.

His torso was a work of art. A defined set of abs carved deep into his stomach, leading down to a tempting path she deliberately avoided—for now. His shoulders were strong, his arms corded with strength, veins faintly visible beneath his skin.

And those thighs... Goddess.

Strong. Solid. Built for control, for dominance, for holding her exactly where he wanted.

Then there were the scars, or rather, artwork, as she preferred to call them. They stretched across his stomach and back in varying lines and depths, each one telling a story she wanted to feel beneath her fingertips.

They didn't ruin him, rather, it defined him. The scars gave Asher a hard, rugged wildness that Violet was drawn to in a way she couldn't explain.

There was nothing soft or gentle about her mate. Just raw, restrained power, devastating beauty, and the evidence of every battle he had survived.

And then for the last serving, Violet's gaze finally rested on his cock and her breath caught.

For a moment, she forgot how to function, her gaze dragging slowly over the rigid member, unable to look away even if she tried.

He was... a lot.

Huge, long and patterned with girth like a weapon designed to destroy her in two. Violet's body reacted, heat pooling low in her stomach, a fresh wave of wetness following as her thighs pressed together instinctively.

How was she supposed to stay in control when he was presenting himself like this like a delectable snack?

Her eyes snagged on the precum dripping from his purple mushroom head. Her tongue darted out, wetting her lips unconsciously, her eyes darkening at the thought of taking him into her mouth.

"Beautiful," Violet said, her voice rough in his head. "I want to taste you, Asher."

She took a step toward him without even realizing she had moved.

"No." Asher answered, pushing her back onto the bed.

This time he pinned her with his body, but Violet had already begun to writhe beneath him, chasing the friction, desperate to ease the ache building inside her.

It took everything in Asher to remain still as he said, "I waited for you so long, my purple queen. I'll take my time serving you."

"No, don't." Violet breathed, her voice strained, desperate with need. "Take me now. No holding back."

Something dark flashed in Asher's eyes, and before Violet could blink, he had already flipped her onto her stomach, lifting her hips in one swift motion and

plunged right into her.

"Oh my God...." Violet's body trembled,

already overwhelmed by the force of him brutally stretching her, stealing the breath from her lungs.

"Yes, yes, yes!" She moaned, arching into him to add to the friction as he pounded into her.

Asher growled low, a primal note of satisfaction in the sound, gripping her backside so tightly it would leave marks, slamming into her more harder.

"You're so tight....so perfect for me," He gritted his teeth, pressing in deeper, relishing the delicious pleasure of her warm channel.

"Yes....h-harder Asher...." Violet was delirious with pleasure.

The rougher he became, the more desperate she became and Asher drank in every sound she made, every broken note of pleasure like it was his to claim.

He fisted her hair and yanked her head back hard enough to send a sharp ripple of pain through her body, but it only fed the pleasure. Asher felt the way she tightened around him, and he knew she liked it.

She was close now, and he intended to make every second count.

"You like it, don't you, my queen," he murmured darkly against her ear, "the way I bring out the worst in you..." he didn't break pace at all, if not angling his waist even deeper until he could hit her womb.

"Oh yes... yes...." Violet answered breathlessly from the overwhelming pleasure. God, she could die in peace right now.

Her hands had bunched around the bedsheets, panting hard. Almost there.... She was close now. So close.

"I must be forgiven then..." Asher continued, his voice seductive as sin. "I'm about to turn your royal highness into a trembling mess."

Then Asher drove into her with such force that the bed creaked beneath them, the sensuous sound of their sexes mixing, echoing loudly in the room.

"Goddess save me!" Violet cried out, her hands giving out beneath her, completely at the mercy of the breathtaking pleasure tearing through her.

It was no wonder her pussy clenched and pulsated around him as she came, crying out his name. But Asher fucked her through the mind blowing release, his hand reaching for her breasts and squeezed hard.

Violet groaned, clenching around him, pulling him into his happy ending. Asher's movements became jerky as he groaned, shooting his warm release inside of her.

Then he pulled away and rolled onto his side, drawing her into his arms and holding her there.

"That was crazy," Violet said breathlessly.

"Yeah." Asher huffed softly, a satisfied note in his voice. He couldn't agree more.

Violet stared at the ceiling for a moment, then turned to him. "Is it crazy if I tell you I still want more?"

Asher lifted a brow, a flicker of surprise crossing his face. Instead of answering, he simply took her hand and guided it around his member, letting her feel just how much he wasn't done with her either.

Good thing they were supernaturals with a quick recovery process and Asher had every intention of making the most of it. He wasn't done with his purple queen. Not even close.

Violet's lips curved slowly. "I guess that's a yes, then."

Without a second thought, she shifted over him, taking control as she impaled herself on his dick with a soft, satisfied moan.

"Gods above," Asher breathed, unable to look away from the rapturous expression on her face, the way she seemed completely lost in the moment.

Of course she was.

The sight of it filled him with a deep, dark sense of pride.

"Come on then, my queen," he said, a lazy smirk tugging at his lips as he folded his hands behind his head, all deliberate arrogance. "Show your devoted servant what you're capable of."

Violet scoffed, slowly rolling her hips against him, savoring the way the new angle heightened everything. Not to mention it gave her control, and she took it without hesitation.

She lifted her hips slightly, just enough to change the depth, before dropping back down. Asher groaned. Violet grinned, her movements growing more confident and quicker, their both sounds of pleasure filling the room.

Violet then braced against his chest for balance, her fingers pressing into him as she leaned forward, her hair falling around them like a curtain.

Whatever restraint Asher had been pretending to show shattered completely, his hands on her the next moment, guiding her hips, matching her rhythm, and amplifying every movement.

Violet couldn't help it. She wanted him. Every ugly, little piece that he hid from the world. She wanted it all.

She didn't last at all. Her orgasm took her quickly, leaving her gushing and trembling on top of him. Then she leaned over Asher, capturing his lips in a kiss that held everything she couldn't put into words.

Asher kissed her back, just as lost and consumed, the world beyond them fading into nothing.

The goddess had given them this bond and Violet swore she would cherish every second of it. She would show him, in every way she could, just how much he meant to her.

They were together forever.

Defy The Alpha(s) - Chapter 857: The Festival Of Souls - 1[1,578 words]

Chapter 857: The Festival Of Souls - 1

District One

"This is an emergency broadcast. All occupants of District One are required to evacuate immediately due to a confirmed viral outbreak. Public gatherings are suspended until further notice. Please proceed to designated safe zones at once."

The announcement blared through the speakers mounted on rusted poles, echoing through the streets of District One.

"Fucking bullshit!" one of the residents hollered. "Where were you when we were dying before?!" He threw a bottle that shattered against the speaker.

But that was just one speaker against many others mounted across the district, and the announcement kept echoing relentlessly.

Just days ago, something that had never happened in District One had occurred. A group of soldiers had arrived in the city and started persuading people not only to stay indoors but to evacuate entirely.

More voices rose, overlapping angrily.

"Move to where?!"

"Into your perfect districts?!"

"Go back and tell your government we're not interested!"

They booed loudly, and openly, right in the faces of the soldiers who stood in one of the popular city centers, trying to inform them of the outbreak.

The government had ignored them for so long that the idea of them suddenly caring about their well-being felt like a trap.

Of course, they had heard about the virus, the one that turned people into zombies.

But District One was far removed from Aster City, the outbreak zone.

For all they knew, the government wanted to chase them out and move their upper-class citizens into the city they had once looked down on, where they could be safe.

Yes, some of them truly believed that.

The government wanted to push them closer to the infection and take their district from them. So no, they were not budging from their home, even if it led to bloodshed.

Notwithstanding, there were still a few cautious citizens who began to leave, gathering what little they had. But most stayed. If the infection was real, then they would rather die here.

It didn't help that tonight was a historical event for them. They were celebrating the Festival of Souls. The festival was a yearly event, and no one in District One ever missed it—and certainly not because of some zombie virus.

The celebration was to honor the souls of the humans who had died during the great war. Although it had been centuries since the war, it remained a symbolic event to District One, especially since they had borne the brunt of it and yet they were still here, still striving.

During the event, the people would gather at the designated location, where there would be loud music, partying, singing, dancing, and drinking.

Then, at a certain point, lanterns would be lit, each carrying notes tucked carefully inside, mostly prayers for their ancestors who had fought in the war, wishing them peace.

"You don't tell us what to do! Get the fuck out of our town!" a resident shouted in the face of one of the soldiers.

"Yes, get out of here! We don't want you here!" another protested, his voice rising above the rest.

While the commotion was going on, Vera Turner snuck out from amongst the crowd and slipped away. She tugged her hood lower over her face, hiding from anyone who might recognize her.

No one paid her any mind. All attention was on the soldiers, and the growing tension that threatened to explode at any moment.

She moved quickly through the streets, keeping her head down, weaving past groups of arguing residents until the noise began to fade behind her.

Joseph was there waiting for her by the time she returned to their current temporary residence.

"What's the situation out there?" he asked immediately, following after her as she stepped inside.

"It isn't getting any better. There are soldiers in the city square," Vera grunted with annoyance. "And I bet my ass more will be flooding in to force the people to comply with evacuation."

She sighed, rubbing her forehead. "I thought we'd be safe here, but we're as good as trapped."

They were dangerously low on resources as well. Not that her lackeys knew that, otherwise, it would give them the confidence to challenge her control over them. Not to mention, Vera was good at keeping up appearances.

The first thing she had done upon arriving in District One was buy mercenaries, knowing she was short on men. District One was a crime hub, and she had to secure their safety before one of them tried to intimidate her.

But that was not enough, which was why she had stepped out to make the arrangement for tonight. There was no more time.

"How did it go then?" Joseph asked, carefully.

Vera lifted a brow. Strange. She couldn't help but feel like Joseph was being more nosy than usual. Her brother didn't always care about their plans, only interested in the role he was to play. Yeah, he had always been callous like that.

Perhaps he had become more serious now, knowing it was just the two of them left, with the rest of her family gone, and that the success of their plan depended on how everything unfolded.

"He wants me to meet him tonight during the festival," Vera said, referring to the crime lord she'd be selling the last batch of Ignis to.

"And you'd be going, right?"

At that, Vera's expression darkened. Unlike the people of District One who hadn't witnessed the outbreak firsthand, she had seen its devastating effects and didn't want to risk her life. Becoming a zombie was not part of her plan.

"I don't know," she said, uncertainty slipping into her voice.

"What do you mean you don't know?"

Joseph shot back. "You were the one who insisted on pushing out this last batch of Ignis when I told you to drop it after seeing what the last one did."

Vera retorted, "This is our final move, you fucking dimwit. It's our chance to create the kind of revolution the Turner family was meant for. If you weren't so useless, you'd be the one meeting Williams. But I don't trust you not to mess this up, which is why I'll be doing it myself, as usual."

Joseph didn't even argue with her.

"Do whatever you want," he said instead, his tone flat, and dismissive.

Vera scowled. "Just make sure things here don't get out of control."

"As the boss says," Joseph replied sarcastically, already stepping away.

Vera noticed the attitude. It had been getting worse lately, grating on her nerves in a way she couldn't quite ignore. But she said nothing.

Joseph was her only family member left. No matter how insufferable he became, she needed him here whenever she stepped out.

The place they operated from was an old warehouse. From the outside was rusted walls, broken windows patched with metal sheets and a large sliding door that screeched every time it move.

Inside was a different story since they turned it into a base. Crates were stacked in neat rows, some filled with supplies, the others with the product. Makeshift rooms had been carved out using wooden partitions and metal scraps.

One served as Vera's quarters while the other was for Joseph. The rest were shared among the hired hands and workers.

The mercenaries patrolled the perimeter, and inner rooms, armed, watching over the remaining workers who hadn't been allowed to leave. No one got out without permission.

Joseph walked past them, his gaze sweeping over the operation. Everything looked under control. But beneath that calm, something darker settled in his chest.

Unknown to Vera, her brother hoped the deal went wrong. Or worse, that she wouldn't make it back at all. That would be a dream come true.

Night fell faster than expected, the sky sinking into darkness as the city began to shift. Even from a distance, the sound of the music and celebration reached them.

District One was alive tonight.

"Let's go," Vera said, already moving.

Two mercenaries fell in step behind her. One of them carried a metal suitcase which contained the sample of Ignis, ready for demonstration.

She reached the exit, hand already on the door and stopped. Slowly, she turned back.

"Joseph."

Her brother paused, glancing over his shoulder.

"I know you hate me," Vera said. "And you'll probably never forgive me for what I did to our family. But for all it's worth..." She hesitated. "You were always my number one. My ride or die."

Joseph said nothing.

"And I'm glad it's the two of us carrying on the legacy the Turners before us failed to uphold, I'm glad to have you as my brother."

Silence followed and for a brief moment, something flickered across Joseph's face, but it vanished as soon as it came.

"Safe journey," he said flatly.

Unlike Vera, who saw him as the one good thing left in her life, Joseph saw her as a nightmare and he couldn't wait for the day he was free of her.

Vera held his gaze for a second longer, then turned away without another word. She stepped into the car, the door slamming shut behind her as the engine roared to life.

She told herself one thing.

One day, when they finally wiped the werewolves from the face of the earth, Joseph would finally understand and thank her for everything she had done.

Vera was sure of it. If only she knew.....

Defy The Alpha(s) - Chapter 858: The Festival Of Souls - 2[1,511 words]

It wasn't until later that Vera discovered stepping out with the car was a bad idea. The streets of District One were flooded with its residents, who had stepped out in large numbers for the Festival of Souls.

Not even the soldiers preaching isolation and evacuation were in sight. They were no match for the number of people out tonight.

"Get the fuck out of the way!" cursed the mercenary serving as her driver for this journey. He hooted relentlessly for the nth time, his patience dangerously reaching its limit.

But no amount of hooting could clear a path in a sea of excited people.

In the backseat, Vera sighed heavily. She asked, "How long would it take us to get there if we walked on foot?"

"Fifteen minutes," he said. "An extra five, tops."

Vera looked out at the crowd of ignorant humans—faces painted in bright colors, strange outfits draped over their bodies, screaming, shouting, drinking, and dancing in wild exhilaration. It wasn't until a few of them began banging on the windows, laughing and making faces, reveling in their freedom, that Vera decided enough was enough.

"Find a safe place and park," she ordered.

It took them almost five minutes to inch through the crowd without hitting anyone—although they came close a few times—and finally find a relatively safe spot to park.

But one thing was certain, if the crowd continued at this rate, they would have to trek back to their residence after the deal was done.

"We should be grateful if the car parts are still here when we get back," the second guard snorted in amusement.

Car theft was common in District One, and in a ceremonial environment like this, there would be a whole lot of thieving happening tonight.

Except Vera did not appreciate the dark joke, and the glare she shot him was enough to shut him up.

Every trace of laughter vanished from his face, and he cleared his throat, shifting uncomfortably on his feet. "Excuse me, ma."

"The suitcase," she demanded, stretching her hand out for it.

Trying to find her way through this crowd, they were bound to get separated, and Vera was not trusting the Ignis with any of them. Just because she had hired them didn't mean she trusted them. The only thing holding them together was the terms of their contract, and the money involved.

The moment the suitcase was handed over to her, she began to push forward, roughly shoving anyone who got in her way. Her men knew the location and would find her there if they got separated.

Of course, holding a suitcase in a crowd like this was bound to attract attention from pickpockets. But Vera had expected that and stayed on high alert.

The instant the unsuspecting teenager bumped into her and, in one smooth motion, tried to slip her phone from her pocket, all he got in return was the suitcase slammed hard into his face.

"You little piece of vermin!" she snapped, kicking him in the stomach.

Gasps rippled through the nearby crowd as attention briefly shifted toward the scene.

However, no one interfered. Pickpockets were everywhere, and Vera was far from the first victim tonight. Still, some were unsettled by the sheer violence of her response, and as she moved forward again, the crowd instinctively parted, giving her a wide berth.

Music blasted from everywhere, the noise swelling around her until it felt almost suffocating. If this was how these people honored their ancestors' sacrifices, they had to be joking. No wonder the festival held no appeal for her.

Call her old-fashioned, but the ancestors' efforts in the Great War deserved solemn commemoration with trembling awe and profound honor. The history should be recounted endlessly to the young, reminding them why they should never yield to the wolves.

The celebration should mean more than drinking and dancing. District One was one of the few districts unsullied by the wolves, and it should stay that way.

The further Vera went, the thicker the crowd became. Her eyes moved constantly, scanning, watching and calculating. No one here mattered, they were nothing but distractions.

A group of brightly dressed dancers spun past her, nearly knocking her off balance. One of them laughed, reaching out to grab her arm, trying to pull her into their circle. Vera yanked free with a look that could kill.

"Don't touch me." She hissed.

The girl only laughed, already lost in the madness of the night as she disappeared back into the crowd.

Vera muttered something under her breath, still moving. Nothing was going to deter her from her mission tonight.

It wasn't long before she found the pub where she was to meet up with Williams.

Though it sat amid the festival's roar, not a single reveler lingered nearby. For good reason.

Williams' men guarded the entrance, armed and vigilant. Locals knew better than to wander too close.

Vera's lips curved to the side. Finally.

She adjusted her posture, straightening just a fraction as she approached them. It annoyed her that her so called guards were not here but Vera was confident of her skills.

One of the guards stepped forward, blocking her path.

"Unless you're one of the partygoers, get lost. Otherwise, state your business, woman."

Vera met his glare. "I'm expected. Tell your boss Vera Turner is here, and watch your tone if you know what's good for you."

His eyes flicked to the suitcase, then back to her face, narrowing at her bite.

"Wait here," he grunted, shooting his partner a sharp glance: Keep an eye on her.

While the first guard was gone, it was at that exact moment her two escorts appeared, and the second guard immediately aimed his gun, ready to strike.

"They're with me," Vera said at once.

But the guard didn't care. He ordered, "Drop your weapons."

Vera's men didn't react at first, but she tilted her head to the side and told them, "Give up your weapons."

The two men hesitated, exchanging a brief glance, before finally dropping their weapons to the ground.

The guard approached cautiously, then kicked the guns aside, keeping his weapon trained on them.

It was at that moment the first guard who had stepped out returned, his brows furrowing in confusion at the scene.

His partner explained, "She didn't come alone."

The first guard turned to her. "They cannot go in with you."

"Fine," Vera said. "But you'll have to give them their weapons back if that's the case."

"No, that cannot—"

"I'm going in alone. I'm already trusting my life in your hands. Or you can tell Williams to kiss this deal goodbye."

Silence stretched for a moment too long.

Then the guard ordered, "Give them their weapons."

To Vera, he said, "You may go in."

Vera walked past him without a word. There were other guards inside, and they fell in step behind her as she walked in.

They marched her into the heart of the local pub, and there he was.

Williams sat at the bar like he owned the night. He didn't rise to meet her. Instead, he said casually, "Vera Turner...."

His gaze raked over her from head to toe and back up again, lingering for a moment on her chest before meeting her face, a sleazy grin spreading across his lips.

"You look quite lovelier than I expected, my lady," he complimented.

It didn't impress Vera at all.

She knew men like him. The kind who thought women had no place leading in this business. Who thought with what was between their legs more than their brains. She already had a feeling this deal was not going to work out.

Vera put on a smile that didn't reach her eyes. "Williams," she said lightly, stopping a few meters from where he stood.

"Oh no, that's not how we do things here," Williams tutted, finally rising to his feet. "Over here, it's all hugs, my lady."

Shoot her now.

Vera gritted her teeth. If she didn't need the bastard, she would have gladly taught him a lesson. Still, she stepped forward, closing the distance between them, intending to keep it brief.

But Williams pulled her in tighter than necessary, his hold firm enough to make breaking away difficult. Worse, his hand slid down to cup her backside while he leaned in, breathing her in as he murmured, "I believe our meeting tonight was written in the stars."

Your death will be too.

The words burned at the tip of Vera's tongue, but she forced them down.

Men like Williams disgusted her, but they were also predictable. And that made them easy to use.

Good for her.

With that same smile that didn't touch her eyes, Vera slowly trailed her hand over his wrist, the one holding her, and peeled it away from her body.

Then she looked up at him, her expression softening just enough to sell the act.

"I trust you're ready to make history, Williams," she said, her tone smooth as silk.

"Oh, I'm more than ready."

Defy The Alpha(s) - Chapter 859: Festival Of Zombies[1,662 words]

Williams didn't offer her a comfortable seat where they could negotiate. Instead, he led her to the counter where he had been seated moments ago, the wood sticky in places from spilled alcohol.

But Vera did not say anything. As long as she got the deal, she'd take it—even if he offered her a toy seat.

"I'm sure you've heard about Ignis...." she began. "It's one of the strongest substances you could—"

"No, no, no," Williams interrupted, pressing a finger against her lips with a long-suffering look. "How can we just delve into business immediately without a little pleasure? Unlike the others, I like to know my partners very well." His words dripped with meaning.

Whether it was his finger against her lips or the implication behind his words, Vera felt a shiver of revulsion crawl down her spine.

She almost lost her patience, a vision of slamming the bastard against the bar top and roughing him up flashing temptingly through her mind.

Just months ago, what was a small crime lord in District One compared to her? She had contacts all over Aster City. But now, she had been reduced to this? It was annoying.

Nonetheless, Vera held back her irritation, saying faux sweetly, "What do you want to know?"

Williams leaned in, his eyes bright at the hint of her concession. "What is your poison?"

"What?" Vera frowned, thinking he meant something else until he clarified.

"What would you like to have for a drink?"

Breathe in. Breathe out.

Vera composed herself as Williams waited casually, clearly enjoying the control he had forced onto the situation. She reminded herself that she had shared drinks over deals before. Except this was different, this was clearly a game to him.

"Something strong," she said finally, holding his gaze without breaking it.

A slow grin curved Williams' lips. "My strong woman," he murmured, amusement flashing in his eyes.

Vera chuckled, playing along.

Williams snapped his fingers, and one of his men immediately moved behind the counter, taking on the role of bartender.

The man worked quickly. He pulled out a bottle from beneath the counter, twisting the cork loose with a soft pop. Then he poured the dark liquid into a glass, followed by ice. He brought out another bottle, a lighter spirit he added in careful measure, the scent of alcohol rising faintly between them.

Williams rested his elbow against the counter, watching her as the drink was prepared.

"So tell me, my lady," he said, almost casually, "how does a woman like you end up in a dirty business like this?"

Vera wasn't here for bonding but she gave him just enough.

"I was born into it."

Williams beamed, clearly entertained. "It would be such a pleasure to meet the parents responsible for bringing such a fascinating woman into the world."

The drink was set before her, the glass sliding across the counter. Vera picked it up, her mind already made.

"Sorry to burst your bubble," she said calmly. "But you won't get to meet them. My father is dead."

She paused just long enough for the words to settle.

"And as for my mother..." Her gaze didn't waver. "I killed her." She tipped her head back and downed the drink in one go, the burn of it sharp as it went down her throat.

Williams' eyes widened just slightly and he reached for his own glass, chugging the whole thing down quite quickly. If there was one thing that move had achieved, it was the fact he now took her seriously.

There was a new wariness to his gaze. The realization that the woman standing before him might just be more dangerous than he thought.

Vera studied him for a moment, taking in the shift in his posture, the way his eyes no longer roamed carelessly over her body but stayed on her face, calculating.

"So," she drawled, tilting her head just a fraction, "do you want to know more about me... or should we talk about Ignis?"

There was a subtle warning beneath her tone. If Williams hadn't cared, he would have continued his little game, dragging things out just to amuse himself. But the air around him changed, replaced by a grim thoughtfulness as he set his glass down.

"I did my research," he began, his voice losing that earlier playfulness. "Just months ago, your people offered the same Ignis to the Red Dragon gang and they turned it down."

He watched her reaction.

"In case you don't understand the hierarchy here, the Red Dragons were one of the strongest gangs in this district. That was until Titan met a miserable end and the entire structure collapsed." He tapped his fingers against the counter. "But the point remains, if

the Red Dragons didn't consider it worth the risk, what makes you think it would work for me?"

There it was. Doubt.

So that was why he had been playing around earlier. He hadn't taken the deal seriously. And since she was a woman, why not entertain himself a little while at it?

Vera let out a quiet breath, relaxed.

"You're right," she replied. "Titan, may his soul rest, rejected the deal because it wasn't good for business at the time. The first batch of Ignis was too lethal. Consumers went berserk, their systems burning out by the time they came down from the high. Titan couldn't afford to wipe out his own clientele."

Her gaze lifted to meet his again.

"But that was then. The new version is different. There's a wider window before the body starts to fail. Users can take it up to three times, stretch it over days, as long as they don't push too far."

Williams let out a low sound, not quite convinced.

"In the end, they still die."

Vera exhaled. "Unfortunately, Ignis was never meant for long term use. The human body simply isn't built to endure that level of strain."

"Then Titan made the right call," he said, folding his arms. "What's the point if my clients end up dead?"

Vera's expression lost its warmth, something darker settling into her eyes.

"Look around you, Williams." She gestured towards the outside, "Don't you see the commotion out there? What makes you think there will be clients left by the time they force you all out of this place to wherever they decide to dump you?"

Williams' jaw tightened.

"They can't force us out of our homes over some made up story of some virus."

"It's not made up," Vera cut in, her tone firm. "I've seen it with my own eyes. It's real."

She let that sit between them, heavy and unyielding. What Vera didn't say was that she had played a part in it. Instead, her voice lowered, drawing him in.

"If anything," she continued, "this might be your last opportunity to profit before everything collapses. The question is simple, will you let the anarchy swallow you, or will you take advantage of it while you still can?"

Silence stretched for a moment between them.

Right as Williams opened his mouth to speak, a sudden, ominous blaring sound echoed through the space.

Then came the screams. It was loud, piercing and terrifying. They rose from outside, followed by the pounding of frantic footsteps and the desperate shouting of Williams' men.

"No! You can't come in!"

Gunshots rang out next.

Williams stiffened. "What is going on?"

Something in Vera's gut twisted. This wasn't normal. She moved quickly to the window and then she saw it. Absolute chaos.

People were running in every direction, shoving, screaming, and falling over one another in blind panic.

Behind them was a swarm of Zombies.

They tore into the crowd without hesitation, dragging people down and feasting where they fell, blood spilling across the streets.

"Oh my God..." Vera gasped, her stomach dropping.

She spun around immediately. "Shut the doors. Now! Don't let anyone or anything in. The zombies are here!"

"What?" Williams said, still trying to process it. He didn't move fast enough and that hesitation cost them.

The doors burst open as a wave of terrified people rushed inside, pushing and stumbling over one another, desperate for safety.

But this was no safe haven and they didn't come alone. The zombies followed. Their guttural sounds filled the room, sending chills down everyone's spine.

Screams erupted.

A man was tackled to the ground, his cries cut short as sharp teeth sank into him. Another tried to crawl away, only to be dragged back. Blood sprayed on the ground while panic spread like wildfire.

More people kept pouring in from outside, thinking this place offered refuge, only to realize too late that it didn't, increasing the population already inside. Bodies pressed against each other, trapping everyone in place.

Vera wanted to escape but she couldn't leave without the briefcase. She pushed toward the counter, shoving past people, but someone slammed into her hard, throwing her off balance. Her foot slipped and she went down.

"Shit—" She tried to get back up, but it was impossible.

People were already trampling over her, their boots slamming into her sides, her arms, and back as they fought to escape. Pain exploded through her body.

"Get off—!"

But no one listened or cared. Survival was all that mattered.

She forced herself up again, gasping, her vision spinning as she struggled to stand.

Then she saw a zombie just a few meters away. Its head snapped toward her, blood dripping from its mouth.

"No—" Vera scrambled backward, trying to get away, but someone crashed into her from behind, their leg knocking into hers and sending her down again.

Her head hit the floor hard and her vision blurred. The last thing she saw was the female zombie lunging at her, followed by blinding pain.

Her scream of agony rent through the night as the zombies teeth sank into her neck, ripping through skin and flesh.

After everything, this was how she died.

Defy The Alpha(s) - Chapter 86o: The Bond Is Complete[1,030 words]

"Welcome back, son."

Griffin opened his eyes, surprised to see his mother and father hovering over him with concern that slowly eased into pure relief. That was when he looked around and realized he was lying on a bed.

A bed?

How did he get here? The last thing he remembered, he had been with the others in the meeting room, making plans on how they were going to kill Angus.

"What happened?" he asked, confusion lacing his voice as he pushed himself up on his arms.

Aeron and Irene shared a look before his father answered. "We were talking when you suddenly clutched your chest and cried out in pain. Then you fainted. Not just you—Roman too. We figured it had something to do with the bond between you all and brought you here to rest. Roman is with his parents as well."

Irene narrowed her gaze. "What's happening? Don't tell me something happened to Violet?"

Right at that moment, the strange dream Griffin had came rushing back to him.

Except it wasn't a dream.

"Fuck!" Griffin jumped to his feet so abruptly that his parents flinched back, worry instantly returning to their faces.

His eyes widened as everything clicked into place, his hand pressing against his chest as if to steady the sudden rush.

He saw Asher and Violet.

"The bond is complete," he whispered at first. Then a laugh broke out of him, wild and exhilarated. "Asher is finally bound to her! That lucky bastard!" He punched the air in excitement.

"Okay...?" Irene muttered, clearly unsure, her expression caught somewhere between relief and confusion.

Right at that moment, there was a knock on the door. Griffin rushed to open it. He didn't need to guess who it was, he could already feel "him".

Roman burst in, breathless, eyes lit with the same realization.

"Asher and Violet are finally mated!" He announced.

"Yes, dude, finally!" Griffin shot back, matching his energy instantly.

They grabbed each other, arms thrown over shoulders, jumping in excitement like children who had just won a game.

Except they didn't realize all the shouting was happening inside their heads. To everyone else, they were just grinning and celebrating like lunatics.

Scratch that—add Leon Draven to the scene, who stood by the doorway watching them with the same baffled expression as the others.

One moment, his son had been unconscious. The next, he had sprinted across the house like the devil was chasing him.

For a brief second, Leon genuinely wondered if Roman had gone mad. In the span of a few minutes, he felt like he had aged ten years.

While the boys were celebrating, Irene leaned in to whisper to her husband, "Should we be concerned about this new development?"

Aeron merely sighed.

Thankfully, moments later, both parents, in-laws, and mated pairs were seated to talk the new situation out.

"So you both can hear each other's thoughts?" Leon asked, not because he was ignorant of the perks that came with being divinely mated, but to ensure his son wasn't losing his mind. He was still traumatized by Roman's abrupt behavior minutes ago. Last he checked, there was no mental hospital for wolves—and he refused to be left heirless.

At that, Roman grinned, sending a thought to Griffin. *"I can't fail to mention that I love this new upgrade."*

Griffin shot back, *"You've said that a hundred times already."*

"So you can hear the others as well?" Leon pressed. "Violet? Asher? Alaric?"

Both of them tilted their heads at the same time, unsure how to explain it. The movement was so identical it sent a chill down Irene's spine.

Roman answered, "I did hear her at first, in the dream. But now I can't."

Griffin added, "I think it has to do with distance. Maybe the bond weakens across realms. We should be able to hear each other if we're close enough."

Roman let out a dramatic mental sigh. *"I can't wait for her return. Now we have a private channel where I can say my thoughts unfiltered. I'm practically bursting with excitement."*

Griffin's brow furrowed slightly. *"Dude, we are with our parents. Can you try not to be weird?"*

"What do you mean, weird?" Roman retorted. *"Sorry, I'm just more honest about my feelings for our mate than you are, you prude. Meanwhile, Asher is probably busy monopolizing her for goddess knows how long. I have to step up my game. There's competition now, and I refuse to fall behind."*

"Goddess above, save me," Griffin muttered mentally, dragging a hand down his face in clear exasperation.

Leon exhaled, then glanced at Irene and Aeron. "I don't think I'll ever get used to this."

"Make that two," Aeron replied, his gaze settling pointedly on the ridiculous grin plastered across Roman's face. Something told him that the boy was currently tormenting his son.

If only he knew how right he was.

"Griffin!" His mother's voice boomed through the pack link, startling him and snapping him back to reality. *"Concentrate."*

That was all the warning Griffin needed. He immediately raised a mental wall between him and Roman, shutting him out completely.

"Congratulations on your quintet being complete," Irene addressed them. "I'll admit, this is the first time we've ever seen something like this, but who are we to question the will of the goddess? Still, it is quite a staggering development, and I believe there is a great deal for you all to face out there."

"The heirs of the four major packs and the Alpha King's daughter, all united in one bond?" Leon added, his tone thoughtful. "That's a significant amount of politics the goddess is playing with."

"And speaking of politics..." Irene continued, "Micah is here. He arrived while you were unconscious, and he has a great deal of information about Angus that we urgently need."

"Our brother-in-law is here?" Roman's interest sparked immediately.

"You don't understand, Roman Draven," Aeron cut in, his expression darkening. The boy wasn't taking this seriously enough. "This mission tomorrow has been confirmed to be far more dangerous than we initially thought."

Roman only scoffed. "Danger? Is that supposed to scare us? Isn't that exactly what we're meant for?"

Defy The Alpha(s) - Chapter 861: Don't Go To Duskmoon Village[1,025 words]

Getting separated from Adele again had to be the worst form of torture for Micah.

After that incident at the Academy, when the witches had the nerve to lay their hands on his mate, he had spent the entire day buried deeply in her sweet warmth, grounding himself in her presence, reassuring himself over and over that she was fine and unharmed.

That alone had kept him from returning to Lunaris and tearing those devil spawns apart. It would have been a delight to torment them endlessly in hell. That was all his demon side wanted. It craved blood and demanded revenge.

But the more rational part of him acknowledged that they had, in their own twisted way, helped him break through the mental barrier that had restricted his teleportation. Unconventional or not, it had worked.

They were just lucky Adele had occupied him. Simple as that.

After a full day of "recharging," he finally left for the Alpha King's residence, where he was brought up to speed almost immediately. Angus had returned—and he wanted his position back.

Unfortunately, Nancy had been injured, and his ever-kind mate, as usual, had insisted on going to heal her. That left Micah alone with a room full of alphas, all of whom were now looking to him for a solution on how to deal with his... "father."

Suddenly, he was being acknowledged as Angus's son. Just not in a way he would have ever wanted. Piece of shit, all of them.

"So what are we waiting for?!" one of the sub-alphas snapped. "I say we don't wait till tomorrow. We storm Duskmoon Village and get rid of him!"

"So you'd bring the fight to his domain? How very smart of you," Micah replied, his tone dripping with sarcasm.

The alpha glared at him. "You have a better idea, demon?" he sneered.

"Better watch your tongue," Elijah cut in, his voice carrying enough weight to silence the room. "That's my nephew you're talking to. Don't make me regret allowing you lowly sub-alphas into this meeting. It's beginning to seem like you lot are only good at taking orders from your respective wardens."

A ripple of low growls moved through the sub-alphas at the blatant insult.

Truth was, there was barely any real difference between an alpha and a sub-alpha. Strength wise, they stood on nearly equal ground. The only thing separating them was title and authority. If a sub-alpha challenged an alpha and won, the position would change hands without question.

But the title still mattered. Sub-alphas were leaders of smaller packs, operating under the supervision of the alphas. Yet the word "sub" carried a meaning of its own; it meant lesser, smaller, beneath. That was enough to sound like an insult to them.

Micah was taken aback by his uncle's response. That had to be one of the first times his uncle had ever defended him.

Nah. He didn't plan on getting used to that.

Elijah was probably just playing nice now that he was being "useful" to him.

Before the tension could escalate further, the cardinal alphas, or rather, half of them, stormed into the room.

"Micah, my brother-in-law!" that weirdo Roman called out, throwing himself into his arms before he could even react.

The scene was ridiculous, with Micah standing stiffly while Roman hugged him without a care in the world.

Not bothered by the lack of response, Roman pulled back, grinning. "Good news, Asher's mated to Violet."

Micah's eyes widened in surprise, his lips twitching into a smile. Whatever reservations he had about Roman vanished in that moment as he reached out and shook his hand.

"Well, congratulations!"

Around them, murmurs broke out almost immediately.

"Even Asher is mated to Angus's daughter now?"

"How is she collecting all the cardinal alphas like prizes to be won?"

"Doesn't this seem a little suspicious? What if Violet and Angus are working together and we're just too blind to see it?"

"Congratulations," Elijah's voice broke through the noise, rising above everyone else. "Where are they then?"

His gaze swept the room, clearly expecting Violet to be present.

"She's not back in the human realm yet. We only found out through the bond," Griffin answered, his voice tight. Elijah's sudden focus on Violet didn't sit right with him.

"What a disappointment." Elijah had the audacity to look genuinely displeased. "From what I've heard she's capable of, she would have been quite useful for this mission."

"I can't believe I'm saying this..." Roman's voice slipped into Griffin's mind, his walls completely down. *"But I'm glad Violet's far away from this conniving pervert."*

Griffin's jaw tightened. *"Unfortunately, she won't be for long."*

As soon as the mating heat with Asher was over, Griffin knew Violet. She would come for them. The fact that she couldn't communicate with them right now? That alone would be driving her insane.

"Now that everyone's present..." Elijah rose to his feet, "it's time we decide how to tackle the common enemy we have, my brother and former Alpha King, Angus."

"Look at him, acting all high and mighty like he didn't contribute to the problem," Roman complained through the bond, rolling his eyes.

"Goddess, help me ..." Griffin was close to strangling Roman.

He valued the bond between them, but Roman was insufferable, and he wasn't sure he would survive if this was what he had to deal with constantly. So he shut him out once more, sealing it tight this time, leaving no room for him to slip back in.

"Micah here has given us the information we need—"

"I wouldn't advise any of you to head to Duskmoon Village for a fight," Micah cut in.

"Trust me, none of you truly understand what you're dealing with. Angus has an entire village of witches and loyal wolves protecting him. Why do you think not even the human government has touched that settlement for years?"

"So what do you suggest we do then, Micah?" Irene asked. "Do we sit here and let him make good on his threats? We are not cowards."

"Yes, you're not," Micah agreed. "But no one fights a war they already know they'll lose."

Defy The Alpha(s) - Chapter 862: How To Kill Angus[1,537 words]

"Then we don't charge at him head on but organize a sneak attack," Elijah gestured animatedly at Micah. "You can teleport now, can't you? Just grab the cardinal alphas and vanish, end him before he blinks, poof, and return back. Plan executed."

Micah's lips pressed into a thin line as he gave his uncle the shittiest look. He should have known the man would never change.

He spoke through gritted teeth, "Even witches can create wards that keep out teleporters like me. You certainly don't think the man who sired me hasn't considered the possibility of me appearing—" he paused, making a mocking motion with his hand, "poof—and taking his head. He would have already put measures in place. And how am I supposed to know he'll even be there when I show up to end him?"

Now that Micah pointed it out, it was clear Elijah's suggestion made no sense. He was practically telling his nephew to walk into a trap. But no one called him out on it. Not when his pride filled the entire room.

Elijah only shrugged. "It was just a suggestion. Even fathers might expect surprise visits from sons who can appear whenever they like. There's always a chance the wards won't hold."

The Alpha King was being petty now, and no one stepped in as the tension between them grew thicker.

"Oh, let me give you a possibility," Micah's voice rose slightly. "How about we lure Angus out instead? Tell him his beloved brother is finally giving up the throne before the deadline." His eyes lit up at the thought.

Except Micah's idea, meant to spite his uncle, turned out to be a good one.

Irene widened, interested. "That is actually a good idea."

"I am not giving up this throne," Elijah growled, his eyes flashing with warning.

"No one said you were," Irene replied, holding back a sigh. "It's a lie to lure Angus out."

Elijah was truly a pain in the ass, and she couldn't help but think of Beatrice, who had endured him all these years.

And whether he liked it or not, Violet was the true heir to that throne. Once she returned, that would be a discussion no one could avoid.

"I don't think Angus would fall for it," Aeron added, speaking from experience. "Even a blind man would see through that kind of trap."

"Angus is smart. He'll know it's a trap," Sub-alpha Will said, his gaze fixed on Elijah without hesitation. "But if there's one thing men like him hold onto, it's their pride. He wouldn't miss the chance to see the brother who took his crown brought down to his feet, trap or not."

Silence followed.

Everyone's attention shifted between Elijah and Will. With the history between them, it was clear the sub-alpha hadn't just spoken out of strategy. There was intent behind those words.

"Hot damn," Roman let out a low whistle, clearly entertained by the tension. Not every sub-alpha had the guts to speak to Elijah like that. He liked whatever kind of madness Will was running on.

With the way Elijah glared at Will, Roman could already picture it—Elijah rising to his feet and declaring, "Off with his head," while his guards stormed in to drag Will away, the man kicking and screaming, cursing Elijah and his entire bloodline.

Except—no pun intended—Elijah had no generation. Hehe.

Quite unfortunately, Roman's imagination didn't go as planned. Elijah simply ignored Alpha Will, although something told him deep down that the Alpha King might be quietly marking the man for death.

Rest in peace, Will. You were beloved for your few minutes of fame.

"In that case," Elijah began, "since my brother knows we intend to lure him to his death, he'll come with enough force. But this is our territory, and we'll be fully prepared for him."

"Hopefully," Micah replied, a little bothered.

Wolves were strong, but they were built for close combat, unlike witches who could strike from a distance. And Angus had an entire battalion of them.

They had none.

Micah had already reached out to Samantha, asking for her help, but she had refused without hesitation. To them, defeating Angus was a lost cause. Not to mention, witches operated in covens. Their own was small, and they had no interest in provoking the larger, more powerful covens from Duskmoon Village.

And to them, this war wasn't theirs. It was between wolves. Wolves had never cared about their survival, so why should they care now?

What they failed to see was Angus's idea of domination didn't stop with wolves. No one would be spared if he won.

Micah was certain he could still convince her. Or she and her coven could all stay locked in Lunaris Academy, waiting for the zombie situation to clear.

"We'll take that bastard out." Griffin clenched his fist as he spoke, his muscles tightening, veins standing out along his arm.

"Let's work on our strategy then," Micah said, ready to put out the ideas he had.

"Urm... excuse me," Leon cut in, his voice edged with challenge. "I didn't realize you'd be the one leading us into this battle?"

Micah's brows drew together. "Excuse me?"

Leon pointed at him. "You're forgetting your place. How do you think you can stand there and start drawing up a battle plan when there are alphas here with far more experience than you? You're a child who was born yesterday."

Roman perked up immediately, a grin spreading across his face. "Oh, this is going to be fun."

Griffin shot him a look. "You should be stopping your father, not encouraging this."

Roman only shrugged, completely unbothered. "Let the adults handle him."

Micah let out a quiet breath, then met Leon's gaze fully. "I didn't realize this was about hierarchy and not stopping a common enemy."

"I didn't come here to claim a position," he continued, his voice calm but carrying. "And if we're being honest, I'm the only one here who actually knows how Angus operates. I am his son. Otherwise, why have you all been listening to me this whole time?"

Leon's jaw tightened. "Then you should give your ideas and step back while those with real authority handle the rest."

That did it.

Before Micah could respond, Irene stepped in else things got out of hand.

"Leon," she called, "save your ego for when we're not discussing a war that could wipe us all out. We don't have the luxury of infighting."

Her eyes shifted briefly to Micah.

"If the boy can do it, then let him."

"No." Micah stepped back now. "I'm just a boy. Let the leaders handle their shit."

Irene threw her hands up in exasperation.

Men and their foolish egos.

"Micah will take charge of the battle tomorrow." Elijah suddenly announced.

Everyone was taken aback, even Micah himself. His gaze lifted slowly to his uncle, a small frown settling on his face.

Elijah continued as if nothing unusual had just been said. "As it stands, Micah was meant to lead the sneak attack in the first place. Since we've decided against that approach, it only makes sense he takes charge of this instead. After all..." his lips curved just a fraction, "he knows Angus better than any of us."

A few of the alphas nodded at that while others simply watched. Leon didn't look pleased, but he didn't interrupt either.

While it sounded generous, almost reasonable, Micah could clearly see what Elijah was doing. He was shifting the weight off the shoulders of his alphas. If the mission failed, it would all be on Micah.

Micah should have stepped back at that realization. He should let Elijah and his men carry the burden he had so carefully tried to pass on. But they didn't know what they're about to face and he refused to let his uncle's games cost them their lives.

"Fine. I'll do it." Micah agreed to everyone's astonishment.

He didn't hesitate, getting into role immediately.

"You all already know Angus cannot be harmed physically."

Of course they remembered quite vividly how Angus had humiliated Elijah without breaking a sweat.

"That's because Angus has protection runes carved all over his body."

Murmurs broke through the room. That changed everything.

They had assumed Angus wore his protection like Elijah did, something that could be easily taken.

If that had been the case, they would have been doomed.

Relief shone across several faces. There was a different kind of understanding in the room. For the first time, a few of them looked at Micah with respect.

Micah went on. "We won't attack Angus immediately. Rather we let him feel safe. To make it real, we'd invite the elders for the dethroning ceremony."

At the word dethroning, Elijah's discomfort became more obvious, though he tried to hide it.

Micah said, "We play into Angus expectations. Let him believe he has the upper hand. And the moment his guard drop...."

His gaze darkened.

"Then I'll appear and take him away. Angus is only powerful because of his army. Take the leader away, and the rest will fall apart. In simple terms, we isolate Angus and keep him away until we figure out how to kill him."

Defy The Alpha(s) - Chapter 863: Blissful End[1,511 words]

Asher Nightshade knew the mating haze was over the moment he opened his eyes.

It had been three days of frenzied fucking, and the burning urgency that had once flooded his veins was gone, along with that restless ache that only his mate had been able to ease each time he buried himself inside her.

Yet, he still wanted her. And he intended to show her that the mating frenzy was not the only force capable of driving him insane over her.

Violet lay naked in his arms. For those three intense days, he had not allowed a single thread of clothing on her. Wraith had been completely consumed with her, craving nothing but skin against skin, her warmth against his own.

Asher couldn't help the small smile that curved his lips. Violet had finally met his wolf. The best thing the bond had ever given him.

Now she understood how hard it had been to keep his hands off her all those months. He had fought and restrained Wraith every step of the way, even when it nearly drove him mad. Not that he had ever shown it.

More importantly, Thalia liked his wolf.

And Wraith? Wraith didn't just like her.

He was obsessed.

More than once during those three days, they had woken with no memory of what had happened, only the aftermath telling the story. Deep, bloody marks across Asher's body, the subtle discomfort in Violet's movements, and the complete ruin their room had become.

They both knew what it meant. Their wolves had taken over, and whatever had passed between them in those moments had been raw, intense, and untamed.

Thankfully, Asher and Violet recovered quickly enough each time, only to fall right back into each other again.

"Take her! Claim her! Make my mate happy!" Wraith roared in his head.

Asher groaned, dragging a hand down his face. "Shut up, dude. I give the commands here."

Wraith didn't quiet. If anything, his presence grew stronger, pushing against the edges of Asher's mind, restless and impatient.

"She's ours," Wraith pressed, his voice lower now but no less intense. *"She's right here. Why are you wasting time?"*

Asher exhaled slowly, his jaw tightening. "I'm not wasting time. But I'm not doing this on your terms either."

Wraith growled in defiance. Then a flash of heat surged through Asher, not the uncontrollable fire from before, but something deeper, possessive, and intentional.

But Asher stood his ground.

He clenched his teeth. "You don't get to take over every time you feel like it."

Wraith let out a dark, satisfied chuckle.

"And we are equal. You don't get to rule over me."

Asher glared at him. The thing with Alpha wolves was that they always challenged and pushed their owners. And when it came to their mate, they fucking demanded.

Wraith shoved flashes of their mating into his mind, and for a brief second, his control slipped before snapping back into place.

"She needs rest," Asher muttered.

Wraith huffed, clearly unimpressed.

"She needs you," he countered. "She needs us. We need her before our white-haired brother comes for her."

That did it.

Asher's jaw tightened, his gaze dropping back to Violet, dark greed settling behind his eyes.

He knew this fragile peace would shatter the moment they walked out that door, and he wasn't ready to let it go. He wanted more time with her.

"Fine," he said at last.

His eyes moved over her body with open hunger, slow and unashamed, as though reacquainting himself with something he would never tire of. They lingered on the soft rise of her breasts, the gentle rhythm of her breathing lifting them in quiet invitation.

Even in sleep, Violet's body responded to him, her pink nipples pebbled and her skin flushed.

Drawn in, helpless against it, Asher lowered his head and took one into his mouth, testing, savoring. The contact alone was enough to stir her.

Violet shifted beneath him, a soft sound escaping her lips, her body reacting before her mind could catch up.

Her eyes weren't even open yet when her fingers tangled in his hair, gripping tight. The pain only excited Asher, who sucked on her nipple even harder, while his hand found the

other breast, rolling her hard nipple between his fingers, coaxing a reaction he already knew he'd get.

"Asher..." Violet's voice broke into a soft moan, her body arching instinctively into him.

Asher didn't stop. If anything, he intentionally began teasing, circling, tracing with his tongue, learning Violet all over again as if the past three days had not been enough to satisfy him.

"Yes... oh—Goddess..." she gasped, her voice breaking as the sensation hit her all at once.

Violet's breaths came uneven, her body already moving against him, chasing relief from the slow torment he was putting her through.

Wraith drank in the sounds she made, every soft gasp and broken moan feeding that possessive part of him. So Asher's hand slid lower between them, finding exactly what he was looking for.

Goddess, save him.

Violet was so wet, her scent making him dizzy. Asher was tempted to forgo his hand and take her fully, giving in to the pull that still burned beneath his skin.

But Violet was wound tight already, so with just a few strokes, she shuddered against him, her breath catching, her entire body tightening before melting into him.

"You devil," she murmured, her voice breathless, her eyes heavy with heat rather than anger.

Asher didn't wait.

He spread her leg as he eased into her slowly, a low groan slipping from his throat as her body welcomed him, tight around him.

He took her inch by inch, unhurried, savoring every second, every reaction it pulled from her. Her nails bit into his back, holding on, grounding him as the tension between them built again.

When Asher finally settled fully against her, they both drew in a sharp breath, the stretch and the sheer intensity of it washing over them at once.

For a moment, neither of them moved, just feeling the moment and existing in it.

Violet wrapped her hand around his neck, her grip tightening as she adjusted to him, her body slowly yielding, welcoming him deeper.

"Asher..." she whispered, her voice soft and filled with need.

Asher felt not just the physical pull, but the bond. It wrapped around him, warm and consuming, drawing him closer in ways that had nothing to do with touch. Her emotions brushed against his, raw and unguarded, and for a brief second, it almost stole the air from his lungs.

His forehead dropped against hers.

"I'm here," he murmured.

It was not just words, but a promise.

His hand slid along her side, grounding her as he slowly began to move with an unhurried and controlled pace, letting the rhythm build naturally between them instead of rushing it.

Violet's breath hitched, her body responding in kind, rising to meet him without thought. This wasn't the frantic pull of the mating haze anymore, but them professing their love for each other.

Asher watched her face, studying every reaction, committing it all to memory.

Mine.

The thought came unbidden, not possessive in the way it once had been, but certain and unshakable.

Violet's hand slid up to his face, her thumb brushing lightly along his jaw, imprinting his features into her mind too.

Always mine.

She responded through the bond.

When Violet came this time, Asher came with her. For a moment, neither of them could breathe, tangled in that magical moment.

Then it was over, and the two of them lay back in bed, the room quiet.

It was Violet who spoke first.

"Alaric's outside."

Asher groaned, dragging a hand over his face. "Of course he is."

He glanced around the room, then back at her, clearly annoyed. "Can't he give us one more day?"

Violet laughed. "Apparently not."

He sighed, then pushed himself up. "Come on. We'll clean up first."

They slipped into the bathroom, where they had one more session, and then finally stepped out again, dressed and composed, their fingers finding each other without thought.

Alaric was waiting just outside, leaning casually against the wall of the manor. Thankfully, he had come alone. It was a known fact that newly bonded males didn't like other males around their females. But Alaric was bound to them. Asher's bond didn't push them aside or reign superior over theirs.

Alaric's gaze dropped immediately to their joined hands. Specifically, the rune.

For a moment, there was nothing but silence. Then his face broke into a grin.

"Well," Alaric said, pushing off the wall, "about damn time, brother."

He stepped forward and pulled Asher into a quick, firm hug before turning to Violet.

Without warning, Alaric lifted her off the ground and spun her once.

"Look at you, my darling mate," he laughed. "Job well done."

Violet let out a surprised laugh, gripping his shoulders. If Alaric was already this excited, she couldn't wait to see the others' expressions.

It was time to find her men and unite their group.

Defy The Alpha(s) - Chapter 864: Thank A Husband[1,129 words]

This was not the way things were supposed to end, Baron thought with a hiss as he moved through the hidden path in the forest, trying to escape the Free Fae.

He was headed to Astaria to hide in the Summer Court and monitor things before returning. Annequin might have betrayed him, but thanks to her, he had his backup plan.

Baron was not traveling alone. With him was Councilor Zion and a few other Fae assigned to protect him, along with servants carrying the most important properties he couldn't part with.

He had intentionally left Enock behind. That old fool was not smart enough. Moreover, if Violet came after him, Enock and Celeste would be the reasonable target. He couldn't risk himself.

Baron believed Queen Seraphira was dead and that he had ruined every plan of bringing her back. However, Asher's plan had failed, and now he had to deal with Violet, who would surely want revenge.

"How long till we get there?" Baron grumbled impatiently.

"Not long now, your highness," Zion answered.

They were not taking the normal routes out of the border, knowing there was a high chance of being caught there. But with the chaos in the palace, it would take time for anyone to track this path, and he would be out of the Free Fae by then. Teleporting would have been easier, but Astaria was unfamiliar territory, and the Free Fae teleportation methods might not work there. Not to mention, he didn't know exactly where he would end up.

They had already made arrangements with one of the lords of the Summer Court. He was related to the Summer Prince, Valerie, and Baron would enter his court under the guise of asylum.

That way, even if Violet came after him, she wouldn't be able to touch him, not unless she wanted to start a war with the kingdom of Astaria.

Already, Baron was forming plans in his head.

If Violet did take over the Free Fae, then he would set his sights on Astaria. It would take time to climb his way up the ranks—things would have been easier if that bitch Annequin had agreed to marry him—but he was patient enough.

Fae lived long lives, after all. He just had to make the right impression on the leaders of this new territory. And this time, he would not fail.

Then, out of nowhere, taking everyone by surprise, the earth suddenly split open. The servants carrying his load shrieked as the ground gave way beneath them, plunging them into the pit.

They clawed at the edges, trying to climb out but the earth closed over them just as quickly, swallowing them whole and cutting off their screams forever.

Baron was left flabbergasted, frozen for a moment before his survival instinct kicked in.

"We've been found out! Run, Your Highness!" Zion screamed.

Like he had been doing all day, Baron took off.

It was late at night, but Fae had excellent eyesight, and he could see his way clearly through the forest. He ran with supernatural speed, as if his life depended on it—because it did.

He couldn't see his pursuer but he could feel them. The hairs on his body stood on end, his spine tingling with a sharp awareness that something was closing in.

Baron shoved desperately through the tall bushes in his path, however, something was wrong. The bushes only seemed to grow taller, thicker, closing in around him, and turning his escape into a struggle.

He knew what this was. Earth magic.

His pursuer was not just hunting him, they were toying with him. For the first time, Baron felt something close to fear twist into frustration.

After everything he had done, here he was, running like a coward. How had his life come to this?

Still, he forced his way forward, pushing through the living barrier until he came to a sudden stop, nearly tripping over himself.

Baron's eyes widened in horror. His breath caught. For a moment, it felt like his soul had left his body.

Standing before him was his wife. Seraphira.

The very woman he had been certain he killed.

"No..." Dread crawled down his spine. The soul transfer worked? But how? He thought he handled it. Baron was sure of it.

"Going somewhere?"

Seraphira's smirk was pure menace, her eyes glinting with something dark and unforgiving.

For the first time, Baron truly felt fear. So he did what every cornered animal would do. He attacked.

A violent surge of air blasted forward from him, aimed straight at Seraphira. But she was ready. The earth rose instantly at her command, forming a thick wall that absorbed the impact with a dull, crushing force.

Seraphira could have ended him right there, but she didn't. The queen of the Free Fae let him believe he had a chance.

Moisture gathered in the air at Baron's command, freezing into sharp icicles that formed in an instant before shooting toward her in a deadly barrage.

He had no idea how powerful she was now, but he clung to one hope that she wasn't at full strength after switching bodies. What Baron failed to understand was that there was no force more dangerous than a woman betrayed, a wife murdered, and a mother whose child had been threatened.

Baron wasn't fighting to win but to escape.

So when he summoned a raging cyclone, twisting violently around Seraphira, he didn't stay to watch. He ran.

Seraphira let the winds swallow her whole, making him believe it worked. She watched him flee through the storm with cold amusement.

She had to give it to him. Like an ant, he was desperate to live. But that fragile hope was exactly what she needed. Because she crushed it.

It was almost laughable, the way the hope drained from Baron's face the moment he saw her floating right in front of him again, unharmed.

His legs gave out instantly. Baron dropped to his knees.

"Please... please, Seraphira, have mercy."

She descended slowly, like an angel of death, her feet finally touching the ground.

"Is that so?" Her lips curved wickedly as she stepped toward him.

Baron scrambled back, his hands shaking, panic flooding his features.

"I must have been out of my mind," he rushed out. "I don't know what came over me. It was Celeste! She wanted to be queen so badly she turned me against you. But you know me, Seraphira—I even shared my life force with you."

"I know that," Seraphira said calmly, stopping right in front of him.

"And that is why I must thank you properly."

"Huh?"

Confusion barely had time to register in Baron's head before Seraphira moved and drove her fingers into his eyes.

Baron's scream tore through the forest.

Defy The Alpha(s) - Chapter 865: A Vengeful Queen[1,050 words]

Violet had expected the journey back to the palace would be quick. That wasn't the case.

The manor the pixies had taken them to was farther than she had imagined. They were practically isolated and hidden away like a secret even the Fae world had forgotten.

As much as she wanted to simply carry them back, she couldn't. Not that distance, and certainly not with two fully grown Alpha males. Even with her strength, flying both Asher and Alaric over such a long stretch would drain her before they were halfway there.

Thankfully Alaric had not come alone. As a matter of fact, the white-haired prince had driven here in a carriage. A gold, gleaming wagon drawn by two majestic white horses. Their manes flowed like silk, their eyes glowing with quiet intelligence.

They didn't just look like horses but creatures that knew exactly what they were doing. The carriage came to a smooth stop before them.

Alaric came into view, clearly pleased with himself. "The pixies gave it to me."

Violet stared at him, stunned.

"So not only do the pixies tell you where I am," she said folding her arms, "they also give you a carriage to come take me home like some princess?"

"Which you technically are," Asher pointed out casually.

"Like Cinderella," Violet muttered. "That is what it's giving."

She glanced back at the carriage, squinting slightly. "I swear those little creatures have somehow discovered old world fairy tales."

Because this was too on the nose. Except instead of one prince, she had two. Four, technically. Just temporarily unavailable. Something she planned to rectify soon.

Asher moved first, stepping forward and opening the carriage door like it was the most natural thing in the world. Then he turned and extended a hand toward her.

Violet raised a brow.

"You do realize I can get in by myself, right?"

"Of course," he said. "But where's the fun in that?"

She snorted but took his hand anyway.

The moment she stepped inside, Violet was impressed.

The interior was just as extravagant. Soft velvet seats lined the inside, deep and plush, in a rich shade of midnight blue. Gold accents traced the edges. The air was cool but comfortable, carrying a subtle floral scent that was soothing.

Asher slid in beside her, and before she could even adjust, Alaric followed, taking the space on her other side.

Violet froze because now she was sandwiched between them. For someone who had only just come out of the mating haze, that was quite... dangerous.

She cleared her throat, trying to ignore the way her body reacted instinctively to their closeness. The door shut behind them. Without a driver, the horses moved instantly, as if they had been waiting.

Violet glanced toward the front. "Are we really trusting the horses?"

Alaric leaned back comfortably. "They brought me here. There's nothing to be afraid of."

Violet relaxed then. Honestly, what was left to be afraid of? They had survived worse.

A heavy silence fell between them. There was too much to say. Too much that had happened in the past few days, and yet none of them seemed to know where to start.

Then—

"I—"

"You—"

They both stopped.

Violet was surprised

Alaric huffed a quiet laugh. "Go on. You first."

She sighed, rubbing the back of her neck. "I'm sorry."

Both of her mates turned to her.

"For the way I left in the middle of the fight," she continued. "I know I disappeared without saying anything and you must have been worried."

"I was," Alaric said immediately. "I didn't know where you were. All I knew was that I had to find you. And when I felt your pain..." he paused, jaw tightening. "I thought I had truly tasted death."

"But you didn't," Asher cut in dryly. "I did."

Alaric rolled his eyes. Asher was never going to let that go.

"The point is," Alaric continued, "I felt useless, like I failed to protect my mate. "

Violet opened her mouth to speak but he stopped her with a small shake of his head.

"But I understand," he added. "I would have done the same thing in your place. I would give my life for my brother too."

It all sounded touching until he ruined it with, "Kind of? Maybe?"

"Asshole," Asher shot at him.

Alaric's expression was full of mirth. He reached for Violet's hand, squeezing it gently.

"I'm just glad it worked out. But next time, we do it together. Not alone."

Violet nodded.

"I promise," she said. "And I'm sorry for scaring you. It won't happen again."

Alaric leaned forward and pressed a soft kiss to her forehead. "It's alright."

The tension eased just a little until Asher asked.

"What about the queen?"

Violet stilled, her heart nearly jumping out of her chest. She had been so busy with Asher, she hadn't thought about her mother. Not once.

Guilt hit her immediately. What kind of daughter was she?

Alaric said. "The queen died."

Violet's breath caught, her chest tightening. Before the grief could fully settle, Alaric clarified, "But the soul transfer worked.

Relief hit her so hard she almost slumped.

"That was not funny," she muttered under her breath.

"How is she?" Violet followed, more serious now.

Alaric hesitated.

"...Fine?" He sounded unsure.

Violet narrowed her eyes. "That didn't sound convincing."

Alaric scratched his brow. "She's just... a bit vengeful."

"How vengeful are we talking here?"

"She's showing no mercy," he admitted. "Anyone involved in the attack, she's eliminating them and their families."

Violet sighed. All it took was death for her mother to become decisive and ruthless.

"I guess the queen and I have something in common then," Asher said suddenly.

Both of them looked at him.

He leaned back, a small smile playing on his lips, though his eyes were anything but amused.

"I'm feeling quite vengeful myself, and I can't wait to get my hands on Baron. He would pay for what he did to me." Asher's eyes gleamed darkly, his hands balling into a fist.

"In that case," Alaric said to him, "you might want to get in line."

Asher raised a brow.

"Because Seraphira already has him, and in the mood she's in right now..."

He exhaled slowly.

"I don't think she plans on sharing."

Defy The Alpha(s) - Chapter 866: Unforgiving Queen[1,536 words]

"Who goes there? Reveal yourselves!" The command rang out the moment their carriage came within range of the palace gates.

The carriage slowed, the white horses stamping lightly against the stone path as if aware of the tension in the air.

"Let me handle this," Alaric said, already moving before Violet could respond. He stepped down from the carriage with ease, his presence commanding.

"Alpha Alaric—you're back," one of the guards was startled, before relief crept into his tone.

The second guard's gaze drifted toward the carriage, his voice trailing off. "Is that the...?"

Violet didn't wait for the rest. She stepped out of the carriage gracefully, her presence alone enough to answer their unspoken question. Her golden eyes swept over the guards, calm and observant.

"Princess Violet!"

Both guards dropped to their knees instantly, heads bowed in respect.

"You don't really need to do that," Violet said, a little uncomfortable with the display.

Behind her, Asher had already stepped out, his gaze sharp and alert as he scanned the surroundings, missing nothing.

The guards rose quickly to their feet. One of them lifted a hand to the strange device fastened around his neck and spoke into it.

"The princess is back," he announced.

Violet's attention snapped to the object, her brows drawing together. "What is that?"

Alaric leaned in explaining to her, "Think of it as a walkie-talkie but made with Fae magic. Inspired by human design, it's one of the many changes around the palace."

Violet stared at him, speechless. She had been gone for only three days, and already the palace had magic tools modeled after human technology.

An uneasy feeling settled in Violet's belly, and she didn't know whether to feel impressed or wary.

"Come, come," the guard said excitedly, gesturing for them to move on.

The second guard was more hesitant when his gaze fell on Asher, but that was until his eyes landed on the mating rune at the top of his hand. His gaze quickly snapped to Violet's, his eyes widening in shock.

"T-they're mated!" he shouted. "They're finally mated!"

The first guard, upon hearing this, exclaimed, "They are?!" His eyes immediately searched Asher and Violet for the rune, and he nearly choked on air when he saw it.

"They're mated indeed!" he shouted in celebration.

Violet's face flushed red. She hadn't realized they had been rooting for her.

"I think I like him," Asher said to her through the matebond.

"Of course you do," Violet snorted. "He practically announced your sex life for you."

"This is a three-way bond. Try to have some decency," Alaric cut in mentally.

Asher scoffed. "Then fuck off, pervert. Slam the door on your way out."

"Asshole," Alaric shot back.

Together, they were escorted into the palace, and that was when Violet began to notice the changes. The palace was tense, filled to the brim with security. Not just that, the statues had increased. More watchers.

Aside from that, the palace was eerily quiet, like a graveyard. In the past, there had always been chatter with Fae servants moving about their duties, and the groaning of brownies hidden in the walls or beneath the floors. Now, there was nothing.

"What's going on?" Violet asked, unable to hide the unease in her voice.

"Some of the Fae affected by Baron's little revolt are back home burying their loved ones or trying to heal the injured ones. The ones here are staying out of the way. Like I said, Queen Seraphira is a bit brittle right now."

"Where is the queen right now?" Violet asked as they moved deeper into the palace.

The guard leading them stiffened a bit before answering, "Her Majesty is holding court. She has been doing so these past few days."

Violet commanded. "Take me to her."

The guard slowed, glancing back at her with clear discomfort. "Are you sure you want that, Princess? Perhaps you'd rather rest with your mates and wait until the queen is done. She would surely come to you—"

"Take me to the queen," Violet repeated, firmer this time.

There was no room for negotiation in her voice. If Seraphira was truly on a killing spree, then Violet needed to see the raw, unfiltered version of her mother, not the one that would be presented to her after everything had already been done.

The guard swallowed and nodded. "As you wish."

They moved quickly after that, the air heavy with tension. Even the servants they passed kept their heads low, moving aside quickly, afraid to be noticed.

When they finally reached the grand hall, the guards stationed at the doors straightened in surprise.

"Princess—" the herald began, already preparing to announce her

Violet lifted a finger to her lips, silencing him.

The rest of them froze, then nodded in understanding, stepping aside and pushing the heavy doors open without another word.

Violet stepped inside, followed closely by her mates, Asher and Alaric. Then she halted suddenly, speechless at the sight before her.

It wasn't the Fae nobles lining the sides of the hall, their faces pale with fear, and bodies rigid with tension.

Nor was it the bodies sprawled across the marble floor, blood staining the ground.

It wasn't even the trembling fae kneeling before the throne, begging desperately for mercy, their voices breaking as they pleaded for their lives.

No, what caught Violet's attention was Baron. Or rather, what had become of him.

He was on all fours like an animal with iron chains wrapped around his neck, the metal burning into his skin with a sizzle. The other end was held by Queen Seraphira.

Above all, Baron's eyes were gone. He was

blind. His clothes hung off him in torn strips, barely covering a body that was already marked with deep, cruel scars. There were already fresh wounds layered over the old ones, as if the punishment had not come in a single moment, but repeatedly.

Her mother stood above him, regal, her posture flawless as ever, but there was a certain cold and ruthlessness to her. This was not the woman she had left behind.

Through the bond, Asher's voice slipped in, low and edged with dark amusement.

"Damn. Who knew the queen had this in her?"

For once, Violet said nothing because there was nothing to say.

Queen Seraphira noticed the interruption almost immediately. Her lips had already begun to curve in irritation at being disturbed, her grip tightening slightly on the chain in her hand only for her eyes to connect with Violet's.

Just like that, everything changed. The irritation vanished as if it had never been there, replaced first by surprise and then joy.

"Violet, my daughter!"

The chain slipped from her hand without a second thought, clattering against the bloodstained floor as she rushed forward.

Before Violet could even react, she was engulfed in a hug, the force nearly knocking her off balance.

Oops. The woman was quite strong.

Seraphira let out small, relieved sounds, clutching her for a moment longer before finally pulling back. Her hands came up to cup Violet's face, studying her as if committing every detail to memory, before she leaned down and pressed a firm kiss to her forehead.

"How glad I am to see you alive," she said, her voice full of warmth, almost breathless. "Although I expected nothing less from you. You are my daughter, after all."

Violet didn't respond immediately, thrown. Her gaze lingered on the woman in front of her. Even though she knew it was her mother, this was still Celeste's body. Or at least, it had been.

The features had shifted, molded, reshaped into Seraphira's. Those familiar, unmistakable purple eyes stared back at her.

Seraphira noticed and chuckled. "You must be startled by my appearance."

Violet only nodded, words failing her.

Seraphira gently took Violet's hand and began to guide her forward, back toward the center of the hall.

"As you have the ability to shift forms," Seraphira explained, "my magic appears to have done something similar. It adapted this body to suit me."

They came to a stop before the bodies, both living and dead. The living Fae now seeing Violet had hope in their eyes that she would save them.

"Mother..." Violet's voice came out quieter than she intended. "What is all this?"

Seraphira shrugged, as if the scene before them was of little consequence.

"Just a few subjects who thought I wasn't worthy enough, and decided to stab me in the back. With the help of my dear husband." There was a dark gleam in her eyes at the end of her words.

The kneeling fae flinched. A few whimpered under their breath, as though they could already see the end waiting for them.

Violet's gaze moved to Baron. "And him?"

Seraphira's expression changed instantly, all warmth draining away as her eyes fell on him.

"Him?" she repeated, her tone laced with disdain, as though she were looking at a dirt beneath her feet.

"He is my demonstration so that the court remembers what happens to those who think betrayal is an option."

Her gaze swept over the kneeling Fae, cold and unforgiving.

"The next time they try, they will already know how their story ends."

Defy The Alpha(s) - Chapter 867: The Next Ruler[1,549 words]

"Is this the right way, though?" Violet asked suddenly, her face set in a frown.

The way Seraphira changed so instantly was unsettling. She subtly stepped away from Violet.

"What do you mean?"

There was a coldness to Seraphira now that made Violet stumble over her words.

"I—I mean... you said the Fae's population is at an all-time low—"

Seraphira cut her off.

"All this while, you all questioned my leadership," she said, her voice turning stern. "You pointed out that I was too soft on punishment. Now that I decide to be a little more forward, you're suddenly what? Judging me?" Disappointment flashed across her face.

"That is not what I'm trying to say," Violet tried to explain. "You're talking about entire families here, some of whom might not have had a hand in what happened. What about a trial? Finding out the truth?"

"They are not innocent!" Seraphira snapped. "These traitors—" She pointed at the group of weeping female faeries huddled together. "—they might not have agreed to it, but they knew what their husbands, brothers and son were planning, and they chose to keep it from me!"

Violet bit down on her lip, holding back the words rising to her tongue. Something told her her mother would not listen in this state of mind.

"They once claimed to love me..." Seraphira's purple eyes gleamed with hurt and betrayal. "They worshipped me. They said I was the best ruler after my mother. And yet..." Her

purple eyes darkened. "They were willing to sacrifice me. Me—who did everything for them! So why should I pretend to be nice anymore?" Her voice was stripped of mercy.

Violet understood her mother's hurt. Seraphira had loved the free Fae deeply. She had given, protected, nurtured them too much. So yes, that kind of betrayal would cut deeper than any blade.

But this was not the way. This was not justice, but raw, consuming anger and it was dangerous as hell. If Seraphira kept feeding this rage, it would swallow her whole, dragging her down a path she might never return from.

That terrified Violet more than anything because she knew her mother. Seraphira was soft, kind, and fierce when needed, but never cruel. Never like this.

"And the children?" Violet asked, staring at the three terrified faces clinging to their respective mothers. "Are they guilty too? Should they pay for the sins of their fathers?"

"No, they shouldn't," Seraphira answered.

But Violet caught it. "Shouldn't." Not "wouldn't."

"However," Seraphira continued, her voice even, carrying a strange detachment, "according to my mother—your grandmother, Elawon—once a seed is planted, it does not remain still. It grows, it spreads, and eventually, it bears fruit."

Her gaze remained fixed on Violet as she spoke. "I would not want any of them returning one day, driven by revenge."

Violet's stomach dropped. She knew what was coming.

"Mother—no!" she shouted.

It was too late.

A sharp metallic sound rang through the hall as the iron swords at the guards' sides ripped free from their scabbards all at once, drawn by an unseen force. They hovered midair for the briefest second, then, moved fast, precise and merciless.

Steel flashed and in a single motion, the blades swept across the kneeling figures. Their heads fell and eight decapitated bodies collapsed.

Silence lasted for a second, followed by loud, startled gasps.

Murmurs rippled through the nobles lining the hall, shock spreading like wildfire. Some staggered back, others covered their mouths, but no one dared to speak.

Violet didn't move. Couldn't move. Her eyes were locked on the scene before her, her body frozen as if rooted to the ground.

One of the children, a small girl, her head had rolled just enough to face Violet. Her eyes were still open wide, uncomprehending, and somehow accusing. As if asking why Violet hadn't stopped it.

Something inside Violet cracked.

Violet?

Alaric's voice broke into her mind, tight with concern.

Violet, are you okay?

Asher followed immediately after.

"Breathe, love."

She wasn't okay. Not even close.

Violet shut her eyes, her chest rising and falling unevenly as she struggled to pull in air. Her hands trembled at her sides.

This was the first time she had stood so close to an unfair execution and did nothing. What was she even supposed to do? Fight her own mother? She was the queen—and she believed she was right.

Right?

Her conscience pricked at that thought. Those were innocent children who just paid for the foolish mistakes of their family.

That is not your fault, Asher's voice came through the bond, firm and grounding, trying to anchor her.

Violet swallowed, her throat tight, and her chest aching. *I just let those children die.*

You didn't let anything happen, Violet, Asher replied. *You walked into something that was already decided.*

That doesn't make it better, she shot back.

No, it doesn't, he admitted. But this is politics, my love. And in politics, the innocent are dragged into things they never chose. It's ugly, it's wrong, but it happens.

Violet hated that he wasn't wrong. Hated that part of her understood exactly what he meant. Before she could respond, Seraphira's voice echoed through the hall.

"My court." She called out, and every head turned in her direction. Her aura alone demanded obedience, demanded silence, demanded fear.

"Let this serve as an example," she addressed the nobles, "Of what happens when betrayal is even considered. I have been patient. I have been merciful. I have given chances where none were deserved."

She paused.

"That ends now."

The words settled heavily, like a verdict no one could escape.

"Things will change within this court," Seraphira declared, her tone unwavering. "Loyalty will not be questioned again. Doubt will not be entertained. And betrayal—" her lips curved faintly, though there was no warmth in it, "—will be met with consequences far worse than death."

A ripple of unease moved through the gathered Fae. The low murmurs that followed were filled with fear, with realization, with the understanding that something fundamental had shifted.

When she finished, her attention turned to Baron.

He remained where he had been left on the floor, on his knees, his body slack, his head hanging. There was no fight left in him. Whatever had once made Baron who he was had been stripped away, leaving behind a hollow shell.

Seraphira announced.

"Baron will be publicly executed at midnight."

Even Violet was surprised, not to mention the scared high Fae. Atleast, she was finally putting him out of his misery.

Seraphira ignored them and turned back to Violet.

"Come, we have much to discuss," she said, reaching out to her daughter as though nothing had happened.

Violet stepped away from her. The way she looked at her right now it was as if she was the worst person alive.

Seraphira's lips pressed into a thin line at the move. But she did not let that affect her. She lifted her head with the regal bearing of a queen and strode out of the hall, leaving her behind.

Violet did not wait. The moment her mother turned and walked out of the throne room, she followed, her steps sharp, anger burning hot beneath her skin.

"Violet... "

Alaric reached for her arm, but before his fingers could close around her,

"Let her be," Asher cut in.

Alaric frowned, his jaw tightening. "She's not thinking straight."

"Exactly," Asher replied, watching Violet's retreating figure. "So don't stop her."

Alaric didn't like that one bit. But he let go.

By the time Violet reached her mother's chambers, the guards had already stepped aside for her. She pushed the doors open without knocking.

Inside, Queen Seraphira stood near the center of the room while servants moved around her, carefully removing the layers of her official attire. Gold clasps were undone, silk slipped from her shoulders, the weight of the crown already gone.

Seraphira did not turn.

"Everyone out," she ordered.

The servants bowed and quickly left, leaving mother and daughter alone.

Only then did Violet speak.

"What was that?"

Seraphira said nothing, stepping out of the last of her robes.

"That wasn't justice," Violet continued, her voice rising despite herself. "That was the slaughter of mothers and children."

Seraphira finally turned.

"And how far is too far, Violet?" she asked, her tone even. "Tell me."

Violet faltered for half a second, then pushed through. "Far enough not to kill those who had no hand in it."

Seraphira studied her.

"As a ruler," she said slowly, "you do not have the luxury of choosing only the clean path. You make difficult decisions that make a mark and ensure some things never happen again."

Violet let out a harsh laugh. "So that's it? You're going to become her now?"

Seraphira arched her brow. "You mean your grandmother?"

"Yes."

There was a pause. Then, to Violet's absolute disbelief, Seraphira actually considered it.

"Perhaps she wasn't entirely wrong after all."

Violet groaned, dragging a hand down her face. "You cannot be serious."

"I am very serious," Seraphira replied. "And when it is your turn to rule, you may govern as you see fit."

"I don't want it!" Violet snapped. "I want nothing to do with the Fae realm."

Seraphira's expression did not change.

"Perhaps then," she said calmly, "the child in your womb will."

Defy The Alpha(s) - Chapter 868: Failure Of A Mother[1,514 words]

"What?" Violet blurted out in her head, alerting Asher and Alaric immediately. They stirred through the bond.

"Violet? What is going on in there? Should we come in?" Alaric asked, urgency clear in his voice.

Asher snarled in her head. *"If that thing that returned as your mother lays a hand on you, I'm going to murder her."*

Violet didn't answer, dumbfounded.

She said to her mother, "How did you know that?"

Seraphira gave her a long-suffering look. "Have you forgotten I see auras? And right now..." Her purple eyes glowed faintly, focused on Violet's stomach. "There's a tiny blotch of aura in your belly that wasn't there before. If that isn't pregnancy, then tell me, did you swallow a soul?" she finished sarcastically.

"But how?" The words fell from Violet's lips as if she didn't know how a baby was made. Unfortunately, Violet Purple was in a state of massive shock.

"I assume you're trying to ask how it is possible for a baby to form so quickly," Seraphira continued. "Unlike Fae, who have longer gestation periods, often lasting over a year, wolves are the opposite. Their pregnancies typically last between four months, due to their accelerated growth."

She chuckled softly, as if recalling a distant memory. "I carried you for six months, if I remember correctly. Likely because I am Fae and you are a hybrid."

"Oh shit," Violet muttered again through the bond as the information sank in.

"Violet!" Asher's voice boomed in her head. *"Answer me! What is going on in there!"*

Finally, Violet said the life-altering words, her voice almost flat.

"My mother thinks I'm pregnant."

The bond went completely silent.

"Asher?" Violet called out, her face tightening.

"Asher, what is—"

In the next second, the door to the queen's chambers slammed open so hard it nearly came off its hinges. At the doorway stood Asher and Alaric, both wearing expressions of pure disbelief.

In a blink, Asher was already in front of her, his hands on her arms, scanning her body, his gaze lingering on her stomach.

Then his eyes lifted to hers.

"Is it—" he started, but couldn't finish.

They had just come out of their mating frenzy. There was no way. Except... there was. Werewolf pregnancies were not normal.

His heart pounded violently in his chest, thoughts racing faster than he could control. It couldn't be—but it could be. And even if it wasn't his, it didn't matter. The child would be theirs. All of theirs. That was what their bond meant.

He would love Alaric's child as his own, just as Alaric would do the same for his.

Violet nodded slowly, still trying to process it herself.

"I think it's yours," she said. "My mother can see the life in my belly."

Asher took a startled step back, his expression wide with shock, his entire body going still as the weight of her words settled in.

For a brief, ridiculous moment, Violet had the absurd thought that he might refuse it. That he might look at her and see a mistake. They were young after all. She was still in her final year of high school, and now she was supposed to carry a child that could arrive in four—six months at most if her mother was right about hybrid pregnancies. Her future—their future—had just shifted in a way she hadn't planned for.

Oh fuck. Nancy was going to lose her mind. Violet almost laughed hysterically at the thought. She was pregnant at the same time as her own mother. This was not how she imagined any of this happening.

Then Asher lifted a hand to his mouth, his eyes brimming with tears.

"Come here," he said hoarsely, and before she could react, he pulled her into him, wrapping his arms around her so tightly it knocked the breath from her lungs.

"We made a baby," Asher whispered against her hair, his voice breaking.

"We fucking made a baby." He pressed a kiss to the top of her head this time, lingering there like he needed to ground himself, to feel her.

He pulled back just enough to look at her, his gaze dropping instinctively to her stomach, as if he could somehow see it.

"I'm going to be a father," he said, barely above a breath.

The realization hit him again, harder.

"I'm going to be a father."

The tears came harder, spilling freely down his face as he let out a shaky laugh, overwhelmed.

"Thank you, Violet," he murmured, pulling her back into him, holding her like she might slip away if he loosened his grip. "Thank you so much." Asher buried his face into her hair, his shoulders trembling as he wept.

Violet stood there for a second, stunned. She had prepared for his hesitation and regret, not this.

It took Violet a moment to understand that Asher wasn't breaking down because she had ruined something, but because, to him, this was everything. That he wasn't losing anything, instead was gaining something.

Slowly, Violet's arms came up around him, tightening as she leaned into him, holding him just as tightly, as if anchoring herself in the moment.

At the corner of the room, Alaric sniffed quietly, dragging a hand across his face as he blinked away the moisture in his eyes. Their mate was pregnant. The thought alone hit deeper than he expected.

He wanted to go to her, and pull her into his arms too, to be part of that moment, but he held himself back. This belonged to Asher and Violet right now. He would have his moment later.

Still, he couldn't help the warmth that spread through his chest as he watched them. Asher had been alone for so long, carrying so much within himself. Seeing him like this—open, overwhelmed, filled with a feeling so pure—it felt like a gift.

And maybe it was.

Alaric wasn't one to speak of fate or divine will, but even he could see the pattern. Violet hadn't conceived during the others' mating haze. And then it happened with Asher. This was no coincidence, and certainly something more.

Either way, he knew one thing. Griffin and Roman were going to lose their minds when they heard.

However, while they were celebrating, Seraphira took a proper look at Violet and Asher, and that was when she discovered the shock of her life.

"No... you didn't." She recoiled as if slapped.

Earlier in the hall, she had been distracted, but now she saw clearly the life bond between them.

"What have you done?" she demanded, horror written all over her face.

Violet pulled away from Asher, frowning. "What do you mean by that?"

Seraphira pointed at Asher, her hand trembling. "You bound your life to him?"

Oh. Violet stilled. So she finally saw it.

"I had no choice," Violet said. "He was dying. No—he died. It was a miracle I managed to bind us."

But Seraphira wasn't moved.

"And of all the ways to save him, a life bond?" she snapped. "Or have you learned nothing from my mistake, Violet?"

Violet's jaw tightened.

"That's the thing," she said coldly. "I am not you, mother."

"What?" Seraphira's voice rose in disbelief.

Violet met her gaze head-on. "Just because your mate bond with Angus failed doesn't mean mine will. Angus was an anomaly to begin with, and you were unlucky to be bound to him. And Baron—" she scoffed, "—that was another terrible choice. So don't project your fears onto me. It won't happen. My fate is not yours."

For a moment, the room fell silent. Mother and daughter stared at each other, neither willing to back down.

"Fine," Seraphira sneered. "You know best. Your mother is a testament to failure, after all."

Violet's brows furrowed. "I didn't say that."

"Then what was that about Angus and Baron?" Seraphira shot back. "Or are you simply rubbing your perfect bond in my face now?"

Violet exhaled sharply, frustration rising. "I'm only saying you were unlucky—"

She stopped and shook her head.

"No, you know what? I'm done." She lifted her hand, cutting herself off. "It's one thing to have abandoned me all these years, but being jealous of me? That's a whole different level of madness."

Her voice dropped, sharp and final.

"I'm leaving this realm first thing tomorrow morning."

"Good!" Seraphira snapped. "Leave then! After all, what is there to learn from your failure of a Fae mother?"

Violet shook her head slowly, disappointment settling deep in her chest.

To think she had believed coming here and getting to know her biological mother, would be everything she had ever wanted.

Instead, it was a disaster. At least she and Asher were bonded now. That was something.

"Let's go," Violet said to her men.

She turned to leave but Asher caught her hand, stopping her.

Violet glanced back at him, confused.

Asher didn't look at her. He looked at Seraphira with a hardened expression.

"This is the last time Violet is giving you a chance," he said. "Once we leave this realm, I don't want your toxicity anywhere near her, or my child."

Defy The Alpha(s) - Chapter 869: Angus And Seraphira[1,507 words]

The hour before midnight, the palace was already filled to the brim.

Having learned her lesson, Seraphira ensured the palace was crawling with guards even though it was a little too late for such caution. The damage had already been done.

In uncertain times like this, the overwhelming presence of the soldiers only made the common Fae uneasy. Yet none of them wanted to leave. They needed to see the execution with their own eyes.

The entire kingdom had been thrown into shock when the news broke that Baron had staged a rebellion. Not that the conflict itself was surprising. Baron and Seraphira had always been at each other's throats. It had only been a matter of time before one of them fell.

Most had assumed it would be the queen.

She was the one dependent on Baron's life force. What truly shocked them was that Seraphira survived, and the retaliation that followed.

The news of her killing the Fae females and children had spread across the realm, leaving the people shaken. This was not the queen they remembered. She had been kind, gentle, accommodating, not cold and ruthless.

So some came out of fear, unwilling to risk being mistaken as Baron's sympathizers and facing the same fate. Others out of curiosity, eager to see with their own eyes that Baron had truly been reduced to nothing—and that their queen still lived.

"Things are about to change in the Free Fae realm," Violet muttered solemnly, her gaze fixed on the sea of people gathered below.

She sat on the roof of the palace, the night wind brushing against her skin. As always, Asher and Alaric stayed close, unwilling to leave her side, especially now she was pregnant.

She had been the one to fly them up there, but not without argument. Asher had insisted it was reckless, that carrying both of them could strain her, and affect the baby.

Violet had argued back just as fiercely. Being pregnant did not make her fragile. If she was powerful, then her child would be too. A simple task like that wouldn't harm either of them.

In the end, she compromised by carrying them one after the other. She was still annoyed about it. If this was how things were going to be now, she could already tell there would be endless arguments over what she could and couldn't do.

Violet let out a quiet sigh.

"I can't help but feel guilty," she admitted, her voice calm now. "Leaving at a time like this. My mother... she needs someone strong enough to pull her back from whatever she's becoming."

"The Free Fae was never your responsibility in the first place, baby girl," Asher said, seated beside her as he absently played with strands of her hair.

"I agree with him," Alaric supported. "If you remember, we weren't brought here because they wanted to help you grow into a princess. They brought you here to confirm your identity."

Asher's expression hardened. "She left you alone for eighteen years. You don't owe her the burden of fixing what she chose to ignore."

Violet didn't respond immediately. Asher reached for her chin, turning her face so she was looking at him.

"And..." he added quietly, his voice lowering, "I don't do long distance. Especially not when we're about to become parents."

The meaning was clear. He had a pack to lead and Violet was not meant to stay behind and face this alone.

Violet breathed out. "No, you're right. Not to mention, we can't leave Roman and Griffin behind. We have our own mess in the human realm. The Free Fae will have to handle this one on their own."

Even as she said it, they could tell she wasn't at ease with that decision.

"The queen isn't alone," Alaric reminded her. "She has Lila and Lord Taryn. He's a good Fae. If the two of them aren't enough to pull her back from whatever this is..." he paused, then said it anyway, "then maybe this is who she was always meant to be."

"Are you sure there were no side effects to the soul transfer?" Violet asked, her voice tighter now. "When you read about it?"

Alaric, scratched the back of his head. "I don't remember reading anything like that. But then, I didn't finish everything. The translating magic was giving me a terrible headache. Next time we come back here, I'll just have to learn their language properly."

Violet stilled at that. She still hadn't decided if there would even be a return to the Fae realm, not with how things stood between her and her mother. And especially not with the interest her mother had already shown in her unborn child.

She wouldn't stop her children from embracing their Fae roots, but it would be their choice if any of them wanted to carry the heavy weight of ruling that kingdom.

It would not be forced on them.

Seeing the shift in her, Alaric quickly changed the subject.

"Zuru did mention something," he said. "The reason knowledge of soul transfer was hidden was to stop rulers from chasing immortality. Think about it, if someone like

Seraphira decided she didn't want to die, all she'd have to do is keep switching bodies. She could rule forever."

"Let's hope that thought hasn't crossed her mind," Asher's tone was more serious now. "Because if it has, then both you and my heir are threats to her throne."

Violet felt the air leave her lungs.

"No," she said quickly. "My mother isn't like that."

Asher raised a brow. "And you're sure about that? Look at what she's becoming already."

"We're making assumptions," Violet argued. "Assumptions that might not even be true."

She exhaled. "Seraphira is just going through a lot. She was betrayed by her partner, killed, and brought back to life. No matter how you look at it, that's bound to leave a scar on anyone's soul."

Her voice lowered. "Let's just give her time. With Lila and Lord Taryn around, I'm sure she'll come around."

Violet hoped so because she didn't want to imagine a future where she would have to stand against her own mother the way they would against Angus.

Wait. Violet paused, her thoughts catching on something.

"What if..." she started slowly, her voice slipping into the bond despite the fact they were alone. In the Fae realm, even the walls could listen. *"What if it's not just betrayal she's feeling?"*

Asher's voice came immediately. *"Where are you going with this?"*

"What if she's lonely?"

She pushed on before they could interrupt.

"In the stories, it said Seraphira's soul suffered when she rejected the mate bond with Angus. She lost her mate and child and had no will to live, thus why she was tied to Baron's life force to sustain her."

Her gaze drifted, unfocused. *"But now that she has a new body. A reset. What if she misses her mate?"*

Silence followed.

Violet knew how it sounded. She saw it on Asher's face.

"I don't like where this is going," he said flatly. "Are you suggesting we ignore the fact that Angus is a threat and just send him to your mother because she misses him?"

Violet threw her hands up, frustrated. "I don't know!" she snapped aloud. "I'm just saying, what if there's a way to keep him contained here? In the Fae realm. She gets what she wants, and he stays away from us. It could work."

"Even if that were somehow possible," Asher said, his tone firm but not unkind, "Angus is a psychopath. What makes you think he even misses his mate? Or that he'd want to be reunited with her if we spared him?"

Violet opened her mouth, but no words came.

Alaric was just as certain. "And even if, by some miracle, he did feel something for her, it wouldn't matter. Angus has always had a taste for power. Look at what happened between Baron and Seraphira. Now imagine someone worse."

His gaze darkened slightly as he continued, "Angus wouldn't stop at the Fae realm. If he gets control of it, he won't sit quietly on that throne. He'll use it. Build from it. And then he'll come for the human realm. We can't allow that to happen."

Silence settled between them, heavier this time.

Violet's shoulders dropped slightly, the weight of their words sinking in. When she spoke, her voice was stripped of the earlier urgency.

"That was stupid," she muttered. "I'm sorry. I wasn't thinking straight."

"Hey," Asher cupped her face gently. "Don't do that."

Before she could react, he leaned in and pressed a soft kiss to her forehead.

"My sweet, kind purple queen," he murmured against her skin. "You just want the best for everyone. That's not a flaw."

"It's also exactly why you need us," Alaric said. "Someone has to balance that out before you start offering peace treaties to monsters."

That earned a small breath of laughter from Violet.

Then came the sound of a bell. It was time.

Defy The Alpha(s) - Chapter 870: Gone Forever[1,581 words]

The bells tolled heavily across the Fae palace three times before stopping, the ominous countdown reminding everyone that it was midnight.

Baron's execution was due.

The ground was so packed with faeries that there was no space, and the smaller winged faeries such as the pixies couldn't have been more grateful for their size as they hovered curiously in the air.

All of their murmurs quieted immediately, a ripple of silence spreading through the crowd as every head turned toward the raised execution platform at the center of the courtyard.

Torches burned along the perimeter, their flames reflecting off the faces of the stern-faced Fae guards at the sides, doing their duty. The air was thick and oppressive, the fear from the people even reaching Violet where she stayed on the rooftop, watching the procession.

Then the doors of the palace opened, and her mother, Queen Seraphira, stepped out with regal bearing.

Even for an execution, she moved with such measured grace, her presence alone enough to command the entire courtyard without a single word spoken.

Behind her followed an entourage of guards with unreadable expressions, their formation tight.

And between them was Baron.

Unlike earlier, Seraphira had the grace to clean and dress him in the royal purple robe he was known for. But even that could not cover his gaunt expression or his empty sockets, dark and hollow.

A scandalized gasp rippled through the crowd as faeries who had not seen Baron since his punishment finally took a good look at him.

How far Baron had fallen that a chain was fastened around his neck to lead him, even though he could walk perfectly. He must have been feeling his surroundings through his other senses; Fae senses were heightened, after all

Violet had to give a grudging respect to Baron for walking to his execution with his head held high. However, that was where her feelings of pity for him ended.

She had almost lost Asher because of the decision he made, which was a sin Violet could never forgive. Moreover, Alaric had told her that the mind-controlling larvae he used on Asher could only be found in places of massive Fae death.

In one word, Baron had intentionally taken and killed his own people, farming their bodies in order to produce that larva. There was already suspicion that there could be more circulating around, and Seraphira had opened an investigation into it.

For a place so jam-packed, the crowd parted effortlessly for Seraphira to step through until she reached the platform and stepped onto it. She turned to face her people as silence fell completely.

"Loyal citizens of the Free Fae," Seraphira began, her voice projected effortlessly across the courtyard with magic. "Tonight, the Free Fae witnesses the end of rebellion."

Baron was made to kneel before her, Seraphira's hardened eyes sweeping over him with disdain.

She said, "I once called Baron of the House of Briarwood my beloved. He was bound to me in marriage and soul. Yet he conspired against his queen, against his realm, and against the very people he swore to protect."

Baron made no sound or attempt to refute anything Seraphira had said. He simply remained still, waiting for the moment his fate would be sealed.

Seraphira went on, "He sought to take what was not his, and in doing so, he chose his fate. Let it be remembered that this is the hour Baron Briarwood would be sent to the great beyond."

Her voice boomed with authority now as she thundered, "While our own punishment may be quick and swift, let hers be eternal and cruel. Let the Fifth One judge him harshly unless he sees fit to confess his crimes, repent, and move on to rest with our ancestors."

Seraphira looked at Baron. "Do you, Baron, acknowledge your crimes and plead for mercy, so you may rest in the bosom of the Fifth One?"

For a moment, Baron did not respond, making everyone watch and wait. Then he lifted his head as if he could somehow see Seraphira, even with his missing eyes.

"Rot in hell, bitch!" His words were laced with hatred right before he spat at the queen.

What followed next was a quick flash of steel and what could qualify as the fastest execution Violet had ever seen—not that she had seen many—as Baron's head rolled to the ground.

Startled gasps and murmurs ran through the audience, with some looking away as Baron's decapitated body twitched and bled out on the ground.

"Let it be known that tonight marks a turning point in the Free Fae realm. No more betrayals will be forgiven. Every crime will be met with equal punishment. May the Fifth One bless the prosperity of the Free Fae."

Queen Seraphira took her leave, her gown trailing behind her, looking unaffected and undaunted by the renewed look of fear in the eyes of her people. They could see it—she had changed entirely. Now they were uncertain what the future held for them.

"Well," Asher said with a finalizing tone. "That is that. We've confirmed he's dead." His eyes moved to the guards who had stepped in to clear what remained of Baron.

Then Asher suddenly narrowed his eyes and asked Alaric, "A decapitated body can't switch bodies right? I like to believe that my enemies stay dead."

Alaric's expression slightly creased, clearly thinking it through. "I don't know for certain," he admitted. "Soul transfer isn't dependent on the body itself, it's the soul that moves into a new vessel. But in some practices, the condition of the body matters."

He paused, choosing his words carefully.

"Decapitation, especially, is believed to disrupt certain rituals since it severs the flow of magic tied to the body. I want to believe that is why Queen Seraphira chose this method. But if it's purely soul-based, then..." he shook his head, "I can't say for sure it would stop him."

"However," Alaric reminded him, "for him to actually switch bodies, he would need to find a compatible one, which is not possible, not without my device, and that is safely out of reach."

Asher's gaze darkened. "Even so, we can't rule out the possibility of Baron's sympathizers going the extra mile to bring him back."

Alaric stilled for a second, then his eyes widened in realization. "Then his body has to be cremated."

A slow, dangerous smile spread across Violet's lips.

"Well," she said, lifting a finger, a small flame flickering to life at its tip, "guess who can solve that problem for you."

She pressed the burning finger lightly against her lips, her eyes glinting with something wicked.

"Goddess above," Asher breathed, his voice low, and filled with raw admiration. "I'm so in love with you right now, baby girl."

Alaric shifted subtly where he stood on the rooftop, clearing his throat as he adjusted himself, his own reaction far less subtle than he would have liked.

Violet's heart skipped, warmth blooming in her chest at the look in Asher's eyes. For a moment, she let herself enjoy it, then she turned her attention back to the courtyard below.

With a soft breath, she blew the flame from her finger.

Below them, chaos broke out.

Shouts and startled yelps broke through the night as Baron's body suddenly went up in flames, the fire spreading rapidly across the burial cloth.

The guards jumped back at once, abandoning their task, unwilling to risk being caught in the blaze. What they didn't know was that Violet had imbued her darkness into the flame.

Within seconds, the fire consumed Baron's body, leaving nothing behind that could ever return.

Violet yawned, then said, "I'm tired. I need to sleep. We have a long day ahead, and I can't wait to see my other mates."

Asher quickly rose to his feet. "Then you should—" he started, but didn't get to finish.

In a flash, Violet had already grabbed both him and Alaric and leapt off the rooftop.

"You—" Asher was left speechless. He couldn't even scold her, not when she clearly knew what she had done.

What was he going to do with this mate of theirs?

Together, the three of them returned to their quarters, exhaustion finally catching up to them. Sleep came quickly, deep and heavy, each of them aware that by tomorrow, they would be leaving the Fae realm behind.

But the morning came violently.

Violet woke with a scream ripping from her throat.

Asher and Alaric shot awake instantly, alarm flashing through them.

"Violet, what is it?" they demanded at once.

"My back—" Violet writhed on the bed, her fingers clawing at the sheets. "It's on fire!" she cried out.

Before she could say anything more, Asher tore the shirt from her back.

Then he froze, a sharp breath escaping him.

Alaric leaned in, and stilled just as suddenly.

"What is it?" Violet demanded, panic rising as the pain pulsed through her. "What's wrong?!"

Asher didn't answer. His silence was worse,
rage burning in his eyes.

It was Alaric who finally swallowed and spoke with a tight voice.

"Violet... there are words... carved into your back."

"What?" Violet breathed.

The pain was fading now, but fury was taking its place. Someone had messed with her.
She went still. Her voice dropped, deadly quiet.

"What does it say?"

Asher and Alaric exchanged a look. Neither of them wanted to say it.

But Alaric forced himself to speak.

"Come get your mate, bitch."

Defy The Alpha(s) - Chapter 871: Tomorrow Then[1,588 words]

"Alpha Supreme, we just received a message from your brother, Elijah," one of Angus's men announced, stepping into the meeting room.

Ziva, who had been bored in the corner, using her magic to oscillate a small knife, quickly perked up. Her father and his men had been having one of those meetings where they didn't need her opinion—unless she forced her way in.

When her father's beta made a move to take the letter from the wolf who had brought the news, Ziva crossed the distance and snatched it first.

The beta snarled at the blatant disrespect.

But Ziva snapped, "It could have been spelled."

Jericho hissed, clearly annoyed. "And how would they do that? They don't even have witches."

"You can never be too careful," Ziva shot back with the same attitude.

Jericho turned to Angus with a look that said everything he felt about his daughter.

But Angus simply closed his eyes and gave a small nod, silently telling him to let her be.

Ziva didn't care about the beta's feelings. She tore the letter from the envelope, making a show of running her magic over it, checking for any hidden traps.

There was none.

Then she held the letter out to Jericho. But her hand remained suspended in the air because the man didn't take it. He simply stared her down, the tension between them thick, and ready to snap.

The other wolves in the room noticed it immediately.

"Jericho?" James called cautiously, sensing where this was heading.

Oh. Ziva saw it now. The beta's ego had taken a hit.

Of course, she understood all that hierarchy nonsense between wolves. Jericho believed that as second-in-command, he could throw his weight around and that she was expected to bow to him.

But he was forgetting something. She was Angus's daughter — and a wolf. Even if her witch side was stronger, her blood still placed her above him. And until that was made clear, he would keep treating her like some child.

So Ziva straightened instead, lifting her chin slightly, her gaze locking with his in silent challenge. If he wanted to, they could settle it now.

"Ziva." Angus's controlled voice cut through the room, edged with the warning of a father who was close to reaching his limit.

Ziva let out a breath, schooling her expression into something that resembled restraint. Then she extended the letter toward Jericho once more, this time with a polite smile that did not quite reach her eyes.

"There," she said. "All yours."

Jericho didn't take it immediately, glaring hard at her. The faint glow in his eyes showed the war raging within him, man and wolf clashing for control, both equally insulted, equally unwilling to back down.

The room seemed to tighten around them, every wolf present aware that one wrong move would tip this into something worse. Finally, Jericho snatched the letter.

Except Ziva had not let go completely, holding on for the briefest second, but that was enough to do the damage. The paper tore cleanly down the middle.

"Oops." She lifted a hand to her mouth, pretending to be shocked. "You should have been careful."

There was not a trace of sincerity in her voice.

That was it.

A dangerous growl tore from Jericho's chest, low and feral, vibrating through the room before erupting into something violent.

"Jericho!" voices called out in alarm.

Too late.

His beast surged forward, overwhelming whatever control he had left as he lunged at Ziva, claws extending, and eyes blazing yellow with unrestrained fury.

Ziva didn't flinch, lifting two fingers and Jericho's body slammed hard into the wall, the impact cracking against stone with a force that rattled the room.

She had expected that move would be enough. After all, Ziva's intention was to show her father exactly how weak his beta was — and he should prioritize her.

But Jericho didn't stay down.

A harsh breath left him as he pushed himself upright, shaking off the hit like it was nothing more than an inconvenience. His eyes were no longer human and burned with murderous intent as they locked on her.

Fuck. Ziva panicked a little.

Quickly, she raised her hand again, calling on more power. The air tightened and pressure crashed down onto Jericho like an invisible weight, forcing him back, trying to pin him where he stood.

"Ziva."

Angus warned her to back down.

But she couldn't answer. Not when Jericho was pushing against her magic, his body trembling under the force, muscles straining, teeth bared as he fought to move.

She had to hold him and couldn't afford to get distracted.

"Ziva!"

Angus's voice cracked through the room like thunder and even as a witch, the command hit her hard.

Her focus broke and her hold on Jericho shattered. Ziva's eyes widened just as her father's beta broke free and came at her in a blur.

His claws ripped through her stomach first, the impact knocking the breath from her lungs. Right before the second strike sliced across her face and pain exploded through her.

Ziva screamed as she stumbled back, her legs giving out beneath her as she crashed to the floor. The world was spinning, her vision blurring at the edges. For a split second, she wondered if this would be her end. She couldn't go yet.

"That is enough, Jericho!"

Angus's voice slammed into the room with absolute authority and Jericho froze.

But not completely.

Every muscle locked in resistance as his wolf snarled beneath the surface, fighting against the command. His chest heaved, claws still extended, and dripping with blood, his gaze fixed on Ziva like a predator unwilling to release its prey.

He wanted to rip out her throat now that she lay there, bleeding, vulnerable, and within reach. He needed to finish her off once and for all.

For a moment, it looked like he might break it until Angus's voice came again, hard and final.

"Now."

Jericho stopped.

The man stood frozen where he was, the haze cleared from his mind, the yellow glow in his eyes dimming as control returned.

Awareness settled in, and with it came the full weight of what he had just done. His hands began to shake, not out of fear, and certainly not out of regret for the girl writhing on the floor, but because he had lost control in front of everyone. To a child.

He forced his claws back, his jaw tightening as he took a step back, then another, putting distance between himself and Ziva.

"I apologize, Alpha," he said, his voice rough but controlled. His actions was not a trait of a leader. That was weakness.

Angus did not acknowledge him. He had already moved, his steps calm and deliberate as he walked over to where Ziva lay on the floor, blood pooling beneath her.

She writhed in pain, clutching at her stomach, her breaths uneven and shallow.

"Father..." Ziva gasped, her voice shaking. "I'm in pain..."

Angus looked down at her, and there was nothing in his eyes. No anger, warmth or concern, just cold indifference. Then, without warning, he pressed his shoe hard against the wound in her stomach.

Ziva screamed.

The raw sound tore through the room, her body jerking violently under the pressure as agony shot through her.

"F-Father—!" she choked, panic rising in her voice. For a brief moment, fear flashed in her eyes, realizing that he might truly kill her.

Angus leaned down slightly, his lips curling in a sneer. "You should be grateful you are still useful to me." He pressed harder for a second, forcing another broken cry from her.

"My patience is wearing thin, try to undermine my beta again, and next time, I will let him finish the job."

He finally released her.

Ziva collapsed back onto the floor, gasping for air, her body trembling uncontrollably as blood continued to seep from her wounds. It hurt. Goddess, it hurt. But she didn't dare complain again.

Her heart pounded violently in her chest as shame and fear twisted together inside her. He was right. This was her fault. This was her punishment, and she was lucky it wasn't worse.

"Lucas." He commanded.

A wolf stepped forward immediately. "Yes, Alpha."

"Take her to be treated."

Relief barely had time to settle before Angus added, "And inform the healer not to treat her face. That should serve as a reminder."

Ziva's breath hitched, her chest tightening at the words. Her face. But even that—she would take it. It was better than death.

Lucas crouched down and carefully lifted her into his arms, turning to carry her out of the room. Ziva didn't dare look back.

The moment the doors closed behind them, Angus turned away, as if the entire incident had been nothing more than a minor inconvenience. "James."

His advisor stepped forward, holding the torn sheet of paper that had been left behind.

"What does it say?"

James glanced down at the letter, then back up. "Elijah intends to give up his throne to you..." he paused. "Tomorrow."

For a moment, there was silence. Then Angus laughed loudly. His men said nothing, waiting for his decision.

"My brother really must be eager for his death." He smirked.

"It's obviously a trap." Jericho said, "They're probably trying to lure you out. They can't break into the village, and want you in their territory where killing you would be easier."

Except he couldn't be harmed, physically.

Angus lips curved in amusement, "Tomorrow then."

Defy The Alpha(s) - Chapter 872: Fake Ceremony - 1[1,107 words]

"He's here." That one sentence from Christian sucked the air from the room, nearly sending some people into a spiral.

Though they had planned "sufficiently" for this moment, it didn't mean the wolves weren't nervous. Everyone knew how this meeting would end, and the possibility that some of them might not survive it.

"Let's go welcome my brother, then," Elijah lifted the brown ceremonial wolf headdress shaped like a sleek, elongated crown and placed it over his head. Two curved, fang-like extensions framed his temples, giving him a predatory, untouchable presence. It wasn't every day one got to see the Alpha King fully adorned in his Alpha glory, but today called for it.

Elijah Richmond was draped in a matching fur, the heavy pelt coat falling down his body in a display of dominance. He wore nothing beneath it, offering fleeting glimpses of a muscled chest carved from years of training. No doubt, good looks ran in the family—though werewolves were rarely anything less than striking.

Below, he paired it with black leather pants and boots. He walked with a silver-tipped cane shaped like a wolf, its eyes glowing red to denote his authority, yet it did not harm him.

It was a blessed relic from the goddess, meant only for the appointed Alpha king. Any other wolf who dared to wield it would have their skin burned. That didn't mean Elijah was immune to silver, unfortunately. And soon, he would no longer be able to use the staff once he handed power over to Angus, his brother.

Beatrice should have been beside him, but Elijah wasn't about to risk her life in a show that would end bloody. He had not just sent her out of Aster City, but far into the West Pack, where he knew she would be protected—just in case he didn't survive and Angus took over.

Of course, she had protested, but Elijah was the king and had the final say. As much as their relationship was what it was now, deep down, he loved that woman. He was just too damaged to show it properly.

The elders were here, all four of them, since the fifth had died last year, and the grumpy old fools were too high-maintenance and political to choose a replacement from the four

packs. Thankfully, their number wasn't a set requirement, otherwise Angus would have smelled their bullshit from a mile away.

"With all due respect, Your Majesty," one of the elders began as they walked toward the entrance, "what if Angus doesn't buy this? How are you going to ensure that we leave here alive?"

And this was one of the reasons Elijah had not told them about the plan until an hour ago, after their arrival. You would think that with some of them living up to two hundred years and watching most of their loved ones die around them, they would be more accepting of death, but the reverse was the case.

The elder who spoke was Felix, an ancestor several generations above him and the oldest of them all. He was also the one who had suggested Elijah be crowned the instant Angus was found crippled from the effects of the demon ritual. All that mattered to him was making sure the throne stayed within the family.

Had the wolves found out what Angus had done at the time—and that Elijah would be unable to bear an heir—they would have pushed for the crown to leave the Richmond family. He couldn't let that happen.

The instant Elijah heard that, laughter rumbled from his chest. He looked at the elder with open mirth. "You see, that's the thing, nobody knows." He added, "Perhaps at last you'd find your desired rest."

Elder Felix looked as though he had been personally betrayed, and the expression that followed was pure gold—so much so that Elijah couldn't help the laughter that slipped past his lips as he walked by him.

"Selfish bastards," he muttered at last, every trace of humor gone from his face. Here he was, risking his life, and the old prick was worried about preserving his own, one that amounted to nothing.

Nonsense.

With a quiet huff, Elijah moved on, finally meeting Angus in the foyer. Both men halted, a small distance between them, assessing each other.

Angus took in everything Elijah wore with a possessive gleam in his eyes, as if he couldn't wait to take his place as Alpha King already.

Even with the years between them, his brother Angus looked fit and strong, not an ounce of fat on those muscles. He was dressed in an all-black outfit, but Elijah wasn't interested in that. Instead, he took in the size of the entourage Angus had brought.

There were only ten of them.

Elijah's brows furrowed slightly. Was Angus that confident of defeating him that he didn't come with all his forces? Or was this an intentional move to have them underestimate him, only to strike when they least expected it?

He chose the latter.

Angus was his brother. He had made him who he was today. That meant he also knew how his mind worked, and one of Angus's favorite moves was letting the enemy think they had the upper hand.

Elijah tried not to gulp. No matter what his brother had planned, they were ready. He hoped so.

Angus was the one who broke the silence.

"I didn't think you'd give up the throne that easily, brother. Imagine my surprise when I received that letter. I almost thought it was a lie."

"It's not a lie." Elijah sighed, playing up the exhaustion. "I realized it wasn't worth risking the lives of my people over a war. Moreover, how many years do you even have left to rule? One? Two? Three? And then your heir, Violet Purple, takes over?" He said that on purpose. "Trust me, I had two days for the alphas to talk some sense into me."

That reminder didn't sit well with Angus.

His mask slipped a little but he recovered quickly. He hadn't been born yesterday. He had been playing this game for far too long.

"You're right," Angus said smoothly. "I forgot you've always been a bit of a coward. First, you covet my throne. Then years later, you surrender it without a fight. No matter what I taught you, you just aren't capable enough."

Elijah's jaw ticked with anger. He remembered those lessons well. Every beating and mind games his brother had put him through, all under the guise of preparing him to be a worthy successor.

Still, Elijah controlled himself. He simply gestured.

"Shall we?"

Defy The Alpha(s) - Chapter 873: Fake Ceremony - 2[994 words]

"Ziva is not here," Roman pointed out to Griffin through the Matebond.

And for once, Griffin was grateful for that connection—unlike the other times Roman filled his head with absolute nonsense. Only pack members could mind-link with one another. Theirs, however, was different.

It allowed Griffin to take that information and relay it seamlessly to his people, then return to Roman without missing a beat. Messages moved silently between them effortlessly, passing through the room without ever being heard.

"That is a problem then," Griffin grumbled in his head. *"We haven't even started, and the plan's already falling apart. Goddess help us all."*

According to the plan, aside from Angus, Ziva, the witch, was their priority. They were supposed to keep an eye on her and, at the signal, take her out. With her gone, the witches would be disorganized and easier to deal with.

Except now, how were they supposed to take out a witch who wasn't even in sight?

"You didn't actually think this was going to be easy. Angus isn't stupid," Roman said.

And that was saying a lot, coming from him.

"In that case, we have to find the witch. Micah said Angus rarely goes anywhere without her. They're practically joined at the hip. So she's probably somewhere around the compound as we speak—"

"Or invisible," Roman cut in.

"What?"

"They don't know our plans the same way we don't know theirs. But one thing is clear—we're gunning for Angus. And what better way for his daughter to protect him than to remain invisible at his side?" Roman reasoned. *"Witch magic."*

"Damn," Griffin muttered, impressed.

"Damn, indeed," Roman said, his voice pitching higher with excitement. *"I think all that time spent with Asher in the Fae realm must have rubbed off on me."*

Griffin snorted. *"Something all your years together couldn't achieve? Hallelujah."*

"Fuck off," Roman shot back.

"I better get this message to our resident demon then. Except, where the fuck is Micah?" Griffin had no idea.

The plan was simple. Micah wouldn't reveal himself until the right moment. Then—poof—he'd appear and drag Angus straight to hell while the fight continued here.

Meanwhile, Roman looked around the hall, searching for Angus, who was currently familiarizing himself with the elders who had betrayed him.

Focused on him, Roman's green irises shifted, the color deepening before warping into the slit, reflective shape of a hound's eye. Those creatures were far more attuned to the unseen, capable of sensing disturbances far beyond ordinary perception.

The world around him dulled, sounds thinning into the background as his focus sharpened. And there it was—a heavy, suffocating aura pulsed at Angus's side. It was thick and unnatural, like something coiled and waiting.

"Just as I thought," Roman said in his head. *"Angus is not alone."*

And he was impressed—more than he expected to be—with how much his powers had grown these past few days. Roman couldn't wait for Violet to return. He already had a number of ideas on how he could thank her.

"I'll pass the message around. We're switching to plan B. Hopefully, Micah gets it wherever he is."

Meanwhile, while everyone was quietly plotting his death, Angus was making himself at home.

"Elder Felix," Angus called out, the distaste in his voice saying exactly what he thought of him. "Nice to see you're still on your feet."

Although his hair had completely gone gray, the werewolf didn't look like someone who had lived over a hundred and fifty years. He still stood straight, though his movements were slower, and faint lines marked his face.

Elder Felix equally stared at Angus, bitter disappointment etched across his face.

"You brought disgrace to this family," his voice was tight. "You should count yourself lucky that sending you away to die quietly was the least I did. Although now, I wish I had ended you right there and then."

Angus smiled, but there was no warmth in it. "Except the goddess was gracious enough to give me a second chance, because she knew there was more I could do."

"Your time is over, Angus. This is useless," Elder Noah commented this time, and Elijah cursed under his breath.

What were these fools doing, antagonizing Angus when they needed him calm? He should have known better than to trust this bunch of old, proud idiots.

And just as he feared, Angus said, "So does that mean the ceremony won't be happening, even though my brother is willing to step down?"

At that question, the elders' gazes flicked toward Elijah, as if silently asking him—*what now?*

Were they kidding him?

"Ahh," Angus sighed, tipping his head back slightly before looking at them again. "I was wondering when we were going to drop the act."

In the blink of an eye, Angus moved with terrifying speed and, before anyone could react, snapped Elder Felix's neck cleanly.

His body dropped to the ground like a puppet with its strings cut.

For a heartbeat, silence held.

Angus straightened, rolling his shoulders as if he had merely stretched. "I've been waiting to do that for so long," he said, almost casually.

That was all the signal each side needed.

Chaos broke out.

Shouts rent through the hall as wolves lunged and power flared.

"Now!" Elijah's voice boomed with a commanding voice.

Out of thin air, Micah appeared, his form flickering into existence as he lunged for Angus, hand outstretched, ready to drag him straight into the abyss.

But someone came in the way.

"Did you really think I wouldn't be here?"

Ziva appeared from thin air as if she had always been there. The mark on her face twisted across her skin, raw and jagged, making her look almost grotesque as she sneered.

Her hand shot out and power slammed forward, hitting where Micah was standing, but he was already gone.

Ziva's eyes widened a fraction, her body going on alert immediately.

Behind her, a voice murmured, calm and certain.

"I know."

Micah appeared at her back, and reached for her.

Defy The Alpha(s) - Chapter 874: Roman Was Gone[1,513 words]

Everything went wayward in the blink of an eye. The moment Micah's fingers closed around Ziva, something went terribly wrong.

He didn't feel the magic at first until thousands of needles were piercing through him at once, burrowing deep beneath his skin. The pain was more than physical, crawling through his veins, his nerves and striking his core. His breath hitched violently as nausea surged up his throat, and the world tilted.

Micah dropped hard to the ground as his body convulsed, muscles locking and unlocking in erratic spasms. His vision swam, colors blurring into one another as he fought to stay conscious.

No. No, no.

He tried to vanish but nothing happened.

Micah forced the power again, trying to drag it up from whatever well it lived in, but instead of obeying, his body trembled, distorting at the edges like a broken reflection.

It was as if he existed in two places at once but belonged to neither. The air around him warped with unstable energy, but he remained stuck where he was.

"What —" Micah choked, his teeth grinding as another wave of pain crashed through him.

He tried again and again all to no avail, every attempt making it worse. His skull throbbed violently, pressure building behind his eyes like something was trying to split him open

from the inside. His limbs felt heavy, weighed down like stone, refusing to respond the way they should.

Through the haze of his vision, he saw Ziva.

She approached him slowly, her expression glowing with cruel satisfaction. She was enjoying his torment.

"Hello, brother," she said, her voice dripping with mockery as she crouched in front of him.

Micah dragged in a breath, forcing his head up just enough to glare at her. "What have you done to me?" he grunted.

Ziva tilted her head, feigning thoughtfulness. "You see, the thing about trying to destroy your enemy is that you become quite predictable. Obviously, daddy was going to be your first target. And then obviously me..." She let out a laugh. "Because, of course, I would never let anything happen to him. And who knows that better than anyone else?"

Her gaze cut into him

"You." She leaned in slightly, her eyes gleaming. "I knew all your little tricks. The way you drag people into hell and play god with them there. We figured that would be your move. Cut off the shepherd and the sheep scatter, right?"

She scoffed. "You really should have come up with something better. Although, what made you think you were ever going to win this fight? Not even by changing territory?"

That was when Micah's saw the truth behind Angus's confidence. Three witches were at different corners of the hall, the air cracking with magic as they summoned three portals.

Oh shit.

From those portals, waves after waves of Angus's forces poured in. Werewolves. Witches. An army. They flooded into the hall in relentless numbers, their arrival shifting the balance instantly.

Goddess above. Micah's stomach dropped.

This wasn't a fight but a trap they had walked straight into.

All around him, chaos broke out fully now. The clash of bodies, the crack of bone, the screams of pain, it all blended into one violent symphony. Blood sprayed across the polished floors as both sides collided, teeth and claws meeting magic in a brutal exchange.

But it didn't take long to see the pattern.

For every one of Angus's men — or women — that fell, two more took their place. Their own forces were thinning. Fast.

Wolves dropped around him, their bodies hitting the ground with sickening finality.

They were being overwhelmed, and as long as those portals stayed open, this would never be a battle, only a massacre. They had no choice but to execute Plan C or none of them were leaving this place alive.

"I won't kill you," Ziva announced to him, almost bored. "Daddy wouldn't like that." Her gaze dragged over him, slowly. "But you can sit here and watch as we destroy each and every—"

An inhuman roar cut her off, followed by something massive slamming into her from the side with bone-crushing force. Ziva's body flew across the hall and smashed hard into the wall. She dropped instantly, limp and unmoving.

Griffin stood there in full beast form, enormous and terrifying. His body was covered with blood, some of them his, most not. His chest heaved, eyes blazing with fury that bordered on feral madness.

He turned, grabbed Micah by the collar, and hauled him up with ease. "Get up," he growled with a deep and gravelly voice that was not fully human.

Micah tried but his legs buckled immediately.

"Ziva," he gritted out, struggling to stay upright. "She paralyzed my body and my magic."

Griffin's jaw clenched, a low snarl rumbling in his chest. He tightened his grip, keeping Micah from collapsing again.

"Plan C," Micah forced out, his voice strained. "We need to initiate Plan C. We're getting out of here. Our forces aren't enough."

Griffin froze for half a second.

"We are leaving?" he echoed, the words rough, as though they didn't sit well in his throat.

It wasn't just Griffin speaking anymore, but the beast. Whatever upgrade happened through the bond, man and beast had become one.

"Go," Micah snapped, urgency cutting through the haze of pain. "Now."

Griffin's head snapped up.

Through the bond, his voice slammed into the other wolves in his pack.

Summon the witches! We are leaving now!

Across the battlefield, Roman heard him through the bond and reacted.

"Find the Alpha King and retreat!" he shouted with equal authority, instructing his pack.

The message spread like wildfire. One by one, the wolves echoed it.

"Retreat!"

"Fall back!"

"Get out!"

The tide shifted not in victory, but in survival.

Somewhere deeper within the compound, Samantha and her coven moved into action. Their voices rose in unison as they tore open the fabric of space, a swirling portal snapping into existence.

"Get in now!" Samantha shouted, her hands glowing with power as she held it open.

Angus's witches saw it and they moved to stop it. Spells ripped through the air, aimed straight for the witches.

"Irene!" someone shouted, possibly her husband.

"I see them!" Irene barked. "Cover the witches! That's our way out! Protect them!"

Wolves surged forward immediately, throwing themselves into the path of incoming magic. One by one, they intercepted every attack, crying out in pain.

Then a wolf tackled a witch to the ground, taking a silver blade through his side but refusing to let go. Another shifted mid-lunge, ripping through two enemies before collapsing under a spell that burned through his chest.

They were holding the line with everything they had.

"Get Elijah!" Leon's voice thundered across the commotion. "Get him out of here!"

They knew as long as Elijah lived, Angus hadn't won. He still remained Alpha king.

Roman sent the message through the bond.

We need Elijah.

Already on it. Griffin said, moving.

Roman joined him and together, their senses locked onto the one presence that mattered.

Angus.

Tracking him wasn't hard, he had a heavy presence even in the middle of the fight. They found him near the far end of the hall and the sight made something cold settle in Roman's chest.

Elijah was unconscious and was slung over the shoulder of Angus's beta like he was nothing.

Angus stood before them, watching the massacre play out with dark satisfaction.

"Going somewhere?" Roman called out.

Angus turned and smiled as if he had been waiting for them.

"You."

The both of them moved at once. Griffin lunged first, striking Angus with all the power he could pack in that one punch. Roman followed, power coiling around him as he struck from the side.

The impact alone should have killed Angus but instead, it bounced off his body. To make it worse, Angus moved through them like they were nothing, his strength overwhelming, and movement fast.

He struck Griffin mid-lunge, sending him crashing into the ground hard enough to crack the floor beneath him.

Roman came in faster than most could track, but Angus caught him mid-motion as

If he was nothing.

"Still trying?" Angus murmured, almost amused.

Roman twisted, forcing his way free just enough to shift focus.

Elijah was all that mattered.

He moved faster than Angus expected he would, struck the beta, and grabbed Elijah from his hold, ripping him free.

"Griffin!" Roman barked.

Griffin was already there as Roman shoved Elijah toward him with everything he had.

"Go!"

Griffin caught Elijah, expecting he would follow. Except Angus's hand closed around Roman's throat and the world snapped still.

"Not so fast," Angus said.

Roman's eyes widened.

"No—" Griffin started, stepping forward—

But it was too late.

The portal behind Angus flared and in the next instant, he pulled him into it. Roman and Angus were gone, the portal snapping shut with a violent crack.

"ROMAN!" Griffin roared, the sound tearing through the hall as he lunged forward, but there was nothing to grab.

Roman was gone.

Defy The Alpha(s) - Chapter 875: Get Him Out Of Here[1,035 words]

"Griffin, that's enough! We have to go now!" Irene barked at her son, urgency in her voice. But her voice might as well have been water rolling off oiled steel.

Since the moment they found out Roman Draven had been captured by Angus, Griffin had lost it completely.

Leon too.

"I'm going to get my son!" the South Alpha had roared earlier, charging toward one of Angus's portals.

But Aeron had overpowered him, intercepting the move before it turned into suicide, and threw him straight into their own portal and out of the battlefield.

They had truly underestimated Angus and

now they were paying for it. They had no idea what kind of spell had been used, but the portals refused to close even after the witches responsible for opening them had been killed. The magic clung stubbornly to the air, like it was anchored from the other side.

And through those openings, they kept coming. Witches and Werewolves. Reinforcements pouring in without The hall had long since stopped being a battlefield, quickly turning into a graveyard. The only reason they were still standing at all was Griffin.

For the first time, Irene truly saw the extent of her son's power.

He moved like a force of nature, tearing through enemies with brutal efficiency. Bodies flew, bones snapped, and blood sprayed as he ripped through them as easily as one would tear apart cloth. When witches tried to strike him with spells, all he had to do was slam his hand—or sometimes his entire body—into the ground.

The shockwave that followed disrupted everything, shattering their magics and throwing them off balance.

The attacks never reached him. It was terrifying, yes, and yet, it wasn't enough because Griffin wasn't invincible.

There were deep wounds carved into his body where the spells had struck true. His flesh was burned and blood ran freely. It was hard to tell how much was his from the way he was drenched head to toe, but Irene could smell it. Her son was bleeding.

"He's lost to the bloodlust!" Aeron shouted over the chaos, his voice edged with concern.

Usually, when Griffin's beast took over like this, there was a struggle, and he managed to fight his way back to the surface.

But not anymore.

What they didn't know was that the bond had changed him. There was no longer a divide between man and beast. Griffin was the beast and the beast was furious.

Pulling him out of this state wasn't just difficult, it was nearly impossible.

Angus's witches had changed tactics. They were no longer killing the wolves outright, instead incapacitating them.

Except that didn't make it any better because she knew the ways of war. Roman and the likes of them would be held hostage, and Angus would use them to bargain for whatever he wanted.

"Electricity!" Irene shouted suddenly, turning to Aeron. "That's what Alaric used to snap him out of it before!"

Aeron's gaze scanned the battlefield, calculating fast. "Then we need a witch, now."

Elijah's mansion was barely holding together. Walls had collapsed, leaving jagged openings. The remaining structures were scorched black from spells. Sections of the roof were completely gone, torn apart by the intensity of the magic. Dust filled the air, thick and choking, making visibility almost impossible.

"What are you waiting for? Let's go!" Irene snapped, cutting down anything that came at her without hesitation.

"Samantha!" Irene hollered when they found her. "We need a witch!"

"Can't!" Samantha shot back, her voice strained, her entire body trembling with effort. "I'm the last one standing!"

"Fuck," Irene and Aeron said at the same time.

Only one portal remained. Most of their wolves were already gone, with the few left dragging the injured—and the dead—through it. But they wouldn't hold much longer.

Micah stood between Samantha and the enemy, and he was devastating. No one knew where he had gotten the blade in his hand, but he wielded it like it was an extension of himself.

The magic that had held him down earlier was gone now. He flickered in and out of existence, impossible to track. One moment, a witch stood and the next, her head rolled across the floor. Then he was gone again. Striking. Vanishing. Reappearing. Cutting them down one after another.

"My magic is burning out!" Samantha cried, her voice breaking. "I can't hold it much longer!"

Aeron turned to Irene, his expression set. "Micah will get Griffin. You need to go."

"What?" Irene snapped, spinning on him. "What about you?"

"I'll be right behind you."

"No," she said immediately. "You're not playing goddess martyr today."

Aeron smiled faintly. "Stubborn woman. But you don't exactly have a choice."

Before she could react, he shoved her hard.

Irene stumbled straight into the portal, a curse already forming on her lips as she vanished through it.

"Hurry! I can't hold it anymore!" Samantha screamed out the warning.

The last of the werewolves heard it, but their enemies wouldn't let them go easily either. They tried to stop that, and Aeron saw that.

"Micah!" he roared. "Get my son out of here!"

For a brief second, Micah appeared, just long enough to nod, an unspoken agreement passing between them.

Then a growl rumbled from his throat as Aeron threw himself back into the battle, his claws tearing into the witches who held the rest of the wolves back.

"Go now!" Aeron barked, attacking ruthlessly and trying not to get distracted.

"But—" one of the wolves hesitated.

"Get out!" Aeron snarled, his eyes flashing.

That was enough. The wolf grabbed his injured companion and bolted through the portal.

"Quick!" Samantha gasped, her voice barely holding.

As soon as the last wolf passed through,

she let go and the portal snapped shut.

Samantha turned to stare at the lifeless bodies of Liv and Hazel, and tears sprang to her eyes.

"Rest well, sisters," she said in prayer right before everything went dark.

Across the battlefield, Aeron saw Micah catch her before she hit the ground and vanished.

Relief barely had time to settle before a spell struck him square in the chest. Pain exploded through his body as darkness swallowed his vision. And then, nothing.

Defy The Alpha(s) - Chapter 876: The Other Side[1,105 words]

Hundreds of years ago, Lunaris had been a sanctuary for wolves, and once again, history was repeating itself. Except with a little twist.

Never had the wolves thought there would come a day when they would fight against each other. Humans had been their enemies for so long that a battle like this rattled them to their core.

Although days ago the students had been informed that there would be "guests" arriving and were told to keep themselves confined to their dormitories, it still shook them when portals appeared across the school grounds and people began stepping out of them bloodied, some gravely injured.

The term was over, but they couldn't go home with the zombie virus ravaging their cities. In a way, the saying that the most dangerous place was the safest must have come from situations like this, because even with the zombies right outside their walls, everyone remained perfectly at ease.

Micah had figured out that since portals couldn't be used to go in and out, Lunaris Academy would be the perfect place to retreat to, as Baron's witches wouldn't be able to follow. Samantha's coven had refused to help in the fight, but Samantha and the other witches stuck at the academy eventually agreed to help in the end.

Then came the problem of portaling in and out, since their witch magic didn't work within the wards. They were able to find a loophole by using Micah's blood and tuning into the frequency of his magic. In a way, they tricked the wards into believing it was Micah teleporting out when, in reality, it was the opposite.

The downside, however, was that it drained a significant amount of their power since they were transporting many.

Nonetheless, Lunaris Academy at the moment was a beehive of activity. The students who were supposed to be confined to their rooms had poured out onto the grounds, moving in hurried clusters, trying to help in whatever way they could as Adele barked out instructions over the commotion.

"Don't just stand there! Put pressure on the wound!" Adele snapped, dropping to her knees beside a fallen wolf whose side was torn open. She pressed her hand firmly over the

bleeding gash, turning her head sharply. "You—tear that cloth. Now. Wrap it tight. If the bleeding doesn't stop, he won't make it to the infirmary."

The trembling student obeyed immediately, ripping a strip from her sleeve and handing it over with shaking fingers. Adele didn't slow down, guiding her hands into place. "Good. Keep it steady. Don't loosen it no matter how much he growls at you."

All around them, the grounds had turned into a makeshift triage. The students moved between the injured wolves, some kneeling to clean wounds with whatever water they could find, the others pressing cloth to bleeding limbs, their hands stained red. The air smelled of iron and smoke, filled with low groans and hurried breaths.

"Careful with his arm!" Adele called out, rising and moving to the next group. "It's broken, not dead. Support it before you move him!"

Two boys nodded, adjusting their grip as they lifted the injured wolf between them. "Where do we take him?" one of them asked.

"The infirmary," Adele answered without missing a beat.

Nearby, a young girl knelt beside a wolf struggling to stay conscious, her hands hovering uncertainly over his chest. "I don't know what to do!" she hollered, scared out of her mind.

Adele crouched beside her, her voice gentle but no less firm. "Here." She guided the girl's hands down. "You feel his breathing. It's shallow. So sit him up slightly, don't let him choke. Good. Now stay with him. Talk to him. Keep him awake."

The girl nodded quickly, swallowing her fear as she did exactly that.

"Goddess help me," Adele swore, scanning the field with assessing eyes. She could feel her magic sitting just beneath her skin, urging her to use it, to heal faster, to fix everything at once, but she resisted.

Unless it was severe, she wouldn't waste it.

They were werewolves and would heal. The pain was temporary, but running out of power wasn't.

"Lift him!" she ordered another group, pointing at a wolf with deep claw marks across his back. "Infirmary—now. And don't drop him!"

"Yes!" they answered, scrambling to obey as they carefully hoisted him up.

For once, Adele wondered what she would have done without the students. She wouldn't have been able to do this without them. They were helping in their own way and it was enough.

At that moment, it didn't matter whether you were wolf or human. All that mattered was staying alive.

Somewhere inside the infirmary, Elijah was already resting in one of the private wards, with Ezra and a handful of trusted wolves standing guard over him.

Already, a few of Baron's witches had managed to slip through the portal, but they had been dealt with before they could cause any real damage.

Nor did it escape their notice that an emotional wolf might decide assassinating their Alpha King was the solution to their problems.

Adele wiped the back of her hand across her forehead before moving again, her voice cutting through the noise once more.

"Keep moving! We don't stop now!"

But not everyone who made it through the portal was alive. Some had already died back in Angus's mansion, while others gave up the moment they reached Lunar Academy.

Unfortunately, this was the academy, which meant some of their children were in attendance. That meant there was mourning, and some of the wolves were trying to hold back the emotional kids.

Among them was Irene, who stood waiting for her husband and son to materialize. She swore to the goddess that once he appeared, she was going to give him a piece of her mind. How dare he pull that move on her? But beneath that fury, she just wanted him back.

Then Micah appeared out of thin air and dropped an unconscious Samantha. The moment Irene saw that, her stomach dropped.

She knew what it meant. The portal was gone.

But she couldn't give up. Micah had gone back. He would return with her son and husband.

Just as she thought, Micah stumbled into existence again, this time with Griffin, nearly crumbling under his weight.

"Griffin!" she cried in relief, rushing to him.

"Thank the gods." He was alive.

Then she turned, expecting Micah to be gone, but he was still there. Her heart faltered as it dawned on her.

Micah had exhausted himself.

Her husband was trapped with the enemy on the other side.

Defy The Alpha(s) - Chapter 877: Find A Way To Control Violet[1,522 words]

Duskmoon Village was in a festive mood.

Angus had ordered that there be a celebration to commemorate their victory, and the village answered with excess. Fires burned bright in the open squares, their flames licking high into the night, casting dancing shadows across the ground.

Laughter rang out in bursts, loud and unrestrained, with some witches performing complicated party tricks to the delight of the crowd.

Long tables groaned under the weight of food, barrels were cracked open without care, and the scent of roasted meat mixed with spilled alcohol saturated the air. It wasn't every day they got to celebrate like this, and they made sure to indulge in every part of it.

With the music pulsing through the air and carried across several hectares with the help of the witches' magic, wolves moved in packs, their bodies loose, instincts unrestrained, feeding off the high of victory. Some of them made their pick, disappearing into darker corners where the celebration took on a more private form, evidenced by loud groans and moans.

Tonight, no one held back.

But the celebration had an edge to it. Victory had come at a cost, and not everyone who had left for that battle had returned. So they drank until they forgot the pain, choosing to hold on to the good memories instead.

However, while the majority were in high spirits, the same couldn't be said for Angus's inner circle. Away from the fires and the frenzy, within Angus's palace, the mood was heavy with tension as they remained locked in a meeting.

Angus sat at the headtable.

"Report."

The word fell from his lips without force, yet it struck harder than any raised voice.

James rose at once, though not without clearing his throat first, a small betrayal of the tension threading through him.

He said outloud, "On Elijah's side, we estimate forty-two confirmed kills. That number remains uncertain as several bodies were retrieved during their retreat, and others may yet die from sustained injuries."

He continued, "We have sixteen captives with us, Roman Draven and Aeron Hale among them. Two additional sub-alphas from the South and North packs, alongside several lower-ranked wolves."

The information settled across the table, each figure finding its place like pieces in a grim equation.

Angus leaned forward then, placing both hands against the table. The movement was unhurried, almost languid, yet it drew every eye back to him. "And ours?"

James did not answer immediately. His gaze flickered toward Jericho in a brief exchange that carried the weight of shared understanding. They knew where this was headed.

Even Ziva, who had positioned herself at the edge of the table with her usual careless poise, remained still, her silence more telling than any interruption she might have made.

When James spoke again, his voice wasn't as confident. "We lost one hundred and twenty-eight, the majority being witches."

He said it as though it was some relief that it wasn't their wolves instead. Ziva felt a tick in her jaw, her fists clenching at her sides.

James continued, "The highest number of casualties were inflicted by Griffin Hale and Micah Richmond."

At the mention of his son, Angus's expression darkened. To think the son who was supposed to stand by his side had dealt the most damage.

"We also lost General Samus," James added.

Their gazes drifted toward the empty chair among them. Though none lingered for long, the weight of his absence pressed heavily on the room.

The silence that followed was even more suffocating than before, especially as Angus's gaze swept across each of them.

"Tell me then, is that a win," he asked, each word measured with care, "or a loss?"

The answer was obvious. They had suffered the greater losses. In fact, were it not for their numbers, Elijah's side would likely have won. But no one wanted to be the one to say it. They were not stupid.

But the silence only irked Angus. His hand came down against the table with sudden force, the crack reverberating through the chamber like thunder striking stone.

"Answer me!"

They slightly flinched, even though they tried not to show it.

Ziva spoke immediately, seizing the moment. "They're hiding in Lunaris Academy. If you give me permission, I'll take a small team this time. Not only will I bring Elijah back, I'll deliver the destruction you seek."

Angus turned to her.

"Are you stupid?"

The words struck harder than any blow.

Ziva went still, rendered speechless. She swallowed, heat rising to her face at being called stupid in front of everyone. Though the generals kept their expressions carefully neutral, she could feel the quiet satisfaction, and disdain they barely bothered to hide. They had never liked her.

Angus's lip curled. "If I wipe out all the wolves, who exactly is left to serve me?"

Realization dawned on Ziva, but she pushed forward anyway. "You don't need them, Father. You already have enough forces here. In fact, it would benefit you to get rid of those old wolves and build with a new generation, one that would be far more loyal to you."

Except that did not impress him at all.

"I'm surrounded by idiots," Angus muttered under his breath.

What meaning was there in ruling over wolves who had not seen him at the peak of his glory?

The older wolves remembered him. They had seen him rise, seen him fall, seen what he was capable of. Their obedience meant something to him. He wanted to see the look on their faces when they bowed their heads to him once again.

But these new ones? They were little more than children pretending at war—unproven, soft, and easily molded. Useless.

"Your Majesty is right on that matter. We cannot afford more deaths, not with the zombie virus on the rise." Jericho spoke up.

One look at Ziva's face said it all—pure rage, raw and unhidden. The marks etched across her skin only made it worse. She might have accepted her father's punishment, but that didn't mean she had forgiven the one who inflicted it.

"There's still the zombie virus spreading," Jericho continued. "We need as many forces as possible."

"So what's your point?" Ziva sneered, her patience thinning. She failed to see what his rambling was about.

Jericho didn't hesitate.

"We need Violet Purple."

Ziva lost it.

"Do you even hear yourself?" she snapped, her voice rising. "What can Violet Purple possibly do? And more importantly, she's not even on Father's side. Or is this your ploy to sabotage him?"

"Shut up right now, before I have your mouth sewed," Angus cut in, his voice sharp, and eyes blazing. "Don't tempt me."

Ziva fell silent instantly. She knew better.

Angus never made empty threats.

But her glare shifted to Jericho, burning with open hostility, a hundred violent thoughts flashing through her mind all at once.

Angus focused his attention on his beta. "What is your point?"

Jericho met his gaze. "Your daughter is powerful, and if we have her on our side, that would solve all our problems."

"Except you forget the part where she won't join me," Angus reminded him.

"The attack today already reminded them of what we're capable of, and what will happen if we continue this fight. We already have Roman Draven, Violet's mate. That should be enough to convince her to make Elijah choose the right path."

"Unfortunately, we still don't know Violet's whereabouts," James added.

While they spoke, an idea struck Ziva.

"I can do it."

Angus's eyes flashed. "Do what?" His patience with her was already wearing thin.

Ziva caught the irritation in her father's gaze and felt it cut deep, but she pushed past it. "I can draw Violet out of wherever she's hiding."

Angus lifted a brow. "And how exactly do you plan to do that?"

Ziva's lips curved into a fiendish smile. "I'll send her a message she can't ignore through her mate. If Roman is as important to her as we think, she'll come running back to the human realm."

"I don't know about this," James said, uncertainty threading through his voice. "Isn't provoking Violet a little extreme? We all know how powerful she is, and we want her on our side, not trying to kill us."

Ziva waved him off, her confidence unwavering. "That's why we'll make the appropriate arrangements. No matter how powerful Violet is, she's still one person against a hundred witches. And we have her mate. She'll be careful around us if she doesn't want him to die."

Ziva sounded almost pleased with herself. If her father approved of this, she would finally have the chance to settle her score with Violet—though it would be Roman who bore the brunt of her frustration.

Angus rubbed his jaw thoughtfully before speaking. "Do what you must, but don't overdo it."

"I won't, Father," Ziva replied, the lie slipping easily past her lips.

Angus continued, his voice turning colder. "And consult with the witches. Find a way for me to control Violet. If she won't help me willingly, then she will have no choice but to serve me."

Defy The Alpha(s) - Chapter 878: Bonding Time With Aeron[1,605 words]

Aeron Hale groaned, finally stirring back to consciousness. Goddess above, his head hurt like a bitch.

"You're finally awake," a very annoyingly familiar voice shattered whatever remnants of sleep remained.

With effort, Aeron turned his head only to find Roman Draven staring at him with a toothy grin.

The boy looked relieved.

"I mean, thank the goddess you're alive. I had no idea what I'd write on your eulogy if you died considering we haven't spent enough time together." Roman shook his head solemnly. "Would've been awkward. I can't exactly write, *Here lies Aeron Hale. We bonded briefly through mutual kidnapping.*"

Aeron stared at him blankly.

Roman continued anyway.

"But if we survive this, I swear we're making memories together, Aeron. Real ones. Griffin would probably cry knowing I was there for his old man during his darkest hour. We'd write books about this. Go on tours. Retell the story over expensive champagne while people applaud our bravery." He paused suddenly, his expression turning thoughtful. "Although, that might be difficult."

Aeron immediately regretted asking, "Why?"

Roman sighed deeply. "Because I can't really afford to be away from Violet for long periods of time. Or Griffin." He winked at him. "Mostly because of the matebond, and sex."

Aeron's face twitched.

Roman noticed instantly.

"Oh, goddess, I'm sorry." He winced. "I forgot how weird this must be for you considering your son and I share the same woman."

Aeron closed his eyes.

Too late. Roman was already going again.

"You're probably wondering if Griffin and I do all that adult stuff with her at the same time." Roman lowered his voice confidentially. "Which, for the record, yes. Absolutely yes."

"Roman," Aeron warned him.

"But if it makes you feel any better," Roman pressed on, "I'm definitely better in bed than your son."

Aeron looked genuinely offended on Griffin's behalf.

"I mean, Griffin's thing is raw power." Roman gestured vaguely. "Very aggressive. Very throw-you-against-the-wall-and-ruin-your-life energy. Women apparently love that. But there's an art to pleasing someone, Aeron. Precision. Technique. Emotional delivery—"

"Goddess help me," Aeron groaned, dragging a hand down his face. What fresh version of hell had he woken into?

Honestly, he would rather pass out again than spend another hour listening to this boy. How Griffin tolerated Roman on a daily basis remained one of life's greatest mysteries.

"But the point is..." Roman thankfully drifted away from the topic of sex. "We'd be together. And in case you're scared, I can hold your hand—" he actually started reaching toward him.

Aeron's response came instantly.

"Touch me and you're dead."

Roman immediately pulled back. "Okay. No holding hands then."

At least the boy respected boundaries.

Annoyed, Aeron forced himself to properly take in their surroundings. They were trapped in some sort of underground dungeon. Honestly, it was not surprising. This was exactly the sort of dramatic nonsense Angus liked.

The place smelled damp and metallic, the stone walls slick with moisture. The electric bulbs glowed weakly, barely illuminating the surroundings. Somewhere farther down the corridor came muffled screams, low groans, and the occasional sound of chains dragging against stone.

They weren't the only prisoners. Wonderful.

As Aeron tried to sit up properly, something cold shifted against his throat. His hand immediately flew upward and traced a collar.

"What the—"

"I'd suggest not—" Roman started, but it was too late.

Aeron grabbed the collar and tried ripping it off only for pain to explode through him immediately.

Electricity ripped violently across his body, slamming through his nerves hard enough to lock his muscles. A sharp groan tore from his throat as he crashed onto the floor, his entire body jerking from the shock. For one horrible moment, he could smell something burning.

Possibly himself.

"Well," Roman winced sympathetically, "that was the part where I was going to warn you."

Aeron lay there breathing hard, his vision swimming slightly as the aftershocks continued to twitch through his muscles. Slowly, he forced himself upright again, his chest rising unevenly. That was when he noticed Roman wore the exact same collar around his own neck.

"What the hell is that thing?" Aeron managed in a rough, breathless voice.

Roman lifted a hand and flicked the metal around his throat lightly. "A suppressor cuff. Witch version. Honestly, witches are committed, thinking up psychological torture with extra voltage."

Aeron glared at him.

Roman shrugged. "I'm trying to appreciate the craftsmanship here."

"You're insane."

"Violet says that too." Roman beamed. "Usually right before kissing me."

Aeron closed his eyes slowly. No. Forget dying. At this point, surviving Roman Draven might genuinely be the harder challenge. The witches knew the fine definition of torture when they kept them together.

Roman apparently was not done. He said, "I mean, it probably has something to do with all the dark romances girls consume these days. After all, who actually wants to date someone crazy?"

His eyes gleamed. "Although my purple love is the perfect amount of crazy for me, and she doesn't even read those romance books." There was an unmistakable note of pride in his voice when he spoke about Violet.

Having heard enough, Aeron was seconds away from telling the boy to never speak again when he took a proper look at him.

The dungeon lighting was poor, but not poor enough to hide the fading bruises scattered across Roman's face. There was dried blood near the corner of his mouth, and exhaustion sat beneath his usual bright expression no matter how much he tried to bury it beneath the humor.

And suddenly, it clicked. This was his coping mechanism. Roman kept talking because silence would force him to think about where they were, what had happened, and what might happen next.

As long as Aeron had known the boy, Roman had always been sunlight trapped in human form. Loud, reckless and impossible to ignore. The kind of person who could walk into a room full of tension and somehow force laughter out of people against their will.

But Aeron also knew people like that usually carried the deepest wounds.

A slow breath left him.

Fine.

If enduring Roman's endless rambling was the price he had to pay to keep the boy from drowning in his own thoughts, then so be it.

Besides, they were family now, weren't they?

Strange goddess-damned family, but family nonetheless. Perhaps getting to know him better wasn't the worst idea.

Though deep down, Aeron already knew he was going to regret this immensely.

"How are you doing?" Aeron asked suddenly.

Roman blinked at him in surprise. "What?"

Aeron scowled immediately. "Do I need to repeat myself twice?"

Talking about feelings was already exhausting enough. Had it been Arion his brother trapped here instead with Roman, Aeron was certain the both of them would have become drinking buddies within few minutes. This was simply not his thing and yet here he was.

"Splendid!" Roman answered brightly. "And let me tell you why. Because my baby girl is eventually going to storm in here and kick all their asses—" The excitement died midway through the sentence. Roman's grin faltered.

"What if Violet gets hurt in the process?" he muttered more to himself than Aeron. "I wouldn't want that on my conscience."

And there it was. The crack beneath the smile.

Roman lowered his head, the earlier humor draining from him with surprising speed. "I caused this," he admitted suddenly.

Aeron's brows furrowed. Where the hell was that coming from?

Roman laughed, though there was nothing remotely amused about the sound. "I'm the weakness in the bond. And like always, I dragged everyone down with me."

"Is that what you think?" Aeron asked, studying him carefully.

Roman gestured bitterly toward the dungeon around them. "Isn't it obvious? Look where I ended up."

"Isn't that because you rescued Elijah and got captured in the process?"

Roman opened his mouth to speak. "Yes, but—"

"No." Aeron cut him off. "A weak person would've looked at that situation and deemed it impossible. Elijah was not worth it but you choose to save him knowing what it meant."

Roman fell silent.

"A weak person would also be curled up in a corner losing his damn mind right now," Aeron continued gruffly. "Instead, you're in here annoying me with sex stories like this is another average day in your life."

Roman stared at him.

Aeron held his gaze steadily. "So if you're going to blame yourself, at least do it for actual stupidity. Not for something you couldn't control."

Then, after a pause, he muttered under his breath, "Besides turning into animals other than wolves is actually pretty damn impressive."

Roman's mouth dropped open. His eyes lit up instantly, all wounded sadness forgotten with alarming speed.

"You really think so?"

Aeron looked away immediately. "Don't make me regret speaking."

Roman gasped dramatically. "Oh my goddess. We're bonding."

"We are not bonding."

"We absolutely are."

"We are prisoners in a dungeon."

"Together," Roman emphasized emotionally.

Aeron cursed under his breath. He had this coming when he tried being nice to him.

"Can I hug you?"

"Do it and I'll kill you."

Roman immediately froze halfway through leaning toward him.

"...Your family is very emotionally confusing," he informed him seriously.

"And yet somehow my son still tolerates you."

Roman beamed proudly. "That's because Griffin recognizes greatness when he sees it."

Aeron scoffed and shook his head at Roman's nonsense.

But the lighter mood disappeared immediately when a heavy thud echoed through the dungeon, followed by the slow groan of iron scraping against stone as a gate somewhere farther down the corridor opened.

Then came footsteps.

Aeron straightened up instantly. "Someone's coming."

Defy The Alpha(s) - Chapter 879: You Should Be Scared[1,014 words]

Roman stiffened the moment the footsteps drew closer. Not long after, figures appeared beyond the silver bars of their cell. There were about four of them, two men and women.

One of the younger girls lifted her hand and summoned a glowing orb of light. It floated upward, illuminating the dungeon in a pale glow that chased away the darkness enough for Roman to finally see their faces properly. And unfortunately, he recognized one of them immediately.

Ziva.

Or as Roman mentally referred to her: *Angus's anonymously voted most hated daughter.*

Ziva folded her arms across her chest, gaze sweeping over the both of them with clear disdain. "Looks like the two of you are having a wonderful time in here."

Roman's eyes drifted to the ugly mark stretched across her face and winced dramatically.

"Oof. Whoever did that to your face definitely had strong emotions." He added, "I was going to insult you properly, but honestly your face got there before me."

Aeron closed his eyes briefly. Heavens above. Was he trying to fast track their death?

Ziva's face darkened instantly.

Her voice turned icy. "Let's see how much of that confidence is left after I'm done with you." She jerked her chin toward the cell. "Get him."

The two wolves immediately stepped forward as the cell door groaned open.

Roman moved the instant they reached for him. He twisted out of one man's grip, ducked low, and shoved the second away before either could properly grab him.

Beside him, Aeron immediately went alert.

"What do you want with him?" he barked.

No one answered.

One of the wolves lunged again, but Roman slammed his forehead straight into the man's face with enough force to make himself dizzy too.

"Motherf—"

Before the wolf could recover, Roman drove an elbow hard into the second man's ribs. Unfortunately, he was too weakened and could barely do any damage. The wolf barely staggered, his face tightening with fury.

Then Aeron stepped in despite the collar around his neck and the exhaustion still weighing on him, he drove his shoulder into the second wolf hard enough to slam the man into the wall. The impact rattled the entire cell.

Aeron shoved his long dark hair out of his face with a rough jerk of his head.

Roman stared at him in delight.

"See?" he exclaimed happily. "I told you we were bonding perfectly."

Aeron looked ready to strangle him.

"Although," Roman continued thoughtfully, "when we write the book adaptation of this experience, we'll edit the fight scene and say I handled both men while you provided backup."

Aeron genuinely could not believe this boy.

But somehow, the most offended person there was Ziva.

"Are you kidding me right now?" she snapped.

Humiliation and fury twisted across her face. Had she truly become such a joke to them that they could stand here mocking her?

Power exploded from her in violent waves, causing the collars around Roman and Aeron's necks to crackle with electricity. The agony forced both men to the floor, groaning in pain. Roman curled instinctively as the current tore through his muscles while Aeron's body jerked violently beside him.

Roman clenched his teeth so hard his jaw hurt. "Bitch," he gasped through the pain, "are you trying to kill your hostages?"

That finally snapped Ziva out of her rage and her power cut off abruptly.

The torment stopped and Roman and Aeron breathed in relief. That was so close.

"Get him," Ziva hissed before turning and stepping out into the corridor.

This time, when the wolves grabbed Roman, he didn't resist. There was no point after all.

Still, as they dragged him toward the door, he twisted enough to grin at Aeron and blow him an exaggerated kiss.

"Don't miss me too much, partner."

Still sprawled on the dungeon floor, Aeron stared after him in exhausted disbelief before muttering one heartfelt word.

"Fuck."

They didn't leave the dungeon. Instead, Roman was dragged farther down the corridor and shoved into another room, successfully separating him from Aeron.

That alone unsettled him more than he cared to admit. He wanted his partner and wouldn't mind Aeron holding his hand this time.

Roman had expected a torture chamber. Honestly, it would have made sense. Wasn't that usually the point of capturing someone? Beat them until they talked, screamed, or obeyed.

But the moment he was hauled inside, Roman immediately realized this was some sort of witch practice room, and every instinct in his body screamed danger.

The air was thick with incense smoke, so heavy he coughed. Strange herbs burned in bronze bowls placed around the room, releasing sharp scents of spice, ash, and goddess knows whatever else they added. Shelves lined the walls, cluttered with jars containing things Roman absolutely did not want explained to him. They looked like organs.

Yep. This book of theirs was going to be a best seller.

Two older witches were already waiting inside with the kind of quiet that made people uncomfortable.

Ziva stepped forward.

"Where is it?"

One of the witches handed her a steaming cup filled with a thick dark liquid. Then Ziva turned toward Roman with a shit-eating grin.

Oh shit.

Roman's stomach dropped.

"Hold him."

The wolves tightened their grip immediately.

Roman twisted away. "Okay, hold on. Before we continue, can we discuss the horrifying lack of safety precautions here? Because whatever's in that cup looks like it violates several health codes."

Ziva ignored him and approached slowly.

For the first time since his capture, genuine anxiety crept into Roman's face.

"What's in the cup?" he asked carefully.

Ziva scoffed. "Oh? Now you're scared?"

Her smile darkened into something almost vicious.

"You should be."

Suddenly, Roman's body locked up entirely as an invisible force wrapped around him. It felt like giant hands pinning his limbs in place so he couldn't move or attempt to fight back. He could barely breathe.

Pure panic slammed into him, watching in growing horror as Ziva grabbed his jaw.

"Wait—"

Ziva forced his mouth open and poured the disgusting liquid down his throat.

Defy The Alpha(s) - Chapter 880: Best Gift Ever[1,051 words]

Roman nearly gagged instantly. That tasted bitter and wrong like swallowing burnt blood and poison mixed together.

The force released him seconds later, and he doubled over coughing violently, trying to spit the substance back out. But nothing came up.

"Oh goddess," Roman wheezed. "I'm fairly certain no living creature was meant to consume that."

"Put him on the table."

This time Roman fought properly. Or tried to. But the collar around his neck weakened him badly, leaving his movements sluggish and ineffective. The wolves overpowered him easily despite his kicking and struggling.

"On his back," Ziva instructed.

Roman's eyes widened. "Absolutely not. Why on my back?" Alarm flooded him instantly. He really didn't like where this was going, especially with the direction his thoughts were taking.

"Listen, I support personal freedom and all, but I'm very committed to my current preferences."

But they didn't care, slamming him onto the cold stone table and strapped his wrists and legs down tightly. Roman pulled hard against the restraints, his muscles straining uselessly.

Damn it. Right now, he felt no stronger than an ordinary human.

No offense to humans, but how did they live like this?

Then Ziva stepped beside him holding a strange silver dagger coated in a weird black oil. And the look in her eyes? Pure terrifying excitement.

Fuck his life.

Roman immediately knew this was going to hurt.

One of the wolves ripped open the back of his shirt. At the same time, the witches nearby began chanting under their breath, their voices low and rhythmic.

Roman's pulse spiked as Ziva leaned closer.

"I hope this hurts the bitch far more than it hurts you."

Then the blade touched his back and

Roman screamed.

The silver carved into his flesh, pain ripping not only through his body but violently across the matebond itself. It felt like fire spreading beneath his skin, like someone was tearing his nerves apart one by one.

"Motherfucker!" Roman choked out, tears springing instantly into his eyes as his body jerked violently against the restraints. "Fuck—fuck—!"

But no matter how much he screamed, it did nothing to lessen the pain. If anything, the silver only seemed to burn deeper with every movement.

Then horror truly settled in. This wasn't random torture. The bitch was carving words into his back.

"What are you fucking doing?!" Roman practically bawled, his voice breaking from the sheer agony. It hurt so badly he couldn't even describe it. Every stroke of the blade felt like fire being branded directly into his soul.

Ziva looked deeply pleased with herself.

"I'm sending a message to your mate," she replied. "This should be enough to get her ass moving from whatever realm she's hiding in."

Roman's face drained of color. No, no, no.

He would rather endure this pain a thousand times over than drag Violet into Angus's mess. But strapped helplessly to the table, he had no choice in the matter.

Ziva continued writing on his skin.

Roman's breathing turned ragged, his fingers straining so hard against the restraints his wrists burned raw. Thankfully, after what felt like an eternity, Ziva finally stepped back.

Roman collapsed against the table, panting heavily, his entire back feeling like it had been set on fire.

"I'm sorry," he muttered weakly.

Then again, almost delirious.

"I'm sorry."

Blood coated his back where the words had been imprinted into his flesh.

"Hm?" Ziva leaned closer with cruel amusement dancing in her eyes. "What happened? No more jokes?"

Roman barely heard her, reeling from the torment.

One of the witches approached with a bowl filled with water and cloth stained from previous use. She began carefully wiping the blood away from his back, exposing the message beneath.

"Whatever pain you experienced," the witch explained calmly while she worked, "your mate will experience as well. Though unlike yours, her marks will fade eventually."

A pleased smile touched her lips.

"I imagine she's losing her mind already."

"The mark..." Roman rasped suddenly.

Ziva paused.

"What?"

"Show me the mark," he breathed.

That finally caught Ziva's attention properly. Her brows lifted slightly as she studied him. The cardinal alpha truly was bizarre.

Most people would have begged for the pain to stop, instead, Roman wanted to inspect the craftsmanship.

Indeed, Violet was apparently into the crazy ones.

Ziva tilted her head toward one of the wolves. Without question, he pulled out his phone, stepped behind Roman, and snapped a picture of the wound across his back before bringing it around for him to see.

Roman lifted his head weakly to see it. The moment the image came into view, silence settled across the room as everyone waited for his reaction.

"Come get your mate, bitch." the jagged words stretched violently across his back.

The skin around it was red and torn from the silver.

But instead of horror, Roman smiled.

"What a nice tattoo," he rasped.

The room went still.

Roman looked genuinely pleased despite the sweat soaking his face.

"Violet is going to love this."

Even the wolf holding the phone looked confused now.

Roman chuckled weakly, ignoring the fire still burning through his back. "In the end, Asher's not the only one with a dramatic scar anymore."

Everyone was utterly bewildered. Ziva herself looked personally offended by his reaction. Unfortunately, realizing her torture hadn't broken him only made her angrier.

Her expression twisted violently. She swept her hand and the table beneath Roman flipped instantly, sending him crashing hard onto the stone floor. Pain exploded through his battered body, and a groan tore from his throat.

"What the hell is wrong with you?!" Ziva screamed, finally losing the composed cruelty she had been clinging to.

Roman was laughing now. He could already picture Violet in bed, brushing her soft lips against his back tenderly. Goddess, he couldn't wait already.

Ziva thought she had broken him, but instead she had given him the best gift ever.

Unfortunately, frustration finally won over Ziva and she turned toward the wolves.

"I want you to beat the bastard until he's within an inch of his life."

The wolves nodded and set to work.

The sound of their boots striking his flesh and Roman's muffled grunts of pain followed Ziva out of the room as she stormed away, fury practically radiating from her body.

Defy The Alpha(s) - Chapter 881: Hope[1,543 words]

Unlike Duskmoon Village, Lunar Academy was drowning in grief. The atmosphere itself was heavy, weighed down by the gore, exhaustion, and the kind of silence that came only after the loss of lives.

The human students had already been sent back to their dormitories hours ago. Only a few remained behind in the infirmary under Adele's instructions, helping carry supplies, changing bandages, and trying not to panic at the sight of so much blood. The rest of the academy belonged to the wolves now.

They patrolled every corner of the academy. Some of them watched the barriers anxiously, terrified the magic would weaken and allow the zombie horde outside to pour in. Hence every distant growl from beyond the wards stretched their nerves tightly.

Inside the infirmary, Alpha King Elijah stood near the window of one of the private rooms, staring blankly into the darkness outside.

For the first time in his entire life, he felt utterly useless. His reflection stared back at him through the glass, pale, exhausted and hollow.

He remembered the fight clearly. Though he tried his best, Angus had overpowered him as if he were nothing but a child. He had failed his people, woefully.

Twelve bodies currently lay covered in white sheets inside the storage room downstairs awaiting transportation back to their respective packs.

Three had died immediately after crossing through the portal. Two more while Adele fought desperately to save them. The others had already been dead when their bodies were dragged through.

Elijah's jaw clenched painfully.

A knock came from the door before Christian stepped inside.

The beta's arm was wrapped heavily in bandages, blood still somewhat seeping through the white cloth despite the treatment. Yet the man stood straight regardless.

"We're ready," Christian informed him.

Elijah nodded with no words. What was there left to say?

Together, they stepped out into the hallway escorted by a few wolves.

The moment they entered the infirmary corridors, the smell of antiseptic, blood and burnt flesh from magical wounds hit him.

Pain.

Moans echoed from nearby rooms. Some wolves groaned in their sleep while others cried out quietly as Adele and the students practically overworked herself trying to reset broken bones that were healing wrongly.

One of the wolves had his entire chest wrapped in bloodied cloth and was trying his best not to scream out the torment he was currently in.

Elijah looked away, shame churning violently inside him. All of this would have been preventable if only he had gotten rid of Angus from the very start. If he could go back in time, he won't be making the same mistake again.

By the time they exited the infirmary and reached the school grounds, nearly every wolf in Lunar Academy had gathered.

The atmosphere was painfully subdued.

No one spoke loudly or dared to smile.

The surviving wolves stood assembled beneath the lights surrounding the academy courtyard, their expressions grief-stricken.

Christian remained beside him as they climbed the wide staircase leading to the academy entrance. From there Elijah stood at the top, looking down at his people.

So many wounded faces stared back. So many grieving ones. Suddenly the Alpha King understood something horrifying.

They were looking at him for hope. Even now.

"Tonight we mourn." Elijah's deep voice carried across the courtyard. "We mourn our brothers. Our family. Our pack."

Silence swallowed the grounds completely.

"I know your pain because I feel it too."

His gaze swept across them. "Every life lost today weighs on me. Every drop of blood spilled in that battle is something I will carry for the rest of my life."

Several wolves lowered their heads while others looked away entirely, trying to hide the pain.

Elijah continued, "Angus wanted to break us today." Bitterness crept into his tone.

"He wanted us to be afraid. Divided. Hopeless."

His eyes hardened.

"But evil has always mistaken suffering for weakness. Yes, the future ahead of us is dark. Perhaps darker than anything our people have ever faced before. We are trapped behind these walls while monsters roam outside and another monster hunts us from within."

His fists clenched behind his back.

"But we are still standing."

That earned small reactions

"And as long as we still stand, the fight is not over."

Among the crowd stood Irene Hale, her face perfectly blank. She looked in control but inwardly, she was unraveling.

Griffin was unconscious. Roman captured.

And Aeron... Her chest constricted painfully.

No. She refused to believe he was dead.

That stubborn bastard was too difficult to kill. They would bring him back. They had to.

Elijah's voice rang out again. "The Goddess has not abandoned us. Darkness may rise, but it has never once outlasted the dawn."

Then suddenly, the atmosphere rippled violently and every wolf froze. Energy distorted near the center of the courtyard and reality itself seemed to split open.

A portal appeared and chaos broke out immediately.

"FORMATION!" Ezra barked.

Wolves moved without hesitation, their growls filling the grounds. Several shifted halfway, their claws extended, and eyes glowing brightly in the dark.

Tension exploded across the courtyard.

Everyone thought the same thing: Angus had come back. He was here to finish what he started.

The portal widened further now, crackling with unstable energy until it fully stabilized into a swirling wormhole.

Every wolf waited with bated breath for the first enemy to emerge. Then a boot stepped through, streaks of electricity striking the ground, forcing them to step back. Blue lightning danced through the air like living currents as Alaric Storm stepped out first.

Just like that, shock spread through the courtyard. Alaric looked deadly, power rolling off him, the current snapping around his body like a shield.

For a second no one moved only for another figure to step through. Asher Nightshade emerged next, his dark gaze instantly taking in the courtyard. And behind him was Violet Purple.

The portal snapped shut immediately afterward, disappearing into nothingness.

Silence swallowed the academy whole and for one stunned moment, both sides simply stared at each other.

Then Caspian's voice shattered the silence.

"Alaric!"

The North Alpha practically sprinted across the courtyard toward his son. Alaric barely had time to brace himself before Caspian grabbed him fiercely, pulling him into a crushing embrace. Relief flooded the older alpha's face openly.

"You idiot boy," Caspian muttered roughly, gripping the back of his son's head tightly. "How could you leave me like this?!"

Alaric laughed. "Well, I'm back now."

That seemed to break the spell hanging over the crowd. It was really them.

"Asher!"

"Violet!"

Ezra strode straight toward Asher while Irene moved toward Violet almost desperately. The moment she reached her, Irene pulled Violet tightly into her arms.

"Thank the goddess," Irene whispered shakily.

Tears burned suddenly in her eyes. Right now Violet felt like something solid to hold onto while everything else around them collapsed.

Violet hugged her back immediately, startled by the emotion behind it.

Around them whispers spread rapidly through the wolves.

"Violet Purple...?"

"Isn't that Angus daughter?"

"She's back."

"Is that really her?"

For the first time since the battle, the wolves felt actual hope.

Irene finally pulled back enough to hold Violet by the shoulders, scanning her from head to toe as though making sure every part of her was truly intact.

"Are you okay?" she asked immediately.

Violet nodded. "I'm fine."

The older woman let out a shaky breath before smiling at her, relief softening the exhaustion on her face. It looked strange seeing Irene Hale, one of the most terrifying women in the packs, appear so openly emotional.

Before Violet could even ask about Griffin or Roman, Ezra wrapped his arms around her.

"Thank the gods," he muttered roughly. "Do you know how worried everyone was?"

Violet blinked in surprise before awkwardly patting his shoulder. "Uh...you're welcome?"

That earned the smallest snort from Asher nearby.

But when Violet finally looked around properly, the amusement slowly faded from her face.

The wolves were staring at her. Not with suspicion or fear, but awe and hope. The realization hit Violet almost immediately.

They knew. If not the full truth, then enough to know who she was and what she could do.

Just like that, invisible expectations had suddenly been dropped onto her shoulders.

Violet suddenly became very aware of how many eyes were fixed on her. She didn't know what to say.

Then the crowd began parting, creating a path through the center of the courtyard.

Alpha King Elijah was walking toward her and Violet instantly went alert.

The last time Elijah suspected the truth about her identity, he had looked anything but pleased. Asher and Alaric stepped in front of her protectively. Around them, tension immediately returned and for several long seconds, nobody said a word.

The wolves watched cautiously, waiting to see what would happen next. Then Elijah stopped in front of them and exhaled slowly, some of the hardness leaving his expression.

"You're finally here," he said.

Violet arched her brow in surprise.

Elijah continued dryly, "I was beginning to wonder if you planned to wait until your father wiped us all out before coming to save our asses."

Violet relaxed instantly. Okay? It seems

there would be no murdering Elijah tonight after all.

Defy The Alpha(s) - Chapter 882: You Didn't Fail Me[1,533 words]

While everyone was still reeling from Violet's appearance, a loud growl suddenly erupted from behind the crowd.

Heads snapped around instantly and a path was created as Griffin Hale burst through the wolves at frightening speed.

Even Asher and Alaric visibly tensed at the sight of him charging straight toward Violet. There was more reason to protect her now than ever before.

Yet neither of them moved to stop him. Perhaps it was the Matebond between them all, but deep down, they trusted Griffin would never hurt her.

Still, watching a mountain of a man sprint toward Violet like an unleashed beast was terrifying enough on its own.

"Oh shit," Violet muttered, mentally bracing herself.

That was all the preparation she managed before Griffin reached her. One second her feet were firmly planted on the ground, the next, she was snatched clean off them.

A startled laugh ripped from Violet as Griffin spun her around once before crushing her tightly against him, his arms wrapping around her like he was afraid she would disappear if he let go.

"Griffin!" Violet laughed breathlessly, immediately hugging him back just as tightly, her arms sliding around his neck.

But the warmth of the reunion shattered almost instantly when Violet heard raw sobs. Griffin was crying?

"I'm sorry," Griffin choked out, burying his face against the crook of her neck. "I'm so fucking sorry. I couldn't protect him. I failed you."

The laughter faded from Violet's face immediately. Her stomach dropped.

"What are you talking about?" she asked quietly, though deep down she already knew.

When Griffin didn't answer, Violet pulled back slightly.

"It's Roman, isn't it?"

Griffin slowly lifted his head to stare at her, looking almost stunned she had figured it out so quickly.

Around them, silence settled heavily.

For someone who had practically just confirmed one of her mates had been captured, Violet appeared oddly calm. But perhaps that calm came from the fact she knew Roman was still alive, otherwise they wouldn't have sent that message.

If he were dead, the bond would have shattered completely.

Or perhaps the calmness wasn't calmness at all, but a rage so deep and violent that it had gone frighteningly still.

Control.

Asher's voice echoed through the Matebond, as though sensing exactly where her thoughts were beginning to drift.

They had already discussed this back in the Fae realm. Asher knew what she was capable of when she lost control. Unfortunately, this wasn't the Fae realm and Annequin wasn't here to contain her powers if things got out of control.

Violet took a deep breath. But even then, the air around her still trembled with power and the wolves around felt it.

It rolled off her in invisible waves, pressing down on their instincts hard enough to make several wolves unconsciously lower their heads.

"Holy shit," one of the younger wolves whispered, his eyes widening. "I can't be the only one sensing that aura."

Murmurs immediately spread through the crowd, uneasy glances shifting between Violet and Elijah. No one dared say the truth aloud, but it hung heavily in the air regardless.

Violet's dominance eclipsed Elijah's.

But Violet barely noticed their reactions. Right now, her attention remained fixed entirely on Griffin. She gently rubbed his back, trying to soothe him.

"It's alright, babe," she murmured softly. "This isn't your fault."

Griffin's arms only tightened around her.

"We'll get him back," Violet promised, though something cold had already begun settling deep inside her chest. "And when we do, we'll make Angus regret touching what's mine."

It had to be her father. Only one witch hated Violet enough to carve a message into Roman's flesh just to torment her through the Matebond.

Ziva.

And Ziva never acted without permission.

"Griffin needs rest," Irene informed her. "He exhausted himself during the battle."

"No," Griffin refused immediately, lifting his head stubbornly. "I'm fine."

The blatant lie made his mother give him a hard look. He looked half-dead. While Adele had healed the deep claw marks and magical wounds he suffered, it still didn't eliminate the fact his body needed the time to heal.

"Violet just got here," Griffin argued. "She needs to know what happened."

"Exactly," Irene agreed. "Which means the rest of us can explain things while you sleep."

But Griffin wasn't listening. Roman had been taken under his watch. What if something happened to her while he rested?

Logically, Griffin knew Violet was powerful enough to destroy half the academy if provoked. But the logic had very little place in the emotional disaster currently happening inside him.

Right now, all he wanted was Violet safe in his arms where he could physically see she was alive.

"Griffin," Asher stepped in with a calm voice.

"You need to sleep. Now."

Asher didn't need eye contact anymore, the compulsion slid effortlessly into the words and took hold of Griffin. Yes, he too had an upgrade.

Almost immediately, Griffin yawned.

"I need to sleep," he announced, sounding genuinely surprised by the realization.

Everyone saw what happened and from the side, Alpha king Elijah unconsciously touched the necklace around his throat. Thankfully, it was still there.

Just because he had lowered his hostility toward the Cardinal Alphas did not mean he intended to become vulnerable to that ability.

Under the compulsion, everyone expected Griffin to head toward the infirmary immediately. Instead, Violet suddenly let out a startled shriek as Griffin scooped her clean off the ground.

"Griffin!" she yelped, grabbing onto his shoulders. "What are you doing?!"

"I need to sleep," Griffin repeated with another exhausted yawn as though that explained literally everything.

Then he simply turned and started walking away with her still in his arms. In one very Griffin-like conclusion, sleep apparently meant sleeping with Violet.

"Dude," Alaric said slowly, turning toward Asher. "What exactly did you do?"

Asher exhaled heavily and rubbed at his brows.

"The next time, I'm being more specific with my compulsions."

No one attempted to stop Griffin. Not even his mate-in-laws. At this point, everyone understood separating him from Violet right now, there was a high chance someone would lose a limb.

So they let them be.

Instead of returning to the infirmary where he had been recovering earlier, Griffin headed toward the East House instead.

Several human students still lingered in the hallways despite the earlier orders to remain indoors. So the moment they spotted Griffin carrying Violet through the entrance, shock immediately spread across their faces.

"Oh my God—is that Violet Purple?"

"She's back?"

"No way! The purple storm is back!"

Some students even attempted stepping closer out of curiosity but Griffin growled in warning and that was enough. They visibly paled and backed away.

Satisfied, Griffin continued forward without slowing down once. In his arms, Violet could only shake her head. These possessive mates of hers.

By the time they entered Griffin's apartment, the exhaustion weighing on him had become painfully obvious. He practically collapsed onto the bed with Violet still trapped in his arms.

Griffin pulled her against his chest and wrapped himself around her completely till they were spooning. Carefully, Violet ran her fingers through Griffin's hair, soothing him gently while his breathing gradually slowed.

"It's alright," she whispered. "We'll get Roman back."

Her fingers brushed through his red hair that had finally grown to her favorite length.

"We'd end this once and for all. Each and everyone of them would pay for what they did. I promise." Violet said with vengeance ringing in her blood.

Eventually, Griffin's breathing deepened completely. He was finally asleep.

Violet waited another minute before attempting to move and yet it was difficult.

Her mate clung to her like his life genuinely depended on it.

After an impressive amount of effort and strategic maneuvering, Violet finally managed to pry herself free from Griffin's arms without waking him.

She stared down at him for a moment afterward. Even asleep, he looked tense. Her chest tightened painfully. Leaning down, Violet pressed a soft kiss against his cheek before pulling the blanket over him properly.

"Sleep, baby. This would be over, soon." she murmured.

Then she left.

The moment Violet stepped into the foyer downstairs, she found Asher already waiting for her.

"The others are waiting," he said simply while extending his hand toward her.

Violet took it immediately. Together, they left the dormitories and headed back toward the infirmary.

The secured room inside was already occupied when they arrived. There was Elijah, Alaric and the pack Alphas. Not one sub-alphas was around, meaning this was an important conversation.

Her gaze briefly met Leon Draven's and for a second, Violet didn't know what to say. They had never exactly been close, but he was still Roman's father. Violet could see the pain hidden deep in his eyes despite how hard the South Alpha tried to bury it.

But just as quickly, Leon hardened his expression and looked away.

Perhaps this was for the best, because Violet wasn't sure she could handle his emotions right now without snapping.

All eyes were on her like a spotlight, responsibility settling heavily onto her shoulders. Well. She might as well own it.

Violet inhaled deeply before finally speaking.

"What the hell happened here?"

Defy The Alpha(s) - Chapter 883: Kill Angus Tonight[1,518 words]

"What do you think happened, Violet Purple?" Elijah retorted coldly. "Your father wants his throne back."

The disdain laced through the Alpha King's voice was impossible to miss, and just like that, they were back to finger-pointing and blaming.

Violet raised a brow. "And whose fault is that, brother to my father?" she returned evenly.

The title alone was enough to provoke him.

Elijah's eyes blazed dangerously, but Violet remained perfectly still beneath his glare. Unlike him, her own anger came with consequences now. Lives had already been lost today, and Elijah Richmond was not worth losing control over.

What irritated Violet most was how quickly his attitude had shifted.

Just minutes ago, he had looked like a man cornered by fear and desperation. Yet now that she was standing here, suddenly he remembered he was Alpha King again, throwing his weight around like she was still the same girl he once intimidated in the past.

Unfortunately for him, that Violet no longer existed. If Elijah needed her help, then he would learn to speak to her with respect.

"Can we not do this?" Irene cut in.

Though she spoke to both of them, her gaze remained fixed on Elijah, silently reprimanding him. "Quarreling amongst ourselves hasn't gotten us anywhere so far."

That single look from Irene was enough to remind Elijah of tonight's failures, and just like that, he stood down.

Leon stated grimly.

"We cannot allow Angus to become king. Not now. Not ever."

At least he didn't refer to Angus as her father. Violet found herself oddly relieved by that.

It irritated her how quickly Elijah had linked her to a man whose only contribution to her life had been biological. The same thing had happened to Micah for years, isolated and judged because of Angus despite never truly having a father-son relationship with him.

Leon went on, "Angus never stood trial for the dark ritual he committed years ago, despite tainting his bloodline in the process. That alone should have disqualified him from ever becoming Alpha King."

His expression hardened further.

"And now? He has raised his hand against the wolves, spilled the blood of his own kind, all to seize a throne that no longer belongs to him." Leon's voice turned cold. "That is not a forgivable crime."

"Unfortunately, he has Roman and Aeron," Ezra pointed out heavily.

The atmosphere inside the room tightened.

"He's going to use them as leverage." Ezra looked directly at Violet now. "Roman is your mate, and the Matebond demands loyalty above all else. You would do anything necessary to bring him back alive, even if it means giving in to Angus's demands. And that," he finished carefully, "is going to become a problem."

"You're right," Violet admitted without hesitation.

Everyone aside her mates, Alaric and Asher, looked surprised she agreed so easily.

"I will do everything necessary to bring Roman back alive. But Angus won't be a problem." She held their stare, her eyes burning with determination, "I'll get rid of him. Trust me."

Murmurs spread quietly through the room as the Alphas exchanged glances with one another, silently communicating through years of leadership and battle experience.

There was doubt. Not because they underestimated Violet, but because they had seen what Angus was capable of. Violet hadn't.

Right at that moment, the door to the room opened and a flushed-looking Micah appeared in the hallway.

"You have got to be kidding me." He looked around in disbelief. "A whole meeting without me?"

Then his eyes landed on Violet.

"Well," he muttered, "guess the kids weren't lying after all."

Apparently, the rumors surrounding Violet Purple had spread through Lunaris Academy.

Micah shut the door behind him and walked into the room. He stopped directly in front of Violet, his hands twitching awkwardly at his sides as though debating whether or not he was supposed to hug her.

This sibling thing between them was still painfully weird. Very weird. In the end, he settled for placing both hands on his waist instead.

"You look better," he commented honestly.

Violet looked him over.

"You look worse."

Micah winced appreciatively at the brutal honesty. To be fair, he looked terrible.

He was still sporting injuries from the battle hours earlier, his healing progressing slower than usual thanks to whatever magic had been thrown around during the fight.

"Gee, thanks," he muttered.

Then silence settled awkwardly between them.

Unfortunately, it didn't help that everyone else in the room was openly staring with curious expressions like they were expecting some emotional sibling reunion or magical bonding moment. It was uncomfortable as hell.

"I'll sit now," Micah announced matter-of-factly.

Without waiting for permission, he walked toward one of the empty chairs and dropped into it heavily. Crossing one leg over the other, he glanced around the room casually.

"So," he asked, "where were you guys?"

Elijah visibly looked like he had something to say, but Irene must have read his mind because the moment their eyes met, her stare warned him clearly.

Don't.

The Alpha King swallowed whatever inflammatory comment had been about to leave his mouth.

Ezra spoke instead.

"Violet believes she can rescue Roman and take down Angus at the same time." He took a deep breath, "The problem is that she doesn't fully understand how powerful Angus has become."

"How powerful are we talking?" Asher asked immediately, concern flickering across his face at the thought of Violet confronting Angus directly.

Micah's expression darkened.

"Powerful enough that physical attacks don't affect him anymore."

Asher and Alaric shared a brief look. That was not good.

"Not even Griffin managed to leave a dent on him," Micah told them. "The witches carved some sort of protection runes directly into his body."

"Ritual," Alaric said suddenly.

Micah frowned. "What?"

Alaric explained, "I can't help wondering how many sacrifices were needed to make something like that possible."

"Ritual or not," Micah said, stormy eyes sweeping across them, "the point is that he practically made himself immortal."

His gaze fell on Asher.

"And before you ask, I highly doubt your psychic abilities would work on him either. I saw it, myself, witch powers don't affect him anymore, at least not in any normal way." Micah finished and that wiped away whatever confidence remained.

Except that didn't sit well with a particular Alpha king.

Elijah cocked his head. "In that case, what exactly can Angus's hybrid daughter do in this situation considering we've apparently been waiting for you like the messiah?" his tone dripped with sarcasm.

Violet smiled, but it wasn't pleasant. It was the kind of smile that put people on edge.

"Want to find out, uncle?" she asked sweetly, stretching out her hand.

Instantly, darkness gathered above her palm. The black energy twisted into a floating sphere, alive in a way that made several wolves instinctively stiffen, the temperature in the room dropping.

Micah raised a brow, eyeing the ability with the same caution everyone else suddenly had.

Only Caspian truly looked alarmed. He was the only one there who had actually witnessed what Violet's powers could do firsthand in the North pack.

The others merely looked deeply uncomfortable because wolves were not supposed to wield powers like that. Dark abilities had always been associated with witches, curses, and things better left untouched.

Even Elijah's expression changed a little despite himself.

"I have an idea," Alaric suddenly announced.

That immediately broke the tension.

"You have?" practically everyone asked at once.

Alaric explained. "Certain Fae can walk into the dreams of others and manipulate whatever happens there. They can trap people, torture them, and even alter the dream itself."

Caspian was the first to understand where his son was heading with it. "So if Angus can't be killed physically," the North Alpha said slowly, "then we kill him somewhere his protections don't exist and that is in the dream world."

Alaric smiled. "Bingo."

Both father and son looked proud of themselves.

Irene asked thoughtfully. "Isn't that what incubus do?" Her gaze shifted toward Micah questioningly.

Micah looked almost offended by how casually everyone was discussing dream-walking.

"Incubus enter dreams to seduce people," he corrected sweetly. "Not murder them. It's very different professions."

Asher said to him. "But it means you already have a foothold there. If incubi can naturally access dreams, then Micah can act as an anchor inside the dream realm."

"And you can use him to get to Angus," Alaric concluded.

"And once I'm inside," Violet announced, "I can finish Angus in the dream world."

Asher blinked in surprise. "I was going to say I would be the one doing that."

Violet said, undeterred.

"Your powers revolve around mental compulsion, Asher. They let you influence thoughts, maybe even tune into certain frequencies inside the dream realm. But that doesn't mean you can actually kill Angus there."

"I have to be the one to do this. Tonight, Angus will die and I cannot leave room for mistakes."

"But —" he tried to protest.

"I'm the goddess daughter. I see it now...." Violet said lifting her head high, "I was meant for this. No one else."

Defy The Alpha(s) - Chapter 884: Become The Anchor[1,509 words]

At the same time in Duskmoon Village, six witches were seated around a wooden table. They were the six coven leaders, or as Ziva preferred to call them, the Coven Mothers.

Each one looked vastly different from the other, their appearances influenced by the traditions of their respective covens.

The oldest among them, Florence, sat closest to Ziva's right. Her dark hair was braided with tiny bones and beads woven through it, while her aged fingers were stained permanently black from years of potion work.

Beside her sat Mother Kira, a dark-skinned witch with white paint drawn across her throat and forehead in ritualistic markings. Gold rings decorated nearly every finger she possessed.

Another, named Sakura, had long locs adorned with charms, feathers, and dried flowers. The woman wore enough layered necklaces to nearly cover her chest entirely.

At the opposite end sat the thin, sharp-faced Mother Yara whose scalp was partially shaved except for a thick braid running down the center of her head. Strange runes had been tattooed along both arms.

As for the remaining two witches, one of them was blind while the other possessed eyes so pale they barely looked human.

They came from different covens and practiced different customs, but all of them ultimately served Angus.

Yes, they were significantly older than Ziva herself, which made the tension in the room all the more interesting. Despite their age and experience, every single one of them sat carefully around Angus's crazy daughter.

Her mother Sarah had once been one of the strongest and most respected coven leaders, and yet Ziva had murdered her in cold blood. That crime still lingered fresh in their memories, and none of them wished to be next.

Seated confidently at the head of the table, Ziva tapped her fingers lazily against the armrest.

"The reason I invited you here tonight, Coven Mothers," she began, "is because our Supreme Alpha requires your assistance once more."

The room remained silent.

"We achieved victory today," Ziva continued, "but the battle remains incomplete until our enemy's greatest weapon is subdued. And we are speaking about Violet Purple."

That got an immediate reaction, one Ziva had fully expected.

Every witch in Duskmoon Village knew about Angus's child with the Fae Queen.

Fortunately for them, they also knew Ziva, and they knew better than to look impressed by Violet in her presence.

Florence was the first to speak.

"I thought Violet Purple was still trapped in the Fae realm."

"She was," Ziva answered calmly. "I monitored fluctuations in magical energy, and hours ago, I sensed a surge akin to hers."

Of course, Ziva already knew Violet would return eventually after carving that message into Roman's back. That had been the entire point.

Her eyes gleamed coldly.

"She's back."

A low murmur spread around the table.

"And my guess," Ziva added, "is that she's currently hiding away in Lunar Academy with the others like cowards."

"Doesn't that mean we're short on time?" Mother Yara asked. "Last I checked, wolves become violently possessive where their mates are concerned." Her eyes narrowed slightly. "And we currently possess one of hers."

A slow smile spread across Ziva's face.

"That is exactly what I'm counting on."

Something chilling moved through her voice, enough to make the witches exchange uneasy glances. Ziva's eyes practically glittered with whatever twisted plans were brewing inside her head.

"But isn't she powerful?" Sakura asked cautiously.

That question clearly irritated Ziva despite how carefully it had been phrased.

Still, she answered.

"Yes," Ziva admitted stiffly. "Violet is powerful. But she is still only one person, and there's only so much one person can do."

Her fingers drummed once against the table.

"Killing her would certainly solve many problems, but unfortunately, the Supreme Alpha believes Violet would be far more useful alive."

Several witches visibly relaxed at that. They had just finished a brutal battle and lost many of their sisters. Fighting a powerful hybrid was bound to come with losses they were not eager to suffer again.

Ziva noticed. Fortunately for them, she was in no mood to care.

"The problem," she said darkly, "is that Violet does not share our interests. That is why my father has tasked us with finding a way to control her."

The witches immediately began murmuring amongst themselves, shifting uncomfortably in their seats.

How exactly were they supposed to control someone like Violet Purple? Even magic had its limits.

"Well?" Ziva demanded, her gaze sweeping across the table. "I'm waiting for answers."

Silence answered her.

The Coven Mothers exchanged uneasy glances amongst themselves, their hesitation obvious enough to irritate Ziva further. It was clear none of them had an immediate solution, but unfortunately for them, this was not a room where silence was tolerated for long.

With Ziva involved, if answers did not come soon, heads would eventually start rolling.

Finally, Mother Florence cleared her throat carefully.

"Don't we have her mate Roman Draven? We could simply threaten to kill him if Violet refuses to obey the Supreme Alpha's demands."

Ziva stared at her blankly for a moment, then burst into a cold laughter.

"If that idea were foolproof," she replied with biting mockery, "do you honestly think I wouldn't have suggested it already?"

Florence stiffened.

"Or is old age finally catching up to you?" Ziva continued cruelly. "Perhaps it truly is time we replaced some leadership positions around here. Younger witches might actually possess functioning brain cells."

Mother Florence flushed deeply beneath the insult but said nothing. What could she say? Ziva was unstable enough to act on such threats.

"Is that really the best all of you have?" Ziva glared at them.

The look exchanged between the witches this time carried reproach. If Ziva was truly so brilliant, perhaps she should have come with a solution herself. Of course, none of them were suicidal enough to voice that thought aloud.

Mother Sakura spoke instead.

"I don't believe Florence's idea is entirely useless," she said with caution. "It simply requires more precise planning."

Ziva motioned impatiently for her to continue.

"Once Violet surrenders herself," Sakura explained, "we could place suppressor collars on her. If her powers remain restrained, the Supreme Alpha could use her however he wishes."

Ziva immediately shot the idea down.

"And what happens when she escapes?" she snapped. "Or do you somehow believe her other mates would not come for her? We barely even know how Violet's powers function!"

Sakura lowered her gaze immediately, humiliation spreading visibly across her face.

Ziva rubbed slowly at her temples, already feeling a headache beginning to form. This was exactly why she hated working with older witches. They were slow and too stuck in outdated thinking.

"You're all missing the point," Ziva told them. "My father doesn't need temporary obedience, he needs complete surrender. No matter what prison we place Violet in, she will eventually escape with time because she's powerful enough to do so."

The admission tasted bitter coming from her.

"But if we break her spirit first..."

A slow smile spread across Ziva's lips.

"No," she corrected. "If we turn her into my father's obedient little soldier, a weapon that exists solely to receive and carry out his orders, that would be perfect."

Something deeply twisted flickered through Ziva's expression at the thought. If Violet became nothing more than Angus's hollow servant, then there would no longer be anyone competing for Angus's attention.

"We bind her spirit." someone said.

Every head turned immediately toward the blind witch seated near the far end of the table.

Even Ziva straightened up, interest flashed across her face.

"What do you mean by that, Mother Edith?"

The blind witch slowly lifted one wrinkled hand.

"To control the body," Edith explained, "you must first bind the spirit. There is an old ritual mentioned within one of our sacred texts. A ritual capable of breaking a person's will entirely."

A proud smile immediately spread across Ziva's face. Finally, something useful.

"Then what are we waiting for?" she demanded eagerly. "Let's begin preparing it immediately."

But Edith remained unruffled.

"Such rituals are dangerous," she warned. "Especially when the victim possesses a spirit powerful enough to resist."

That dampened the excitement slightly.

"And there is another problem," Edith added. "We require Violet's blood."

Ziva's expression darkened instantly.

"We don't have her blood," she said irritably. "Nor do we have the luxury of time needed to obtain it or the means to." There was urgency to her words.

Then the pale-eyed witch finally spoke for the first time.

"You may not need Violet's blood directly."

Everyone looked toward Mother Eleanor.

The pale witch folded her hands neatly together.

"Your blood will suffice."

Ziva blinked in surprise.

"Excuse me?"

Eleanor's pale gaze settled directly on her.

"You and Violet share the same father. Blood recognizes blood. That connection is enough for the ritual to identify its target. Now the question becomes this..."

Though blind, it somehow felt like she was staring directly into Ziva's soul.

"Are you willing to become the anchor for the ritual despite the risks involved?"

Defy The Alpha(s) - Chapter 885: Your Plans Won't Work[1,105 words]

"What?" Ziva said in disbelief. For a moment, it felt like she hadn't heard correctly.

The blind witch, Edith, who had been the one to propose the idea, answered calmly, "You heard Eleanor. Your blood would act as the anchor we use to bind Violet's spirit. If you permit it, we can begin the ritual immediately."

For a long moment, Ziva said nothing and simply stared at them, silence stretching uncomfortably around the table.

When the staring became too unsettling, Sakura cautiously asked, "Is something the matter, Ziva?"

That seemed to snap her out of it and Ziva suddenly burst into laughter. The laughter was not the normal type, rather it was unhinged enough to make the room tense instantly.

She laughed so hard a snort escaped her nose, yet she didn't seem embarrassed by it in the slightest. Instead, Ziva doubled over the table, her shoulders shaking violently while one hand pressed against the wooden surface for support.

None of the witches spoke.

When Ziva finally lifted her head again, tears clung to the corners of her eyes. She wiped them away alongside the snot beneath her nose, still chuckling to herself.

"Oh," she breathed in amusement. "I see it now."

Her gaze slowly narrowed toward Edith and Eleanor. "So this is your grand plan to get rid of me, huh?"

Uneasy murmurs spread amongst the witches. They did not like where this conversation was heading. Ziva was unpredictable on a good day. When provoked, she became downright dangerous.

"Admit it," Ziva sneered. "None of you can stand me. Or do you think I don't hear the little whispers and gossip floating around this village?" Her eyes glittered dangerously. "The horrible daughter. The rude child who doesn't know her place."

Florence immediately tried to calm things down.

"Ziva, no one is saying—"

"Shut up!" Ziva barked violently, pinning the older witch in place with her glare. "Do not speak another word before I decide to end your miserable life right now."

Florence immediately went silent while the remaining witches kept their eyes forward, none of them willing to become the next target of Ziva's spiraling temper.

Ziva kept her furious attention on the two witches.

"Do you think I'm not aware you all still hold grudges over the death of my mother, Sarah?" Her voice dripped with accusation. "You believe I'm a monster that should be gotten rid of. Is this it then? The ultimate plan?"

Neither Edith nor Eleanor reacted.

"If the risk troubles you that much," Eleanor offered, "we can simply use your sister Layla instead."

"I'm not afraid," Ziva snapped, the warning in her voice cracking through the room like a whip.

The witches traded discreet glances amongst themselves, weariness hanging behind their expressions. The girl simply could not stomach the idea of appearing frightened.

Unfortunately for Ziva, she caught the disbelief lingering around the table and immediately felt the need to defend herself.

"If the ritual is truly that dangerous," she rushed out, "then I cannot participate because I'm still useful to Angus, and we can all agree nothing should happen to me."

Heads bobbed in acknowledgment around the table, but inwardly, the witches all arrived at the same conclusion. Ziva was talking in circles.

"So we use Layla then," Eleanor settled.

"Layla won't work." Edith dismissed immediately.

Ziva's expression darkened. "What did you just say?" For a second, she genuinely believed the blind witch was challenging her authority.

But Edith answered without the slightest trace of intimidation.

"The anchor must remain emotionally stable since they will act as the bridge reaching Violet. From what I've heard, Layla is currently under house arrest after defying your father's orders." Her cloudy eyes lifted slightly. "I do not see her remaining cooperative through such a process."

Ziva's teeth ground together. Their family was rotting apart and everyone could see it now. Ever since Angus ordered Laura's execution, Layla had chosen rebellion as if she couldn't care if they killed her.

If only Hannah and Laura were still around, Ziva would have already dealt with Layla's growing insolence personally. But their family was smaller now and even they had to keep up appearances.

"We cannot use her," she bit out, annoyed. "Layla's unpredictable right now and there's no guarantee she wouldn't mess this up on purpose to get her revenge."

"Lilian then." Ziva threw out the next name quickly. "She's obedient, useful, and frankly, no one would miss her."

Compared to Layla, Lilian barely existed within the family hierarchy. She was one of those daughters only remembered when errands needed running.

Edith looked deeply unimpressed.

"You answered your own problem already," the blind witch replied with irritation. "She's submissive. I already told you the ritual requires someone with a spirit strong enough to endure the connection." Her voice lowered. "Unless, of course, you still believe we are plotting against you."

"In which case," Edith continued, "you may explain personally to your father why the ritual failed. I certainly have no desire to become a victim of his anger."

At this point, Ziva felt trapped somewhere between fury and frustration. If her useless siblings had not ruined everything, she would not even be sitting here arguing with old women. One of them should have been enough.

Then suddenly, a name surfaced in her mind.

"Use Bree."

The room froze. Even Edith recoiled slightly.

"What?" The blind witch's composure cracked for the first time. "That girl is a monster."

"She's a wendigo," Ziva corrected. "And she possesses the strongest spirit I've ever encountered."

Her chair scraped loudly against the floor as she rose, suspicion bleeding openly into her expression.

"Unless..." Her gaze locked onto Edith. "There's another reason you're so determined to make me undergo the ritual?"

The room became suffocatingly quiet.

"Because if that's the case," Ziva continued dangerously, "then you can all fuck off with your plans. It's not happening."

Madness gleamed openly inside her eyes now. Not the reckless kind but the dangerous one that made experienced witches rethink every word before speaking.

For several stretched seconds, Edith and Ziva remained locked in silence despite the older woman's blindness. But everyone present knew Edith did not truly need sight to navigate a room. Her magic guided her and right now, both women were measuring one another carefully.

Finally, Edith relented.

"Bree then."

The agreement sounded dragged from her throat even though every other witch relaxed.

Then came the cold warning.

"However, you will be the one responsible for restraining that rabid sister of yours." The witch's chin lifted slightly. "And should this ritual fail, the consequences will belong entirely to you, Ziva."

Defy The Alpha(s) - Chapter 886: The Princess And The Incubus[1,151 words]

"I'm really not comfortable with this," Asher Nightshade muttered for the nth time as Alaric prepared the bed for them.

And by them, he meant Violet and Micah.

To dream-walk, they needed to be fully rested and relaxed. Naturally, the boys wanted their mate as comfortable as possible.

Micah was a completely different issue.

No mate willingly allowed another male to stain their sleeping space with his scent. It was practically an unspoken law amongst possessive wolves. Even Micah sharing the same bed with Violet was already testing dangerous boundaries.

Fortunately for him, the bond recognized him as family rather than competition. Otherwise, this conversation would have gone very differently.

At the same time, Micah couldn't exactly take Violet back to his own room either. That space belonged to him and Adele. It was sacred territory.

So one of the rooms in the infirmary had been prepared instead and the other Alphas kicked out as well. Too many dominant males crowding around Violet while she slept was a disaster waiting to happen. Tension alone would have eventually set either Asher or Alaric off.

Sleep made people vulnerable, soft and tempting. None of them particularly liked the idea of another man witnessing their mate in such a state.

Only Irene remained.

She stayed near the door under the excuse of standing watch and offering help if things went wrong. Personally, Asher doubted she would be useful here. He and Alaric could handle anything themselves.

"I told you already, babe." Violet cupped Asher's face between both palms, forcing his attention back onto her. "This is my fight. I'm not dragging any of you deeper into it."

Asher covered one of her hands immediately. "Your life is my life," he reminded her. "If something happens to you, I die too."

His gaze lowered instinctively toward her stomach before returning upward. He didn't dare say it aloud, not with Irene nearby.

"You cannot get hurt." He reminded her.

The three of them had already agreed to keep the pregnancy secret until Griffin and Roman learned about it first. Everyone else could wait.

Violet exhaled through her nose.

"You always think you need to carry everything yourself to stay in control." Her thumbs brushed lightly against his skin. "But you have to let go of the reins this time, Asher. You've suffered enough already. No more." Then she leaned upward and pressed a kiss against his forehead.

"I'll be safe. Little junior will too." Violet whispered the last part so quietly it was a miracle anyone heard it.

Irene heard enough. The Luna pretended to stay occupied checking the windows and secured exits around the room, but her werewolf hearing picked up fragments of the conversation regardless.

Her brows drew together immediately. Little junior? Surely not. Yet suspicion lingered stubbornly in her mind.

She was a mother herself after all. Back then, she and her husbands used coded conversations around the children too whenever they were hiding pregnancies or sensitive information.

But the second Aeron crossed her thoughts, bitterness crept in immediately.

Her husband was still trapped out there.

The possible meaning behind Violet's words stopped mattering after that.

Nothing mattered more than ending Angus and bringing Aeron home alive.

"Bed's ready," Alaric announced.

The moment the words left his mouth, Micah practically launched himself onto the neatly arranged bed with an exhausted groan.

Alaric's eye twitched.

He had spent the last several minutes making sure everything was perfect for Violet and now the blankets looked ruined already.

A low sound rumbled from his chest and Micah glanced toward him instantly. The expression on his face practically screamed, Don't start your territorial bullshit with me.

Violet intervened before either of them escalated. She kissed Alaric quickly on the forehead.

"All good here."

The storm in him eased slightly.

Then Violet climbed onto the bed beside Micah while Alaric hovered nearby fussing over her pillow placement and blanket like an overprotective husband preparing his wife for surgery.

Micah watched the entire thing with amusement dancing across his face.

"Who would've thought our first sibling bonding experience would end up like this?" he asked Violet.

Violet released a tired breath.

"Honestly? Not me."

Micah stretched slightly before adding, "Let's hope our father dearest is already asleep. Otherwise we might end up wandering through random dreams first."

His mouth curved unpleasantly. "Trust me, you do not want to see the things I've seen."

Violet raised a brow at that.

Asher folded his arms. "It's one in the morning. His supposed victory should've made him careless enough to sleep peacefully."

"All theories," Micah replied. "We'll know soon enough."

Then he turned his attention fully toward Violet.

"Ready for this ride, sister?"

Confidence rolled off him so naturally it became contagious.

Violet felt some of her tension loosen. She nodded once.

"Let's go."

Micah took her hand. "See you on the other side."

Violet took that as her cue to close her eyes and surrender herself to sleep.

Realistically, sleep should not have come that quickly considering she had only just shut her eyes, but that was where Micah's abilities came into play. She felt his power wash over her slowly, pulling her deeper and deeper under.

The sensation felt strange, almost intrusive.

Like invisible fingers slipping into the corners of her mind and tugging her consciousness away from reality itself.

Her natural instinct was to resist but Violet knew this was Micah, so she forced herself to relax and let the power take hold. Soon enough, the world around her disappeared and Violet found herself standing inside the dreamscape.

Everything felt weightless and unreal, as if

she existed somewhere between smoke and starlight.

Beside her stood Micah and somehow, he looked even more dangerous here. Perhaps because this was his domain, every part of him felt amplified. His features appeared sharper, his presence heavier, his energy thick enough to almost taste.

Honestly, he looked unfairly attractive. No wonder so many people fell victim to incubi within dreams. What person would willingly resist a creature built to lure people apart piece by piece?

Then Violet remembered exactly what incubi usually did inside dreams and mentally gagged.

Micah immediately frowned.

"Don't give me that look."

Violet only shrugged innocently.

Micah rolled his eyes before focusing again.

"I'll locate Angus —"

He stopped abruptly because the connection between them snapped. One second Violet stood beside him and the next, she vanished as though she had never existed there in the first place.

Micah froze. "What the—"

Before he could even process what happened, he returned to reality.

Micah jerked awake with a sharp inhale, the sudden movement immediately putting the others on alert.

Asher sensed something wrong instantly.

It had not even been a full minute since they both fell asleep.

"Why are you awake already?"

Alaric's gaze fell on Violet who remained completely motionless. His entire body stiffened.

"Why isn't Violet awake?"

Defy The Alpha(s) - Chapter 887: The Hunting Ground[1,116 words]

"Are you fucking kidding me right now?!" Ziva's voice ripped through the hunting grounds as she used her magic to violently drag Bree across the dirt.

The girl clawed at the earth immediately, shrieking like a creature dragged straight out of a nightmare.

Unfortunately, the hunting grounds only worsened her frenzy. This place meant one thing to Bree and it was food, death and blood.

The hunting grounds stretched deep into the forest behind Duskmoon Village, surrounded by towering trees so thick they nearly blocked out the moonlight overhead. The vegetation had long since overgrown wildly, vines curling around branches like snakes while damp moss crawled over stones and rotting wood.

The entire place reeked of decay with bones littering the grounds. Human skulls.

Broken ribs. Half-buried skeletons disappearing beneath dirt and weeds. It was all evidence of years worth of victims Angus had fed to his little monster.

At the center of the grounds stood several rusted restraint posts hammered deep into the earth. Some still carried dried blood stains while nearby were larger holding structures built from thick iron bars and reinforced wood, more like animal cages than prison cells.

That was where Angus kept victims he wanted alive enough for Bree to hunt slowly. The structures had hooks hanging from the ceiling alongside chains bolted into the floor so prey could not run while Bree fed.

Bree suddenly lunged at Ziva with a guttural snarl. A barrier exploded between them and she was knocked back.

Ziva was beyond furious. Usually Hannah or Lilian handled Bree. Or even the twins. It was never her. This task was beneath her.

Bree slammed herself against the barrier repeatedly, claws scratching wildly over the invisible wall while saliva dripped from her mouth.

The sound alone was enough to make several witches step backward uneasily.

With a curse, Ziva released the chains dragging Bree. Then she raised her hand and dark veins spread slowly beneath her skin.

The witches saw it and stiffened immediately. Blood magic. It was the rare magic she had stolen from her mother after killing her.

Ziva rarely touched that side of her abilities unless absolutely necessary. The ability required lots of effort and wore on the body. It was the reason the ability was rare and those who possessed never lived long — it was either it was stolen or they died from overuse.

But right now Ziva was beyond irritated. She curled her fingers and Bree's body jerked violently. The girl released a broken howl as her limbs twisted unnaturally beneath the control. One of her leg dragged backward while her shoulders snapped rigid as if an invisible strings had hooked into her bones.

Several witches grimaced at the sight.

Bree fought it desperately, growls emanating from her throat, but inch by inch, she was forced toward one of the iron restraint structures.

Ziva's breathing grew heavier the longer she maintained control. Sweat gathered at her temple yet she forced Bree forward.

The moment the girl reached the structure, her own hands lifted against her will and slammed the restraints shut around both wrists with a clang.

The chains locked tightly into place. Only then did Ziva finally release her power. The sudden freedom nearly made her stagger backward. A deep breath ripped from her chest while pain throbbed faintly behind her eyes.

Across from her, Bree exploded into violence. The chains rattled furiously as the girl thrashed and snapped at the air, her snarls echoing throughout the hunting grounds like a starving beast trapped in a cage.

Honestly, beast was the perfect word for her. Bree had half-shifted. Her teeth protruded sharply from her gums, longer and thinner than normal wolf fangs, stained yellow and brown from years without proper care. Her nails resembled claws more than fingers at this point.

Dark hair hung around her face in filthy tangled mats filled with dirt, leaves, and dried blood. Her oversized clothes barely clung to her body anymore, ripped apart from years of shifting and neglect.

No one bathed Bree, and that made her smelled horrifically. She reeked of rot, sweat, wet animal fur and old blood. Ziva nearly gagged remembering how close Bree came earlier.

Goddess. The odor alone could kill someone.

Bree suddenly jerked hard against the chains again, foam gathering around the corners of her mouth while her wild eyes darted around hungrily.

The sight would have terrified anyone unfamiliar with her but the witches were unbothered, already used to it.

Ziva wiped her hand slowly against her clothes like she could physically remove the contamination of touching Bree.

Then she looked toward Edith. "She's all yours."

"Restrain the girl."

Mother Edith had not ordered anyone specifically, but Mother Florence obeyed.

The older witch lifted both hands and the temperature dropped, frost spreading across the ground beneath Bree. It crawled rapidly up the chains wrapped around Bree's wrists before climbing higher along her arms and legs, while cold mist escaped Florence's lips with each breath.

The moment the ice touched Bree's body, an awful scream ripped from her throat. The sound was inhumane and echoed through the trees so loudly birds scattered into the night sky.

The wendigo thrashed harder against the restraints, teeth snapping wildly while the chains rattled from the force.

Unlike wolves, creatures like Bree hated the cold. The Ice weakened them, and Florence knew exactly how much force to use without freezing the girl solid. Even then, hatred still burned inside her wild eyes.

Mother Edith moved through the hunting grounds, navigating the uneven earth and scattered bones as though she could see perfectly fine.

The other witches watched silently. Even Ziva folded her arms and stayed quiet now.

Edith stopped directly in front of Bree's restraints.

The girl immediately lunged toward her as far as the chains allowed, snarling viciously enough for spit to spray from her mouth.

It was a warning. If she ever got free, she would rip the old witch apart.

But Edith remained untouched by the threat, reaching calmly toward the side of her robes and withdrew a small knife. She slashed cleanly across Bree's arm.

The wendigo recoiled instantly with a furious hiss, jerking violently against the restraints. Fresh blood welled from the cut immediately.

Bree glared at Edith with open hatred. That hurt!

But Edith paid her no attention. Her focus rested entirely on the blood dripping slowly from Bree's arm onto the dirt below.

Drop. Drop. Drop.

The blind witch tilted her head slightly as though listening to the sound. Then Edith began to chant and the blood touching the earth suddenly trembled. One by one, the crimson droplets lifted from the ground, suspended unnaturally in midair.

Defy The Alpha(s) - Chapter 888: Ziva's Twisted Fate[1,709 words]

"What the hell...?" Violet muttered, turning slowly as she took in her surroundings.

One moment she had been standing beside Micah in the dream realm and the next, something had yanked her away so violently she barely had time to process it.

The air here felt wrong, like something rotten sat beneath it. Directly ahead stood an old woman with clouded, unseeing eyes muttering strange chants beneath her breath. The witch's hands remained stretched outward while droplets of blood floated around her unnaturally.

She was not alone. Five other witches stood nearby. Wait a minute— Violet's attention snapped toward another familiar figure.

Ziva.

That one name rang through Violet's mind with immediate hatred. The two of them had never properly met face to face before, but Violet had seen enough pictures and videos to recognize the bitch instantly. Even her soul would recognize Ziva at this point. The girl reeked of wickedness.

Ziva was nearby watching everything unfold with the kind of excitement that instantly put Violet on edge.

Just like that, Violet realized her mission had been intercepted and she was dragged here on purpose. And with Ziva involved? There was absolutely no way whatever this was ended well for her.

A vicious growl suddenly pulled Violet's attention elsewhere. Her eyes landed on the chained girl nearby. Or more specifically, what used to be a girl.

Bree.

Micah had told her enough stories already for Violet to recognize her immediately. The poor thing looked more animal than human now.

Matted dark hair hung wildly around her face while restraints dug harshly into her wrists. Her teeth looked too long, and she looked ready to tear someone apart. For a second, Violet felt pity for the girl.

Something was made clear to Violet. None of the witches seemed aware she was standing there. If anyone noticed her, it was the blind witch whose chanting deepened suddenly. Her words were faster, almost possessing a hungrier intensity.

Violet frowned, trying to understand what was at play here. Then pain tugged sharply through her chest and her gaze lowered to see a bloody thread stretching outward from the center of her chest.

Violet stared with horror at the thread that looked more like a vein made of blood and magic twisted together, the other end connecting directly to Bree.

Her stomach dropped. That definitely did not look good.

"I can feel her. She's here." Mother Edith announced, barely containing the excitement rising within her at the success of the spell.

"Chant with me, sisters," Edith demanded, raising her hand higher into the air. "Lend me your strength."

Immediately, the other witches joined in.

"Spiritus ligamus. Voluntas frangimus. Sanguine vocamus. Obedi nobis." *We bind the spirit. We break the will. Through blood, we call you. Obey us.*

The hunting grounds echoed with the overlapping chants, their voices weaving together into something dark enough to make Violet's skin crawl.

The bloody thread between her and Bree pulsed harder. Just like that, Violet felt something pulling at her spirit, trying to subdue her.

Call it instinct but Violet knew she couldn't allow whatever plan they had to work. She had to get out of here. So she immediately began to resist, forcing herself away from the

connection and trying to leave, but it was Bree who screamed as if she were the one being torn apart instead.

The sound made Violet freeze.

That was when it dawned on her. They had bound her to Bree and the more she fought against the spell, the more pain the girl would suffer in her place.

Violet didn't know much about this sister of hers, but one thing was painfully clear : Bree didn't deserve any of this. It was Angus's fault she turned out this way. Unfortunately, instead of rehabilitating her, they had chained her up and turned her into an animal instead.

That was when Violet made up her mind. Fine then. If they didn't want her to leave, then they'd better be ready to entertain her. Her gaze settled on the blind witch. She had to be the one maintaining the spell.

Violet called upon her powers and it rose eagerly inside her, rushing to obey her command, a dangerous smile tugging at her lips. Guess the witches didn't know Fae magic would always surpass witch magic.

Mother Edith must have sensed the shift in power because her chanting suddenly faltered. "Chant louder—!" she cried out, but that was as far as she got before fire suddenly exploded across her body.

A shriek tore from her throat instead of words.

Unfortunately for the other mothers, they were all connected to Edith through the ritual. The moment she caught fire, the remaining five witches ignited alongside her. Flames spread hungrily over their bodies while their collective screams ripped through the hunting grounds like something straight out of a nightmare.

Ziva staggered back at once, shock flashing across her face. What the hell was going on here?

"Edith!" she screamed, instantly throwing out spell after spell to extinguish the flames, but nothing worked. The fire refused to die no matter what she did.

And that was when true fear finally began creeping into her.

Violet felt absolutely no pity watching the witches burn alive. If anything, she made sure the flames spread slowly because as long as Mother Edith remained alive, the spell anchoring her here would continue holding her in place.

Instead, Violet's attention remained fixed on Ziva, satisfaction blooming inside her at the fear slowly swallowing the girl whole. Violet had promised her sister a slow death.

And she intended to deliver.

Ziva suddenly shouted, "Violet!"

Her head snapped wildly from side to side as she searched the hunting grounds like a madwoman trying to pinpoint where the attack was coming from.

"I know this is your doing!" she screamed. "Come out and face me like a woman instead of hiding like a coward!"

Violet's lips twitched with amusement.

Was Ziva seriously calling her a coward right now?

Still, Violet immediately recognized the move for what it truly was. Ziva was trying to bait her into revealing herself. Unfortunately for her sister, that was impossible.

Violet clicked her tongue softly beneath her breath.

"I would face you if I could, sister, sadly, this is me in spirit form." Her gaze darkened with wicked delight. "But don't worry. I'll still give you a sign."

The smile stretching across Violet's face was downright fiendish.

Meanwhile, Ziva looked more and more like a cornered rabbit with every passing second. She had no idea where Violet's next attack would come from or how to defend herself against it.

Around her, the witches' screams continued tearing through the night while flames devoured their bodies relentlessly. Some collapsed onto the dirt and rolled violently across the ground trying to extinguish themselves, but it accomplished nothing.

What they didn't realize was that Violet had woven her darkness directly into the flames themselves. Hence it was no ordinary fire and nothing here would put it out.

"The anchor." The realization slipped from Ziva's mouth abruptly. Her gaze landed on Bree as understanding crossed her face.

Bree was the reason Violet had managed to gain a foothold inside the hunting ground. She was the tether binding Violet to this place. Destroy Bree, and Violet would be severed from it instantly.

Violet saw the exact moment Ziva made the decision. The killing intent entered her eyes first before magic began gathering rapidly inside her palm. She was going to kill Bree.

Except Violet had her own plans. A thin strand of darkness shot forward like a whip and sliced cleanly through the restraints holding Bree captive.

The chains crashed heavily onto the ground with a clang, the sound alone making Ziva freeze.

"Uh-oh."

That was all she managed to say before Bree slowly lifted her head and locked onto her.

There was nothing but animalistic hunger radiating from Bree's expression, almost as though she had waited her entire life for this exact moment.

Right at that moment, Ziva watched her life flash before her eyes. She could only stare as Bree lunged at her.

The wendigo launched herself through the air with horrifying speed, her body twisting unnaturally as she launched herself toward Ziva like a creature dragged straight out of hell.

It was at the very last second that Ziva finally released the spell, and while it struck Bree directly, it did not stop her.

The wendigo slammed into Ziva hard enough to send both of them crashing to the ground. Her hunger for Ziva's flesh far outweighed the pain tearing through her own body.

She sank her teeth into Ziva's throat and she screamed in horror.

"Get off me!" Ziva shrieked, throwing spell after spell into Bree's body, but the girl refused to let go.

Even animals carried emotions and Bree had years of abuse fueling her hatred.

"Help me!" Ziva's voice finally lost its usual arrogance and superiority, desperation clawing through every word now. "Get her off me!"

She couldn't die like this. It was humiliating.

However, Bree was not even feeding. This was mutilation and pure vengeance. She ripped flesh from different parts of Ziva's body with brutal force, determined to make her suffer before death finally came. Blood soaked the ground rapidly.

Violet watched the entire thing with immense satisfaction.

There was no way Ziva survived this. There was already too much blood pouring from her body. At this point, it was a miracle Bree could still find untouched flesh to sink her teeth into.

Neither would Bree survive either.

Several of Ziva's spells had struck vital areas during the attack. Perhaps Bree understood that too because she used every remaining ounce of strength she possessed to continue severing her sister.

Honestly, that was for the best. At least this way, Bree would finally be free of this wretched place and find peace.

In the end, fate truly had a twisted sense of humor. Ziva had once betrayed and caused her sister Rose to be torn apart in almost the exact same manner. Now she was dying exactly like her.

Unfortunately, Violet never got to witness the end of it because the next second, she was dragged her back to reality.

Defy The Alpha(s) - Chapter 889: Prepare For Battle[1,645 words]

"It worked. She's back..."

Those were the first words Violet picked up as consciousness slowly returned to her.

Her vision remained slightly hazy, but she could still make out Asher and Alaric hovering over her with worry written all over their faces.

"Violet?" both of them called anxiously.

"Shit," Violet groaned, realization crashing into her immediately. They must have dragged her back.

Honestly, her mates could have waited another minute. The show had just started getting to the best part.

Moreover, she needed to make sure Ziva actually died.

And stayed dead.

"I'm okay. I'm okay," Violet assured them quickly and, with their help, managed to sit upright against the headboard.

The moment she settled properly, her gaze landed on Asher.

He dragged a hand roughly down his face before releasing a heavy breath that sounded painfully relieved. Between the badly rumpled hair and the strain etched across his expression, Violet could already imagine how badly he must have panicked while she was unconscious.

Guilt tugged at her chest. What he feared most—her getting hurt—had nearly happened. Unfortunately, Violet's life practically attracted danger at this point.

Alaric stood with both hands braced against his waist and looked one second away from strangling somebody. Like a furious mother scolding a reckless child, he demanded, "What the hell happened out there?"

Across from her, Micah leaned against the wall studying Violet with disturbing intensity.

"You left?" he questioned too. "Where exactly did you go?"

"I didn't exactly leave willingly." Irritation slipped into Violet's voice at the accusation before she forced herself to settle down enough to explain. "I was dragged into Duskmoon Village."

The second those words left her mouth, the temperature in the room dropped and all three males stiffened.

Asher's expression darkened dangerously.

"What do you mean Duskmoon Village?" The question came out low and deadly.

If those people had touched his mate —no,

when he got his hands on them, he would wipe every last one of them out personally. Nobody would be spared.

"Calm down, Asher," Violet told him, having absolutely no idea the only reason Asher appeared this restrained was because he had yet to notice any visible injury on her body. Otherwise, this conversation would have gone very differently.

Just because there were no visible wounds did not mean she wasn't hurt internally, she had dreamwalked after all. Knowing Violet, she would sooner suffer in silence than admit something was wrong.

Right now, Asher was giving her room to explain herself before he started a massacre.

Violet continued, "Micah and I were able to unite in the dream space—"

"We know that already," Alaric cut in, impatience bleeding through his words. He didn't even seem aware of the static beginning to build in the room.

"Ouch!" Micah practically jumped into the air after getting electrocuted and immediately glared at Alaric.

"Dude, not everyone here is immune to lightning!"

Alaric barely spared him a glance, his jaw locked tight enough to crack teeth.

Micah pointed accusingly at him. "Or maybe I should just leave for my own safety like Irene."

After Micah regained consciousness without Violet beside him, Asher and Alaric had gone absolutely ballistic.

Irene tried stepping in to calm them down and nearly got clawed across the face for her troubles. Micah had no choice but to teleport her out of the room before returning to focus on bringing Violet back.

Unfortunately, the expressions currently sitting on Asher and Alaric's faces suggested they wouldn't particularly mind if Micah vanished. In fact, they would probably prefer it since it meant more privacy with their mate.

However, Micah was fully invested in the drama now. So he stayed.

Violet revealed to them, "Turns out we weren't the only ones with plans tonight. Ziva had hers too. She was the one who gathered the witches."

"So they intercepted your spirit? Why? For what purpose? And how the hell were they even able to pull that off?" Micah fired questions at her one after another without stopping to breathe.

"I have no idea what their full intentions were," Violet explained, "but they did some weird voodoo shit that connected me to Bree. She became the anchor tying me there while their witch carried out their twisted spell."

Micah immediately caught on.

"Blood calls to blood," he muttered. "They used Bree as the bridge to reach you through your shared bloodline."

"What happened next?" Asher asked eagerly.

Violet shrugged, an almost innocent expression crossing her face. "What do you think happened? I killed them all."

Silence swallowed the room immediately.

For a second, all three males simply stared at her, processing what she had just admitted so casually.

Then a broad grin slowly spread across Asher's face.

"That's my mate," he declared proudly, satisfaction practically pouring off him.

Alaric immediately focused on the more important detail.

"When you say you killed them, does that include Ziva too?"

Violet settled deeper against the headboard before answering.

"The witches were all connected through the ritual, so when I lit their leader on fire, the others burned alongside her." There was absolutely no remorse in her voice. "And I made sure they suffered."

Honestly, hearing the witches scream while burning alive had been deeply therapeutic.

"As for Ziva..." Violet's lips curved darkly. "I released Bree on her."

Micah let out a low whistle. "Damn. That's hardcore."

Then, without shame, he added, "I kinda wish I saw that scene though."

Violet, more than willing to feed Micah's morbid curiosity, continued, "Bree mauled her pretty badly. Like ripping flesh out with her teeth badly."

If anyone had ever doubted the demonic side lurking beneath Micah's charm, the devilishly satisfied look on his face erased every uncertainty.

"I didn't stick around long enough to confirm whether Ziva actually died," Violet admitted before throwing her mates a pointed look. "Because certain people dragged me back here before the show finished."

Despite the complaint, amusement still danced openly in her eyes.

Alaric finally moved from where he stood and walked over to the edge of the bed. The mattress dipped slightly beneath his weight as he sat beside Violet.

"If Ziva somehow survives that," he told her, "then we'll help you finish what you started." His words were genuine and not empty threats.

Then he reached out and gently patted Violet on the head. "In the meantime..." A small grin pulled at his mouth. "Good job."

Violet practically melted inside at the praise. Not just her, Thalia was wagging her tail shamelessly inside her head. Her wolf practically preened beneath the warm satisfaction of knowing their mate approved wholeheartedly of her attempted murder.

"In that case," Asher disclosed darkly, "Angus won't be getting any sleep tonight."

Micah sighed dramatically, "So operation kill-Angus-while-he-sleeps is officially dead then. Which means we actually have to face him head-on."

Asher's gaze hardened. "Tomorrow will be the final showdown."

Duskmoon Village

"You have to see this."

Those had been the urgent words Jericho delivered before personally leading Angus toward the hunting grounds.

At first, Angus assumed another prisoner must have escaped or perhaps Bree had broken loose again. But the moment he stepped into the hunting grounds, his movement slowed.

The smell of gore hit him first.

Angus's gaze swept across the destruction littering the grounds and for the first time in a very long while, genuine shock crossed his face.

Bodies. Or rather what remained of them.

Several burnt corpses lay scattered across the earth in horrifying states. Some had collapsed against trees while others looked like they had died trying to crawl away from the flames that consumed them. All of them were burnt beyond recognition.

Jericho began listing their names.

"Mother Florence."

"Mother Sakura."

"Mother Kira..."

Each name only darkened Angus's expression further.

The Supreme Alpha slowly walked past one of the corpses, his boots crushing ash beneath them while smoke still curled faintly from the blackened remains.

Jericho swallowed.

"That's not all."

Angus turned toward him sharply. Without another word, Jericho guided him farther through the hunting grounds.

He saw another body.

Bree.

The girl lay motionless against the dirt, dark blood pooled beneath her while multiple magical wounds spread across her chest and torso. Parts of her skin looked burnt through completely as though powerful spells had repeatedly struck her at close range.

Angus closed his eyes briefly. When they opened again, they held nothing but cold fury.

"Where is Ziva?"

Jericho immediately looked uneasy. His throat bobbed visibly before he answered.

"About that..." He hesitated. "You'll need to see this too."

That hesitation alone told Angus enough.

Something was very wrong.

Jericho led him farther into the forest and along the way, Angus noticed the long dragging trails carved through the dirt. It was the sign of someone desperately trying to crawl away.

Angus already knew whatever waited ahead would not be good. Still nothing prepared him for what he saw next.

Ziva's body barely looked human anymore. It looked like some wild creature had feasted on her alive. Or more precisely, Bree.

It had to be Bree.

Angus stared at the remains of his daughter in complete silence. Then his jaw tightened hard enough to crack stone.

"What happened here?"

Jericho answered carefully, unwilling to provoke him further.

"According to the reports we gathered, Ziva summoned the Coven Mothers here tonight to find a way to control Violet as you instructed." He paused briefly. "No survivors remain alive enough to explain what truly happened. They were discovered like this."

Silence swallowed the hunting grounds afterward.

For the first time in years, something resembling sorrow passed through Angus's eyes. Not because Ziva was dead but because of what her death meant. Violet had returned and she had already struck first.

Slowly, Angus tore his gaze away from Ziva's mutilated remains.

Then he gave the order.

"Prepare our forces, we have a battle tomorrow."

Defy The Alpha(s) - Chapter 890: The Good news[1,056 words]

"Hello, baby."

Griffin frowned at the hazy image of Violet lying beside him with her arm propped up against the head.

Wait a minute— Violet?!

He shot upright so fast a violent wave of dizziness slammed into him immediately afterward, his vision swimming badly.

"Whoa, easy there." Violet grabbed his arm quickly, trying to steady him before he toppled right back onto the bed.

Griffin barely noticed. Not when he stared at Violet like she might disappear if he blinked too hard.

"I thought you were a dream," he muttered before reaching up and cupping her face with both hands, almost as if he needed physical proof she was actually here.

Violet chuckled. "You got beat pretty badly last night, so I'm not surprised."

"Last night, I—" Griffin suddenly stopped as the memories crashed back all at once.

Asher. The compulsion. Sleep.

He sensed Asher through the bond instantly. Griffin's head snapped toward the corner of the room where the bastard lounged lazily on his single-seater couch, casually flipping through a book from the mini library like he owned the damn place.

"You!" Murder burned openly across Griffin's face.

There was an unspoken rule between them where the harem was concerned. Asher was never meant to use his mental abilities on the others.

"No, no, Griffin." Violet was on her feet immediately, trying to stop a fight before it started. "He didn't do it intentionally. You needed the rest!" she explained quickly.

"I should have been the one to decide that!" Griffin snapped back.

"You were seconds away from passing out on your feat and still being stubborn about it!" Violet fired right back.

Griffin let out a frustrated growl, unable to argue against that or deny that forcing him to rest had ultimately been the right call.

He felt significantly better than yesterday.

The exhaustion clouding his mind was gone and he could actually think properly now.

Still there was something deeply unsettling about Asher's powers that instantly rubbed people the wrong way. The way he slipped into your head and stripped away your ability to choose for yourself.

It did not matter whether his intentions were good or bad. The moment Asher compelled you, your choice stopped mattering. That was something Griffin would never truly be comfortable with.

Violet looked up at Griffin with a pout. "Please don't fight, Griffin-pooh."

"Griffin-pooh?" Griffin's eyes lit up with surprise.

"Yes." Violet's voice turned slightly childish now. "You're my kindhearted scary-looking bear..." She carefully poked his stomach. "Just without the pot belly." She clarified, referring to the original fictional character.

A laugh escaped Griffin instantly.

"Come here," he said, pulling Violet into his arms and hugging her tightly.

He pressed a kiss against the top of her head, muttering, "I would never have hurt the bastard anyway."

Asher's brows rose in silent disbelief.

Oh, he definitely saw the violent intent in Griffin's eyes earlier.

But perhaps he judged too quickly because Griffin added without shame, "He would have healed eventually."

Asher rolled his eyes while Violet snorted out a laugh. She would never get used to their ridiculous brand of affection and violence somehow coexisting side by side.

Right at that moment, the bedroom door opened and Alaric walked in carrying a tray of food.

He paused briefly at the sight of Griffin and Violet wrapped around each other before continuing inside like this was the most normal thing in the world.

The scent of food immediately filled the room. Alaric placed the tray down on the small desk nearby before rubbing his hands together.

Then he looked directly at Violet. "I'm guessing you already told him the news."

Griffin paused instantly. Slowly, he eased away from Violet and frowned down at her.

"What news are we talking about exactly?"

Violet bit down on her lower lip suddenly feeling nervous for the second time since discovering the pregnancy.

Griffin immediately sensed the shift in her heartbeat through the bond and his expression changed at once. He assumed something bad had happened.

"Violet," he said more gently now, "you know you can tell me anything, right?" His thumb brushed against her arm reassuringly. "I would never blame you."

Violet could practically feel the intense attention from the others in the room as they silently waited for her to finally say the words that were about to completely change Griffin's life.

So she took a deep breath. Then said it.

"I'm pregnant, Griffin."

"Huh?" Griffin blinked hard. That was definitely not the news he had prepared himself for.

For several seconds he simply stared at her like his brain had completely stopped functioning. Then realization finally settled in.

"Goddess above!" The excitement that exploded across Griffin's face looked almost blinding.

He immediately grabbed Violet like he wanted to spin her around in excitement before abruptly remembering she was pregnant. So he stopped, instead turned and punched his fist high into the air with a loud shout of joy.

Violet could not stop staring at him. There was something about the way her mates reacted to this pregnancy that slowly convinced her this was not the disaster she once believed it would be.

Months ago, getting pregnant before finishing school would have ranked among her greatest nightmares. Now? Maybe it was not so terrible after all.

"Holy shit," Griffin breathed out, looking completely overwhelmed. "We're going to be fathers! This is good news!"

Violet's heart practically melted at the word "we". Griffin did not care whose child it biologically was. In his mind, the baby already belonged to all of them.

Perhaps growing up around two fathers shaped the way he viewed family, but Violet suddenly found herself feeling safer knowing her child would be loved equally by all her mates without division between them.

Then suddenly, Griffin's expression dimmed.

"Roman is going to lose his mind when he hears this."

And just like that, the happiness inside the room took a painful hit. Reality returned. Roman was still missing.

Asher snapped the book shut before rising from the couch with controlled grace.

"That," he said firmly, "is why we're getting him back."

His gaze settled meaningfully on Griffin before shifting toward the untouched food Alaric brought.

"And we start by you eating and getting enough strength back." His voice hardened with determination. "Because we have a battle to win."

Defy The Alpha(s) - Chapter 891: Superhead The Battle[1,004 words]

The school gym had been completely transformed into a war room overnight.

The basketball hoops still hung overhead, but the atmosphere inside the space no longer resembled anything remotely connected to school life.

A massive rectangular table had been dragged into the center of the gym with a detailed map spread across its surface. Smaller maps, papers, and handwritten notes littered the edges while different colored figures had been placed strategically across various locations. Some of them represented wolves, the others were Duskmoon Village and possible enemy positions.

The scent of tension sat thickly in the room.

Only the main alphas remained inside discussing strategy while the sub-alphas organized the other wolves outside for battle preparations. Through the gym doors came muffled sounds of movement, weapons being sorted, and wolves barking orders.

Elijah stood near the edge of the table with both palms pressed against its surface, his gaze fixed on the map.

"So in the end..." His voice carried a trace of bitterness sharp enough to cut flesh. "My brother still lives."

From the direction of his gaze, it was painfully obvious who he blamed for that.

Violet.

"After today, he won't."

Irene's response came simple and cold, effectively killing any chance of tension escalating further.

Micah took over before the atmosphere could worsen and pointed toward the map.

"Duskmoon Village is located deep within District Five." His finger tapped a forested region marked on the map. "It's never exactly been a secret that witches populated the district. But because they remained under the radar and blended in with ordinary humans, the government mostly ignored them."

Asher leaned one shoulder against the table.

"Or," he corrected dryly, "the witches enchanted the place well enough that the government stopped caring to investigate."

Micah pointed toward him. "That too."

He continued, "From everything I've gathered, nobody leaves Duskmoon Village without permission. It's an isolated society. Trade with outsiders is heavily controlled and monitored.

"They keep information contained." Micah moved another figure across the map. "People go missing there all the time and nobody asks questions because the witches make sure of it. There's also talk about a deterrent spell surrounding the village."

Leon frowned immediately.

"A deterrent spell?"

"It's a type of enchantment designed to redirect outsiders before they can enter," Micah explained. "People attempting to approach suddenly change direction without realizing it. They forget why they came or lose interest entirely."

His expression grew grim.

"That's another reason nobody successfully sneaks into the village. The witches are quite cautious."

Violet spoke then. "I can burn through the spell."

The room's attention shifted toward her instantly.

Asher nodded in agreement.

"And if the enchantment somehow distracts her mentally," he added, "I'll remain positioned nearby to pull her back out of it. A spell like that wouldn't be able to trap me without me noticing."

Violet smiled. That arrangement worked.

Micah moved four figures across the map representing Violet and the three Cardinal Alphas

"The four of you move first," he instructed. "The rest of the wolves remain outside the village perimeter until the signal."

Elijah frowned immediately.

"You want the heirs leading the charge alone?"

"Because we can handle that and don't need distraction." Alaric said unapologetically.

None of the alphas laughed because this meant they were viewed as a burden.

"That's why," Violet cut in firmly, "the priority is minimizing deaths as much as possible. We would give them a chance to surrender."

Elijah looked at her in disbelief.

"Excuse me?" His brows lowered. "You want to spare the enemy?"

Micah answered before Violet could.

"Most people inside that village are participating out of fear, not loyalty. After what Violet did last night..." A faint smile tugged at his mouth. "I'm willing to bet the witches are reconsidering their life choices right now."

"So we give them an opportunity," Violet finished. "If they surrender, good. Less fighting. Less losses."

"And if they don't?" Elijah challenged.

"Then they die." Violet answered without hesitation, the certainty in her voice sending a strange stillness through the gym.

"And when that happens," she added, her eyes sweeping across everyone present, "I'll need all of you as far away from me as possible. Unless, you want to be added to the casualty list too."

Leon was the one who broke through the sudden tension hanging heavily around the table.

"Let's say we successfully handle the village itself," he began. "There's still the issue of Angus using Roman as leverage. How exactly are we supposed to ensure Roman survives this while also ending Angus once and for all?"

"I don't fully know how powerful Angus has become," Violet admitted honestly. "But I'd like to believe I can unmake whatever ritual or spell was used to turn him into..." she searched briefly for the proper word before settling on, "whatever he currently is."

"But if that doesn't work," Violet continued, "then that's where Micah comes in."

Immediately all eyes shifted toward the incubus.

Micah straightened beneath the attention before dramatically placing a hand over his chest. "Finally. Recognition."

Violet ignored him.

"He can slip in and out unnoticed. While Asher, Alaric and I keep Angus occupied, Micah gets Roman out."

Micah grinned. "Stealth missions are basically my specialty."

"And I still have mental abilities." Asher announced, "There has to be a way to get inside Angus's head eventually. If anyone should be cowering in fear right now, it should be him."

Violet's attention shifted toward Irene.

"We'll rescue your husband too," she assured the woman. "We'll make sure of it."

For the first time since the meeting started, something vulnerable crossed Irene's face before she quickly buried it again behind composure.

"Thank you." She said, gratitude visible in her eyes.

Then Elijah asked, "So the four of you plan to spearhead this entire operation while the rest of us act as support?"

Violet lifted a brow at the Alpha King.

"You got a problem with that, your majesty?"

For several seconds Elijah simply stared at her. Then unexpectedly, said,

"Not at all."

Defy The Alpha(s) - Chapter 892: A Demonstration[1,618 words]

Roman Draven's eyes slowly stirred open.

Perhaps it was the dull throbbing pain wrecking through his body or the sheer effort it took to pry his eyes apart, but even before fully waking, he already knew exactly where he was.

Or more importantly— who he was laying on.

His head rested against something firm yet strangely comfortable.

Aeron's thighs.

Honestly, for most normal people, this would have been the moment they immediately sat up after realizing another grown man was unknowingly cradling their head.

Unfortunately, Roman was not normal.

Instead, he closed his eyes again and shamelessly settled deeper into the warmth.

Didn't he say it already? Their bond was becoming tighter than an old grandmother clutching her church purse during offering.

Aeron's irritated voice ruined the moment.

"I know you're awake." There was a pause. "You can get up now."

Reluctantly, Roman lifted his head from Aeron's lap and shifted away from him.

Still his eyes gleamed suspiciously bright and that grin on his face looked downright insufferable.

Aeron immediately narrowed his eyes at him.

"Don't say it."

Roman quickly pressed his lips together.

Unfortunately, his mouth kept twitching violently like the words were physically fighting to escape him.

Aeron saw it happening in real time.

"Don't."

Roman failed spectacularly.

"So basically..." he started proudly, "my charm has finally worn you down to the point you're nursing me in your lap now."

Aeron already looked exhausted.

"I mean, look at us. We started as strangers and now you're gently caring for my wounded body in a dark dungeon." Roman placed a hand against his chest. "This is literally how forbidden romances begin."

"Can you imagine if you actually fell for me?" His eyes widened theatrically. "What would that even make us? Because technically Griffin would become both my mate and my stepson at the same time and honestly—"

"What the fuck?" Aeron looked completely flabbergasted.

"I know. But don't worry," Roman assured him generously. "I'm deeply bonded to my one and only Violet, so there's absolutely no chance of that happening." He paused thoughtfully. "Although one cannot help but imagine."

Aeron dragged a hand down his face.

"Goddess help me," he breathed beneath his breath. He was moments away from strangling the bastard.

Despite himself, his gaze drifted back toward Roman's face. The bruises there looked ugly now, a mix of purple and yellow.

Normally wounds like these would have disappeared already had it not been for the collar hindering the natural process.

Still, Roman smiled through it all. Anyone else trapped in this dungeon, beaten bloody and tortured repeatedly, should have looked broken by now. The idiot remained a ball of sunshine.

There was silence for a moment.

Then Aeron finally asked the question that had obviously been bothering him since Roman woke up.

"What the fuck happened to you last night?"

Roman lifted a brow.

Well. Guess his father-in-law cellmate had already seen the words tattooed on his back. Not that it was difficult to miss considering his shirt had practically been destroyed during the torture.

Now he wore the marks openly across his skin like some deranged badge of honor. Roman flexed one arm before trying to glance over his shoulder toward his back.

"I think they were trying to draw Violet out," he explained. "Pretty sure that's the whole reason behind the words."

Aeron's gaze drifted toward Roman's back again. Even from where he sat, the jagged words looked vicious. Like someone had wanted Violet to feel every ounce of pain while reading them.

Roman, meanwhile, grinned shamelessly.

"So basically..." His eyes gleamed with dangerous confidence. "Buckle up, old man. My baby girl is definitely coming for us."

Unfortunately, that declaration did absolutely nothing to improve Aeron's mood. If anything, his expression darkened further.

"You really think they don't know that?" Aeron asked flatly. "If Violet is coming today, then Angus and the witches are already expecting it."

Roman's grin slowly faded.

Aeron continued, "And when she arrives, what exactly do you think happens to us?" His voice lowered grimly. "We're their bargaining chips."

"You're right."

The humor slipped away from Roman for once. His gaze immediately swept around the dungeon as if trying to mentally map every possible exit.

"Then we need to find a way out of here before Violet arrives."

Aeron shook his head.

"It's impossible to escape from inside this cell. But outside might be possible. We just wait for the right moment."

Roman nodded. It was not a terrible plan. Wait a minute, was this even a plan? Good thing improvising happened to be Roman's specialty.

Suddenly, the loud groan of a large door echoed through the dungeon and both males immediately went alert. Multiple heavy footsteps followed shortly after and not long later, five men stopped directly outside their cell.

Roman's gaze took them in. They were wolves and armed. But one thing stood out immediately. Ziva was not with them.

Guess the witch was taking a rest from last night.

The cell door was opened.

"Stand up."

One of the wolves barked the order while another roughly grabbed Aeron by the arm. Roman was hauled up immediately afterward, pain flaring through his battered body hard enough to make his vision briefly blur. Still, he stayed on his feet.

The wolves began dragging them out of the dungeon. As they walked, Roman and Aeron exchanged a brief look. At some point during whatever happened next, they would need to find their chance to escape.

The moment Roman and Aeron stepped outside, they winced hard at the morning sunlight hitting their faces. After spending the night trapped beneath the dim light and darkness, the brightness felt almost violent against their eyes.

Roman cursed beneath his breath while Aeron narrowed his eyes, both needing several seconds for their vision to properly adjust.

Cold morning air brushed against Roman's battered skin, carrying the scent of dirt, smoke, and blood.

The wolves escorting them showed zero care for their condition as they continued forcing them forward to goddess knows where.

Roman picked up on the tense and uneasy

atmosphere. Something definitely happened. Unknown to Roman and Aeron, they were led toward the famous hunting grounds. Immediately, something about the scene made Roman's stomach tighten.

Angus stood atop a raised wooden platform positioned near the center of the ground. Beneath it sat a large ceramic tub stained dark around the edges.

He did not even want to know what had previously filled it.

Surrounding Angus stood six witches dressed identically in white robes with black lipstick smeared across their mouths.

Several armed wolves guarded the area heavily.

But what truly caught Roman's attention was the cages. Dozens of humans had been crammed into metal cages nearby. Some cried openly while others desperately reached through the bars the moment they noticed Aeron and Roman arriving.

"Please help us!"

"Don't leave us here!"

"We didn't do anything!"

The fear in their voices immediately set Roman on edge. Beside him, Aeron's expression darkened too. Both males were alarmed. What in the goddess's name were they walking into?

The guards shoved them forward harder until they reached the front of the platform. Then a kick slammed against the back of Roman's knee and another struck Aeron. Both men were forced harshly onto their knees.

"Show some respect," one of the wolves sneered.

Roman slowly lifted his head toward the guard, murder sitting openly in his eyes. If only he could get his hands on the bastard.

Unfortunately, Angus looked deeply entertained by the entire situation.

"The great assassin Aeron," Angus called out mockingly. "Now reduced to the East Pack Alpha's obedient little bitch."

Aeron looked thoroughly unimpressed.

"Who would've thought," Angus continued with amusement, "that you'd throw away your reputation over a woman?"

Aeron answered without hesitation.

"And where exactly did your reputation get you?" His gaze traveled over Angus deliberately. "No wife. No mate." He cocked his head to the side. "Is that even living?"

For the briefest second, Angus's face darkened, but the expression vanished just as quickly. His attention shifted toward Roman instead.

"Roman Draven," Angus mused. "Heir to the South Pack Alpha and mated to my bitch of a daughter."

Roman already disliked where this conversation was going.

"Of all the Cardinal Alphas, you're arguably the least useful."

Roman sighed dramatically. Yeah. He heard this speech before.

"If only I had raised Violet under my guidance instead of allowing her freedom to grow unchecked," Angus said coldly. "Trust me, you wouldn't have even made the selection."

Roman shrugged.

"Yeah, I know. Unfortunately, it's not my fault I'm so good in bed Violet refuses to dump me."

Angus looked momentarily dumbfounded while Aeron failed miserably at hiding the snort that escaped him. It was fun watching Angus receive a firsthand taste of Roman's shamelessness.

Angus slowly scowled down at Roman.

"Let's see how much that mouth keeps running after I'm done with you."

Then Angus stepped down from the platform and walked closer. His gaze swept across Roman's battered body before stopping on the message on his back.

Angus scoffed.

"This was the best Ziva could come up with?" Disappointment flashed across his face. "That girl constantly let her emotions cloud her judgment. No wonder she failed."

Aeron seized the moment to speak.

"So what's the plan?" he asked boldly. "Kill us?" His eyes swept meaningfully toward the cages nearby.

"Wouldn't that be wasteful?" Aeron continued. "I assumed you'd at least use us to negotiate."

"Oh yes," Angus agreed easily. "The two of you are still very important to me. But before negotiations..." His gaze drifted toward the cages filled with terrified humans. "I'd like to show you both a little demonstration first."

Defy The Alpha(s) - Chapter 893: Is He Dead?[1,602 words]

"I really should not be doing this this early in the morning," Angus said, sounding almost inconvenienced by the entire situation. "Especially knowing Violet is most likely on her way here with every intention of separating my head from my shoulders."

He pressed his lips together, displeased.

"But then Ziva made a catastrophic mistake last night and somehow managed to get herself and several important witches killed."

For a moment, Roman simply stared at him without blinking. Wait a minute. Violet showed up last night and landed the first hit against the enemy before the battle even began?

Roman's face immediately split into a crooked grin.

"Atta girl," he praised proudly out loud.

Angus closed his eyes briefly, saying a small prayer to help rein in his anger before he killed his nuisance of a hostage.

He opened them, saying coldly, "That reckless stunt cost me not only Ziva's services, but also weakened the potency of the protection surrounding me."

Roman shrugged carelessly despite still kneeling.

"You started the fight. Don't be a sore loser."

Angus's eyes flashed dangerously and the next, his fist slammed directly into Roman's face.

"Aww," Roman grunted harshly from the impact, his head whipping sideways hard enough for blood to immediately fill his mouth.

Beside him, Aeron growled a warning at Angus, not that he took it seriously.

Roman slowly straightened again, spitting blood onto the dirt. Thank the goddess he never got the chance to properly bond with Angus as some father figure because he fully intended to kill father dearest in the slowest way possible once he got his freedom. That is if Violet didn't get to him first.

One of the wolves immediately handed Angus a clean handkerchief and he wiped the blood from his knuckle casually like punching prisoners was just another morning activity. Done, he tossed the stained cloth toward Roman's face.

Roman dodged it with a glare filled with pure defiance. That only seemed to amuse Angus further.

"You see," Angus continued, pacing slowly in front of them, "the witches Violet killed last night were not ordinary witches. They were Coven Mothers. The ones responsible for maintaining and strengthening the protection runes on my body."

Roman was interested now. So the bastard was no longer that powerful? Except why was he telling them that? They were missing out on something here.

Angus told them, his tone almost educational now. "Most spells are built to survive the test of time. But like every structure in existence, eventually strain appears when the foundation supporting it becomes damaged."

Aeron caught on immediately.

"Violet damaged your foundation," he concluded.

Angus snapped his finger. "Bingo." There was something deeply unsettling about the satisfaction in his face.

"There are chances she weakened the stability of the runes protecting me." His gaze darkened dangerously. "Which means before Violet arrives, I need to strengthen them again."

Roman suddenly did not like where this conversation was heading. Not one bit.

Then Angus's smile turned outright devilish.

"And the two of you," he announced, looking between Roman and Aeron, "are going to remain here and watch exactly how that process works."

"Begin."

The moment the command left Angus's mouth, the atmosphere across the hunting grounds shifted instantly.

Roman frowned when several wolves moved toward the cages holding the humans.

Both cage doors were violently yanked open and chaos immediately broke out.

Some of the humans tried bolting out in panic only to be brutally struck down before they even made it three steps.

One man was punched so hard Roman heard the crack from where he knelt. Another woman screamed before getting slammed face-first into the dirt.

Most of them were knocked unconscious instantly before being dragged from the cages like sacks of meat while the conscious ones fought desperately, clawing and begging for mercy.

One middle-aged man especially looked completely hysterical as he struggled against the wolves restraining him.

"Luke!" he cried toward one of the guards. "Luke, we've lived in this village for years!"

Tears streamed down the man's face.

"You know us! We're innocent!"

Roman's sight zoomed in on the wolf named Luke. But the human's plea might as well have fallen on a deaf ear because Luke didn't show any reaction at all.

No guilt. No hesitation. Gone was the friendly neighbor the human clearly thought he knew. Standing there now was simply one of Angus's soldiers, cold, empty and obedient.

Six humans in total were eventually dragged toward the witches waiting near the ceramic tub. The witches immediately positioned themselves around the victims like vultures circling dying prey.

It was then it hit Roman what was about to happen.

"Oh my God." Horror crossed his face fully now.

Aeron reached the same conclusion at the same time.

"Goddess above," He breathed. "They're going to sacrifice them."

Something inside Aeron snapped. He could not sit there and watch this happen. Before the guards beside them properly reacted,

Aeron moved.

His elbow slammed viciously into the ribs of the nearest wolf hard enough to throw the man completely off balance. At the same time, he snatched the gun hanging from the wolf's side with terrifying speed.

"Roman!" He tossed the weapon and Roman caught it on reflex.

Commotion erupted when the wolves realized what had happened. They lunged toward them but Aeron intercepted them first.

Despite the suppressing collar around his neck, the former assassin moved like pure violence unleashed, driving his fist directly into another wolf's throat before spinning and slamming another into the dirt.

Meanwhile Roman raised the gun toward Angus and for the very first time since arriving in this cursed village, fear entered Angus's eyes. He tried to run.

"Suck my balls," Roman spat right before pulling the trigger.

Bang!

Angus barely made it several feet before the silver shot struck him squarely in the back. He collapsed hard onto the ground.

Roman didn't stop.

Bang!

Bang!

Bang!

He kept firing relentlessly, unloading every silver bullet inside the gun directly into Angus's body.

The memories of the torture he had been through in their hands guided every shot with brutal precision. He targeted Angus' chest area and spine.

By the time the final bullet clicked empty, complete silence crashed over the hunting grounds. Even the wolves had stopped fighting. The witches stood frozen while the humans stared in disbelief.

Nobody dared to breath or speak. All eyes remained locked on Angus's motionless body sprawled across the dirt soaked in blood.

Finally, one of the trembling humans whispered the question hanging in everyone's mind.

"Is... is he dead?"

Roman cautiously stepped toward Angus's body, every muscle in him tense and prepared for the worst.

The man lay sprawled across the dirt soaked in his own blood. Silver bullets had torn through multiple parts of his body. No wolf would survive that.

Still Roman did not trust appearances when dealing with monsters. He reached Angus carefully before nudging his leg hard with his bare foot.

There was no movement from him. Roman released a breath he had not realized he was holding. While they were still trapped in enemy territory and surrounded by wolves with guns, at least the biggest threat was finally gone. Although the bastard still got off too easily.

Roman opened his mouth, ready to announce Angus was dead when he noticed the silver bullets lodged inside Angus's body were slowly forcing themselves back out.

What the hell.

His eyes widened and at the exact same moment, Angus rolled onto his back and smiled fiendishly.

"You didn't seriously think you'd get rid of me that easily?"

Roman instantly reacted on instinct and pulled the trigger again. Click. It was empty. Shit.

Before Roman could properly recover, Angus's leg lashed out violently. The kick slammed directly into Roman's chest hard enough to launch him backward off his feet. He crashed harshly onto the dirt, pain exploding through his ribs.

Roman barely managed to suck in a breath before agony suddenly ripped through the collar around his neck. He convulsed against the ground, a strangled sound leaving his throat as the current tore through every nerve ending he possessed.

Nearby, Aeron suffered the same fate, his body shaking beneath the torture from the collar. The electricity continued for several brutal seconds before finally stopping.

Roman laid there breathing hard, his muscles twitching painfully afterward.

Then a shadow fell over him and Roman looked up. Angus stood above him. He was smirking like some demon dragged straight out of hell itself.

The Alpha casually stretched his shoulders as though being filled with silver bullets had merely inconvenienced him a little.

"I should thank you for that," Angus mused almost pleasantly. "At least now I've confirmed the integrity of the runes truly weakened after last night."

Roman glared murderously at him.

"Still..." He said in disbelief. "You must be extraordinarily arrogant to think you could dispose of me that easily."

By now, the wolves had already surrounded Roman again, weapons aimed directly at him from every direction. There would be no escape this time.

Angus barely spared them another glance afterward. He commanded, "Continue."

The ritual resumed immediately. Each witch now stood before a kneeling human prisoner with their knives raised high.

Their chanting started, dark incantations rolling from their mouths like poison. Then in one horrifying motion, the blades slit across human throats and blood sprayed instantly.

The humans choked on screams that never fully escaped while the witches coldly grabbed them and forced their dying bodies over the ceramic tub. Blood poured steadily into it.

"No..." Roman rasped in horror.

But it was already too late.

Defy The Alpha(s) - Chapter 894: Never Again[1,515 words]

It was like living through a recurring nightmare that refused to end.

By the time the first set of humans had been drained completely, the second group was dragged forward and slaughtered in the exact same fashion.

Then another.

And another.

Over and over again until every single human inside those cages was dead and the ceramic tub sat filled nearly to the brim with blood.

Roman watched the entire thing unfold with something inside him slowly breaking apart. The bodies were dumped carelessly to the side afterward, piled atop one another like trash instead of people.

Some of them still had their eyes open and

Roman could not stop staring at them. Those glassy dead eyes seemed to accuse him silently for failing them.

Nor could he escape the sounds. The screaming. The choking. The desperate begging. It all echoed endlessly inside his head now.

"Step in, Alpha," one of the witches instructed reverently.

Angus Richmond removed his clothes without the slightest trace of shame, completely unbothered by the blood and corpses surrounding him. Arrogance practically dripped from the man.

He stepped one foot into the tub first, then the other before slowly lowering himself inside. The blood immediately sloshed over the edges and spilled onto the ground around him.

Roman nearly gagged at the sight. The air reeked of the metallic scent of blood.

Angus relaxed deeper into the tub afterward until the blood reached just beneath his neck like some horrifying bath prepared for a monster.

The witches circled him immediately and began chanting.

The ritual had started.

Power crackled violently through the hunting grounds. Even from where Roman and Aeron were restrained, they could feel how vile the spell was. It slithered across their skin

like dark oil. Everything about it felt wrong. It repulsed something primal inside their souls.

Still Roman remained frozen there unable to do anything. Had this been Asher or Alaric, they would have figured something out already.

They would have escaped and protected everyone. But him? Here he was kneeling helplessly while innocent people got butchered right in front of him.

Weak.

Pathetic.

Useless.

"You're not useless," Aeron immediately shot down.

Only then did Roman realize he had spoken those thoughts out loud.

But he was tired. So fucking tired.

Tired of being the one Violet would have to rescue like some helpless child.

Tired of being the weak link among the Cardinal Alphas.

Tired of being vulnerable!

His hand suddenly reached for the collar around his neck and pulled hard.

"What are you doing?" Aeron demanded, alarmed now.

Roman ignored him completely. Instead, he gritted his teeth and kept pulling against the metal restraint with brute force alone.

His face reddened violently from effort. Veins bulged visibly against his neck and forehead while the muscles in his arms tightened hard enough to tremble.

The collar immediately activated in response. Electricity exploded through Roman's body. He screamed from the pain but refused to let go. The current ripped viciously through him, enough to make smoke nearly rise from his skin.

Still, Roman kept pulling.

The nearby guards immediately noticed.

"Hey! What the hell is he doing?!"

But Roman no longer cared. The pain mixed together with fury and desperation until they became impossible to separate.

The electricity meant to weaken him only enraged his wolf further. His eyes suddenly ignited bright green.

The wolves surrounding him exchanged confused looks.

"What do we do?!"

They could have shot Roman, but Angus had specifically ordered him kept alive. Unfortunately, Angus himself remained fully immersed in the ritual and unable to issue new commands.

That hesitation became their mistake because Roman roared and with one final violent pull—Crack! The collar shattered apart.

Every wolf froze in disbelief. Even Aeron stared.

Roman lifted his head, breathing heavily, those eyes glowing with vengeance. At last, he was free.

One of the guards finally recovered from the shock enough to panic.

"Fuck it!" he shouted. "Get rid of him!"

Gunfire erupted instantly but Roman moved quickly. Without the collar suppressing him anymore, he flowed between the bullets almost beautifully, his movements smooth and deadly like a hunting cat.

The wolves barely had time to react before Roman closed the distance. He knocked the gun aside effortlessly, then his claws punched straight through the wolf's chest.

Blood sprayed across Roman's face as his hand burst out through the other side gripping the man's still-beating heart. The wolf looked down once in horror, right before Roman ripped it out.

The moment the wolf dropped to the ground lifeless, the others finally snapped out of their shock.

The wolves opened fire again.

However, Roman was not alone. Aeron used the distraction to strike. He moved before most of the wolves could properly react, taking them down one after another with ruthless efficiency.

"The prisoners are free! Send help! Send reinforcements!" one of the wolves shouted into his communicator right before Aeron smashed the blunt edge of the rifle across his face hard enough to send teeth flying.

Angus heard the chaos ringing out behind him and his brows furrowed in irritation.

What in the world was happening?

Unfortunately, he could not interfere, not while in the middle of the ritual. Nothing mattered more than restoring the vitality of the runes.

Howls tore through the hunting grounds alongside the constant sound of gunfire. Some of the wolves had shifted and Roman did the same. His massive green wolf burst into the battlefield while bullets ripped through trees and dirt around him.

Aeron was nowhere directly visible anymore, but every now and then another wolf suddenly dropped down dead. The assassin was hunting.

Meanwhile, Roman had only one target in mind. Angus.

He could not allow that bastard to finish the ritual. Not even if stopping him would cost his life.

So he charged. Unfortunately, the enemy wolves understood his objective too. They threw themselves directly into his path without hesitation.

Even against three wolves at once, Roman remained terrifying. His green wolf lunged viciously between snapping jaws and claws, mauling them with brutal aggression worthy of an Alpha.

One wolf managed to bite into his side. Big mistake. Roman twisted and sank his teeth deep into the wolf's throat and ripped it open violently. Blood sprayed across his muzzle. The wolf collapsed instantly.

Another lunged for him only for a bullet to suddenly pierce through its side and the wolf dropped with a howl of agony.

Aeron.

Roman did not waste the opening. He descended on the remaining wolf and clawed viciously across its face, shredding one eye completely.

Victory was right there when suddenly another wolf crashed into him from the side hard enough to knock the breath from his lungs.

Roman skidded violently across the dirt before lifting his head with a growl. More wolves had arrived.

Standing before him now was a massive brown wolf with cold eyes filled with violence.

It was Jericho, Angus's beta.

He snarled lowly at him and Roman looked around quickly. More wolves were closing in. Worse, his body was weakening, the torture, blood loss and exhaustion, slowly catching up to him.

Still Roman rose back onto his feet anyway.

Never again would they collar him like some helpless animal.

Never again would anyone call Roman Draven the weakest among the Cardinal Alphas. If he was going down today, then he was doing it in style.

And he knew exactly how. Hell, Roman was not even entirely sure this would work. But Asher once told him, the mind was only a limitation and once you broke past that limitation, anything became possible.

Roman dug his claws into the earth and summoned every ounce of power he possessed. He screamed as he twisted violently. Horrifying snaps echoed through the hunting grounds as his spine arched unnaturally.

Even the wolves staggered backward in alarm.

"What the fuck is happening to him?!"

Roman collapsed onto the ground as his body continued changing. His limbs lengthened and muscles expanded beneath the skin and fur. His wolf form began growing larger and larger. It was strange and unsettling.

He threw his head back with another roar and suddenly emerald scales burst through his skin one after another, spreading rapidly across his body.

The scales carried an iridescent sheen that shifted beautifully whenever light touched them, flashes of emerald, jade and metallic green glinting across his rapidly growing body.

The wolves looked terrified now.

Aeron hiding between the trees muttered, "What the fuck?"

Roman's body continued expanding until he towered over everyone present. Then massive wings suddenly flew outward from his back with a violent snap powerful enough to send several wolves flying backward from the force alone. Dust exploded across the space.

Then his face elongated into something far more dangerous than a wolf ever could be. Rows of razor-sharp dragon teeth filled his mouth while long curved horns emerged from his skull.

Finally, the creature lifted its head fully and

silence swallowed the place whole. Everyone stared upward in stunned horror and awe at the gigantic emerald dragon now standing before them.

Defy The Alpha(s) - Chapter 895: It's A Dragon[1,616 words]

Roman Draven's dragon form was both majestic and terrifying. His iridescent scales gleamed beneath the morning sun like sharpened jewels while smoke curled from his nostrils.

Jericho backed away now, suddenly feeling small. Even the witches froze in the middle of the spell, their eyes widened to the size of the moon. But the most memorable expression belonged to Angus.

"How is that possible?" he demanded, utterly stunned.

No one had told him the boy could turn into a dragon. Perhaps then he would have been far more careful.

Then Roman opened his dragon eyes.

They glowed a brilliant green, the black irises vertically slitted and ancient. But above all else, they were furious.

The dragon lowered its massive head toward the wolves surrounding him and growled his vengeance. The sound alone shook the ground.

Several weaker wolves whimpered so badly some shifted back into human form entirely from fear.

Angus immediately recognized how perilous the situation had become and shouted at the witches, "Finish the spell! Finish the spell right now!"

He could see it in the dragon's eyes. Roman was about to lay waste to him. Angus could not allow that to happen. Not when he was this close.

The conflict was visible across the witches' faces. They wanted to flee. They wanted to survive too.

But Angus darkened with rage and barked with Alpha authority, "Finish the spell now!"

That settled it. The witches resumed chanting with everything they had, perhaps already accepting they were doomed either way.

The remaining wolves recovered at the same time.

Jericho, now back in human form, shouted, "Fire!"

At once they fell into formation.

But Roman in dragon form did not wait around to discover whether silver bullets could pierce him. He beat his gigantic wings deliberately and the force alone uprooted several wolves from the ground.

"Stand your ground!" Jericho roared over the violent winds and terrible visibility caused by the dragon's wings. "Just fire! Fire everything!"

Gunfire exploded instantly. But from another direction, wolves suddenly began dropping one after another before they could even properly aim.

Aeron.

Hidden somewhere within the trees, the assassin was giving Roman the opening he needed.

"You three!" Jericho pointed toward the forest. "Take out the sniper! The rest of you keep firing!"

The formation shifted immediately.

With several mighty beats of his wings, Roman launched fully airborne. But the underbelly of a dragon was far softer than the rest of his body. Two bullets struck him there and Roman howled in pain. The sound thundered across the hunting grounds. Still, he did not stop flying.

If anything, the pain only enraged him further. The fury started deep within his belly like a small stirring before rapidly growing into a monstrous heat. It expanded hotter and hotter until it became a consuming vortex threatening to burst free.

Roman opened his Jaws and released it.

Green fire exploded from his mouth. The flames burned bright emerald, violent and overwhelming as they ravaged across the hunting grounds with devastating force.

Everything in their path ignited instantly. Wolves caught fire as easily as dry paper while the sheer heat sent the lucky survivors screaming as they scrambled away in terror.

The formation scattered immediately. They fled in every direction like rats escaping a flood.

But Roman did not let them go. He came here to deliver vengeance. His dragon eyes locked onto Jericho. The beta was running now, panic having completely replaced discipline.

Jericho panted heavily as he sprinted toward the treeline with everything he had left. Unfortunately for him, no man hunted by a dragon had ever outrun one.

Jericho barely made it beneath the trees before Roman swooped lower and unleashed another torrent of green flames straight into the forest.

Jericho's scream was horrifying as the fire consumed him entirely. He slammed himself against trees desperately trying to extinguish the flames but nothing worked.

The dragon fire refused to die.

The emerald flames reflected beautifully against Roman's iridescent scales, making him look less like a creature and more like the wrath of a god finally unleashed upon the earth.

Nearby, hidden amongst the foliage, Aeron stared upward and muttered only one thing.

"Holy shit."

The dragon's sharp hearing picked it up instantly. Its massive head turned toward him.

Aeron felt his soul nearly leave his body.

The creature before him looked nothing like the Roman who spent their captivity ranting about writing a book together after escaping.

Although honestly?

That book idea did not sound terrible anymore because absolutely nobody would ever believe this insane experience otherwise.

Fear finally kicked in and Aeron turned to run.

Unfortunately, Roman simply swooped lower and plucked him clean off the ground with one enormous talon. Then they were airborne again.

Roman's dragon eyes fixed onto a new target now.

Angus.

"Almost done now, sisters," one of the witches encouraged shakily, though her heart pounded wildly against her chest.

They could feel the dragon approaching.

He was close now.

Even as they chanted, their voices trembled with fear. The final incantation left their lips and the runes across Angus's body suddenly activated with a dark glow— Right as Roman unleashed his flames upon them.

The witches remained hand in hand as the fire consumed them alive. Their screams echoed across the space in pure agony.

Roman did not stop breathing fire. Not until they were burned completely into cinders and all that escaped his jaws afterward was smoke curling from his lips.

Then the dragon suddenly pulled upward.

Roman could feel it now. He was weakening.

He needed his Mate, Violet. He needed to go back to her.

"This is seriously not how I envisioned our dramatic escape!" Aeron screamed, clutching desperately against the dragon's talon while the wind nearly tore him apart.

He looked down toward the ground far below and all he could think about was becoming a human puddle if Roman accidentally let go.

His stomach rolled violently and his vision darkened. Aeron passed out entirely in Roman's grasp. Or more specifically, the dragon's talon.

Meanwhile, back across the hunting grounds, nothing remained except smoke, burning flesh and screams of torment.

Chaos had fully broken loose.

The surviving wolves desperately tried dragging wounded comrades away from the flames though there were not many left alive to save.

Edward, one of Angus's generals, rushed through the devastation coughing heavily while squinting through the thick smoke.

The ceramic tub had been blackened completely. At first all he could make out was a dark silhouette sitting motionless within it.

"Your Majesty!" Edward shouted in panic, fearing Angus had perished in the flames too.

Suddenly, the silhouette opened its eyes.

Edward immediately dropped to his knees.

Angus quietly stepped out of the tub. His body was coated not only in soot but in the ashes of the witches who had sacrificed themselves for him. Only his eyes remained clearly visible.

"Alpha?" Edward questioned uncertainly.

Angus barely spared him a glance.

"Prepare our people," he ordered coldly. "Our enemies will be here soon."

The urgency around Lunaris Academy could practically be felt in the air.

Everyone was making last-minute preparations for departure. Wolves moved rapidly across the grounds carrying weapons and supplies while orders were barked from different directions.

Violet had been discussing with Samantha the witch about the best way to teleport their forces outside the academy without burning herself out too quickly when two familiar voices suddenly reached her ears.

"Violet!"

Violet turned sharply only to see Daisy and Ivy running toward her. Her heart leapt instantly.

She met them halfway and the three girls practically crashed into one another, gripping each other tightly with excitement.

"You lucky bitch!" Ivy cried out. "How could you leave us hanging like this?!"

"You never reached out to us!" Daisy accused right after.

"I'm so sorry!" Violet apologized sincerely. "I genuinely have no excuse."

There had simply been too much happening at once. Even after returning to the academy, she barely had time to breathe.

"It's alright," Daisy assured her while hugging her tighter. "I'm just happy you're alive and okay."

A strange feeling suddenly bloomed deep inside Violet's chest, warm and intense. At first she mistook it for the excitement of seeing her friends again after so long, then the mate bond violently surged to life.

Violet froze. Her breath caught.

"Roman," she gasped suddenly, immediately pulling away from the embrace.

Her heart began racing wildly now with overwhelming excitement. Violet's eyes snapped toward the sky instinctively even though she had no idea what exactly she was looking for.

Then she saw it—Wait a minutewas that... A dragon?

Massive wings cut through the sky overhead casting shadows over them.

"How?" Griffin's stunned voice echoed through the mate bond.

At the same time Violet felt Asher and Alaric's presence flare strongly through the connection.

"*He did it,*" Asher said mentally, pride obvious in his tone.

"*He made it out in dragon form?*" Alaric sounded completely blown away. "*That brilliant rascal.*"

By now others around the academy had spotted him too. Shock immediately spread through the grounds.

"It's a dragon!"

Several wolves pointed upward now while panic began spreading rapidly through the students and warriors alike.

Most of them had never seen Roman's dragon form before. Roman himself had never taken that form until now. Immediately they assumed the creature belonged to Angus.

But Leon Draven stepped out, staring hard at the dragon overhead before recognition crossed his face.

"That's my son," he said at first.

Then louder.

"That's Roman!"

He turned toward the others immediately.

"Someone let him in right now!"

That was when Violet suddenly remembered something extremely important.

The protective dome surrounding Lunar Academy was electrified.

Defy The Alpha(s) - Chapter 896: This Was A Curse[1,011 words]

"Roman, watch out!" Violet warned desperately through the bond.

But there was no response.

"Stop already, you idiot!" Alaric shouted out loud as if Roman could somehow hear him from that distance.

"Something's wrong," Asher muttered, his eyes narrowing immediately.

What none of them realized was that Roman had pushed himself far beyond his limit. Right now, the dragon was no longer flying with control.

He was falling.

"He's fucking exhausted!" Griffin shouted in alarm just as Roman's dragon eyes finally slid shut in surrender and his massive body crashed directly into the dome. Electricity exploded across the barrier on contact.

"Roman!" Violet's heart clenched painfully as the enormous dragon recoiled from the shock before sliding helplessly down the dome and crashing heavily outside the academy walls.

But it was not merely Roman collapsing that terrified her. It was what waited outside.

The zombies.

The entire area surrounding Lunar Academy had become infested with the creatures. Just last night a team had cleared the horde lingering outside the school grounds and yet somehow, by morning, a fresh swarm had already returned.

"Micah!" Violet called in a loud voice.

The demon prince did not need further explanation. At that moment, both siblings moved perfectly in sync. The scene looked almost cinematic as Violet rushed toward Micah while he simultaneously reached for her. The instant their hands touched, both vanished from sight.

A second later they appeared outside the academy walls.

The dragon was gone and in his place laid a naked and bloodied Roman while nearby Aeron fought off the closest zombie with his fist. About eight more creatures staggered from the treelines lining the road.

Violet did not come to play. Her eyes glowed with fierce protectiveness the moment they landed on Roman. Darkness exploded outward from her body and swallowed the zombies whole.

She did not even bother checking the outcome. Instead, she immediately dropped beside Roman whose eye cracked open.

Thank the goddess.

"Hey," Violet whispered softly, staring down at him. He looked absolutely wrecked.

Roman attempted to respond only for pain to wrench through him. His gaze dropped weakly toward his stomach just in time for two silver bullets to force themselves out from the side of his abdomen.

"Ugh..." Roman grimaced as the bullets hit the ground with dull metallic clinks. "That hurts."

"Shhh," Violet hushed him immediately. "Don't talk."

She needed to get him to Adele quickly. If those bullets were silver, then the poison was probably still moving through his system already. The fact his body managed to eject them at all was insane enough on its own.

Carefully, Violet helped him onto his feet.

But Roman would always remain Roman.

"You saw that, right?" he asked with a crooked grin despite looking moments away from collapsing again. "I turned into some big-ass dragon. Nobody can top that."

Violet sighed tiredly.

"Nobody can top nearly dying the way you just did either, Roman Draven."

She adjusted his arm securely over her shoulder so he could lean his full weight against her.

"Micah, let's g—" Violet abruptly cut herself off.

Both Micah and Aeron were staring downward at something nearby with expressions she could only describe as deeply disturbed.

It must have been the zombies. Had she accidentally overdone her power again? Unease stirred in Violet's stomach as she slowly approached the bodies.

Then her jaw dropped open.

"Impossible..." she breathed, shock flooding her face.

Roman immediately understood before laughing weakly.

"Ha! Guess I'm not the only one with badass powers now."

"This should not be possible," Aeron muttered, his voice trembling between disbelief and awe.

The zombies Violet thought she had completely destroyed were still there. Only, not as zombies anymore.

Their rotting flesh was gone. The grey decay vanished completely into healthy skin. They looked peaceful.

They laid unconscious on the ground looking almost normal. It was as though Violet had somehow restored them back into humans.

"How...?" Violet turned toward the others searching desperately for answers.

She had feared this power because everything about it screamed destruction. Yet this was something entirely different.

Before anyone answered, Micah vanished.

Then immediately reappeared with Asher and Adele beside him.

"Check them," Micah instructed Adele quickly before adding, "Carefully though."

Adele blinked at the unconscious bodies.

"Who are they? What happened?"

"The zombies," Micah answered.

Adele's brows nearly disappeared into her hairline. She shot her mate a look that practically screamed *are you fucking serious right now?*

Meanwhile, Asher immediately pulled Roman into his arms in relief.

"You did well," he told him quietly, patting the back of his head affectionately.

Roman looked absurdly proud despite barely standing.

"You saw my dragon, right?" His eyes practically sparkled like a child who had just discovered Santa hiding in their bedroom.

Asher huffed out the faintest laugh.

"Your giant scaly ass was impossible to miss."

"This cannot be possible."

Adele's stunned voice instantly drew everyone's attention. She crouched beside one of the bodies, green healing energy glowing across her palms as she examined them carefully.

Then she looked up. Her entire face had changed.

"They're all fine," she announced shakily. "Their bodily functions are normal too. They're just unconscious."

Her eyes snapped toward Violet.

"Whatever you did..." Adele swallowed hard. "Congratulations. You just reversed the zombies back into humans."

"What are you talking about?" Asher frowned immediately, suspicion coiling inside him as he looked toward the bodies scattered around them.

With both hands resting on his waist, Micah delivered the revelation. "Violet just turned zombies back into humans."

His next words landed with terrifying weight.

"She's the cure to the zombie virus."

Asher released a slow breath while Violet's stomach dropped at the implication.

Humans would want her now.

This was not a blessing, but a curse. As though the responsibility already resting on her shoulders was not heavy enough, fate had somehow added another burden to carry.

At that exact moment, one of the unconscious humans stirred weakly.

Aeron helped the confused man onto his feet while the former zombie looked around in complete bewilderment.

"Where am I?"

Defy The Alpha(s) - Chapter 897: Newest Development[1,044 words]

The moment Irene set eyes on her husband across the field after he had just popped back into existence thanks to Micah, Griffin already knew trouble was coming.

Relief flooded him at seeing both his father and Roman alive, but at the same time, he also knew his mother well enough to understand someone was about to suffer.

And unfortunately for Aeron, that someone was him.

Irene strode toward her husband with an unreadable expression, every step carrying enough weight to make Aeron hold his breath like a criminal awaiting judgment.

Even Roman slowly edged away from him.

Smart move.

When Irene finally stopped in front of Aeron, he visibly braced himself for the slap he absolutely deserved.

So when Irene suddenly moved, Aeron flinched instinctively, only for her to wrap her arms tightly around him instead.

Oh.

Relief visibly spread across Aeron's face.

"Thank the goddess," Irene breathed shakily, her composure cracking apart completely now that he was finally standing in front of her alive.

Even Griffin looked stunned by his mother's reaction. So stunned that he secretly flashed his father a discreet thumbs-up behind Irene's back.

Aeron immediately returned one right back with all the confidence of a man who thought he had survived. Unfortunately for him, his celebration ended quickly.

The moment Irene pulled away, she smacked him hard across the chest.

"You fucking idiot!"

"Ow!" Aeron yelped while clutching his chest. "Woman!"

He immediately looked toward Griffin for support only to find his son suddenly very occupied consoling his mate instead.

Griffin firmly believed everyone should handle their own relationship problems.

"That little traitor," Aeron muttered in disbelief.

"Ow!" he cried out again when Irene hit him a second time.

This time Aeron complained louder, "Are you trying to send me back to my ancestors where Angus failed to?"

"What do you think?" Irene shot back with annoyance.

This was coming from the same woman who had spent the entire night silently crying into her pillow while desperately hoping her husband somehow survived.

The terrifying Alpha of the East Pack jabbed a finger against Aeron's chest.

"The next time you decide to tango with death," she warned darkly, "then fully commit to it and don't bother coming back."

Aeron stopped joking after that. Instead, he simply stared at her quietly and suddenly, Irene's eyes filled with tears again.

She wiped at them furiously.

"I'm not crying."

"Yep," Aeron agreed immediately.

Then he pulled her back into his arms while Irene buried her face against him and cried anyway.

Aeron gently rubbed her back.

"Didn't I promise you?" he murmured. "The day you die is the day I die too."

His hand slid into her hair comfortingly.

"So relax. I'm not going anywhere." He pressed his forehead lightly against hers. "I came back to you, didn't I?"

Unfortunately, those words only made Irene cry harder and in such ugly way.

Goddess above, her pack would never let her live this down. The terrifying Irene Hale crying publicly over her husband.

Although honestly?

She would very much like to see whichever suicidal idiot planned to bring it up to her face.

Meanwhile, Violet and her mates were busy having their own reunion nearby.

"Dude," Griffin practically swallowed Roman whole in a crushing hug.

"Ow! Ow! A little room please!" Roman wheezed dramatically. "Normally I'd appreciate all these muscles wrapped around me, but my internal organs are currently fighting for survival."

Griffin immediately loosened his grip with guilt.

Roman grinned weakly afterward.

"Still worth it though."

Alpha King Elijah stepped out as the noise outside grew louder.

At first, his attention landed on Roman and Aeron and genuine surprise crossed his face. But then Elijah noticed the nine unfamiliar faces standing nearby and suspicion darkened his expression.

So when Violet walked towards him, he demanded, "Who are those?"

Violet simply told him.

"You might want to come inside for a little meeting."

Elijah looked at her like she had lost her mind. "A little meeting? We do not have the time for that."

"Trust me," Asher cut in from beside Violet, locking eyes directly with the Alpha King. "This is absolutely worth it."

Something in Asher's tone made Elijah pause, and just like that, the decision was made.

Roman and Aeron were immediately escorted toward the infirmary alongside the eight rescued humans from outside the academy walls. Only one of them was kept behind for the discussion Violet and the others clearly wanted to have.

Inside the meeting room, the atmosphere remained tense. All the Alphas and sub-Alphas were already gathered there waiting impatiently around the large strategy table.

The moment Elijah stepped in, sub-alpha Will immediately raised his hand with visible annoyance.

"What exactly is this delay about?" he questioned. "Or are we suddenly dragging our feet now that Roman Draven and Aeron are back?"

His eyes narrowed critically.

"Or do I need to remind everyone that there are still some of our wolves being held captive? Or the fact Angus will not stop until he gets what he wants?"

Even though Will addressed the room generally, the accusation was very clearly aimed at Elijah.

Elijah glared at the sub-Alpha so hard one would think he was imagining murder. His greatest disappointment in life remained the fact that Will somehow survived the battle like an immortal cockroach.

"Trust me," Elijah said dryly, "I had nothing to do with this delay for once."

He jerked his chin toward Violet. "Your messiah here demanded the meeting."

The sarcasm was impossible to miss. Fortunately, Violet no longer cared enough to react to his nonsense.

She lifted her chin high. "I have a valid reason for calling this meeting."

"There's been an urgent development," Asher announced from beside her.

Immediately the atmosphere shifted. Every Alpha in the room exchanged curious looks. They all assumed this had something to do with Angus.

Violet motioned toward the nervous man standing near the doorway.

"Come forward."

The man hesitated before slowly stepping into the center of the room. Several wolves frowned at him in confusion. He looked completely ordinary.

Then Asher dropped the bombshell.

"Up until a few minutes ago," he said, "this man was one of the zombies outside the academy gate."

Utter silence swallowed the room whole.

Defy The Alpha(s) - Chapter 898: Stay Behind[1,244 words]

Violet knew the news would shock them,

what she did not expect was the laughter.

At first it started as a chuckle from one of the sub-Alphas. Then another joined in. Before long, nearly half the room had broken into loud laughter as if she had just delivered the greatest joke of the century.

One of the sub-Alphas even dared to say, "I know you have this savior mentality, but not everything can be saved, child. Calm down."

Violet's eye twitched. Wait a minute— Was that genuinely what these people thought of her? That she simply enjoyed running around saving everyone?

"Violet..." Asher sensed the spike of anger through the mate bond immediately. Part of him wanted to deal with them himself.

Unfortunately for the room, Violet did not need defending.

"Really?" Violet sneered, exposing her white sharp teeth. "You think I get some sort of rise or dopamine rush from saving grown-ass men?"

The laughter abruptly died.

"I'm fucking eighteen!" Violet snapped, fury blazing openly across her face. "As the child you all keep calling me, I should be out there living the best years of my life right now!"

Her hand pointed toward her mates dramatically.

"I have four mates and a raging libido. They should be busy scratching my itch, not me standing here breathing the same air as you old people!"

The room went dead silent.

Her words were outrageous. Deeply offensive even. Yet not a single Alpha stepped in to rebuke her because the sub-Alphas started this stupidity first.

Violet had sacrificed too much for every single person sitting inside this room.

At this point she deserved worship, not disrespect. Even Elijah surprisingly remained silent.

"I already have to go kill your former Alpha King, one you people obviously failed to handle yourselves." Violet continued with heavy sarcasm.

Her gaze swept across the room.

"So what exactly makes you think I have the time to invent lies?"

One particularly stupid sub-Alpha muttered beneath his breath, "Unless you're suddenly scared of facing Angus and using this as an excuse—"

The vicious hiss that left Irene immediately shut him up. At the same time, nearly every Alpha in the room turned toward him with murderous expressions.

He shrank into his seat, embarrassed.

Alaric broke the silence.

"I genuinely think the qualifications for becoming a sub-Alpha these days should involve more than strength," he said bluntly. "Maybe brain capacity too because some people here are severely lacking one."

Several sub-Alphas immediately bristled at the insult. Murmurs spread throughout their side of the room almost instantly.

"I was there too," Micah finally spoke up, drawing attention back toward himself. "Aeron, Asher, Roman and Adele can all confirm it."

He pointed toward the nervous human standing awkwardly nearby.

"I swear upon my demon blood Violet turned them back into humans."

Elijah's gaze shifted back toward Violet thoughtfully.

"Wasn't your power originally destructive?"

Alaric answered before Violet could.

"Her power unmakes things," he explained. "Apparently, it unmade the virus too. It's sentient magic. At this point, none of us fully understand its limits."

"If I may..." Caspian slowly lifted his hand.

Every eye turned toward him.

"Perhaps I should examine the human personally."

"Go ahead," Elijah gestured lazily. "You failed to provide a cure after all. Might as well learn from the best now."

Caspian's face soured.

One of these days someone truly needed to hold a mirror to Elijah's face and force the man to confront what an insufferable bastard he actually was.

Caspian approached the man carefully before pulling a small medical torch from his pocket.

"Look at me," he instructed.

The man obeyed while Caspian lifted one eyelid, shining the light directly into his pupil before checking the other eye. He proceeded to press two fingers against the man's neck, checking his pulse.

"Heart rate stable," he muttered mostly to himself.

Next, he grabbed the man's wrist, observing his skin temperature before checking for any visible bite marks or discoloration along the veins. He even instructed the man to open his mouth while inspecting the gums and tongue carefully for signs of decay.

The room stayed unusually quiet while Caspian worked. Finally, he stepped back slightly.

"What's the last thing you remember before becoming infected?"

The man swallowed hard.

"I..." his voice shook. "I went searching for my son. He disappeared after the lockdown started and never came home." he lowered his gaze. "I thought maybe I could rescue him whenever he was trapped."

Pain crossed his face at the memory.

"Unfortunately, I got attacked by one of those things." His hand subconsciously touched his neck. "After that... I don't remember anything else until waking up here."

Caspian nodded thoughtfully before finally turning back toward the others.

"Physically, he appears stable," he announced. "His pulse is normal. Body temperature normal. Pupillary responses intact and no visible signs of tissue deterioration either."

Despite the report, Caspian did not look fully convinced.

"Unfortunately, this is not North Pack territory, so I don't have access to the proper machines required for a deeper examination. So I strongly recommend all recovered victims remain under enclosed observation for at least a few days."

"Why?" Alpha Leon questioned.

"In the unlikely event the virus rebounds," Caspian answered bluntly. "We cannot risk another outbreak inside the academy."

That immediately killed whatever excitement had started building.

"Otherwise," Caspian concluded, "the man appears completely healthy."

Elijah waved dismissively. "Do whatever you want then."

Immediately, two guards stepped forward and escorted the recovered human from the room.

The moment the door shut behind them, sub-alpha Will lifted his hand with visible irritation.

"I still fail to understand why we delayed the battle over this," he complained. "Couldn't this discussion have waited until after victory?"

Micah looked toward him like he had just asked the dumbest question imaginable.

"Because there's no more time."

That drew everyone's attention.

"Days ago," Micah disclosed, "there was confirmation that District One has completely fallen to the virus. District Two, which borders it directly, is already reporting severe infestation levels as well. The government is overwhelmed."

He dropped the final bomb.

"There's also discussions that they're considering bombing District One entirely as a containment measure."

Low murmurs immediately spread through the room. That was not good news.

Asher stepped in next.

"That is why His Majesty Elijah stays behind and contacts the President immediately," he stated firmly. "The humans need to know there's still hope before mass extermination begins."

Now every eye shifted toward Elijah.

The Alpha King narrowed his gaze directly at Violet.

"You want me to sit out this battle?"

"I don't think it's entirely a bad idea," Irene spoke up politely before Violet could answer with sass and another fight begins.

Her voice remained respectful but firm.

"We are already heading into battle with more than enough forces. But the safety of millions of humans outside these walls is far more important right now."

She added carefully, "I genuinely believe you should consider remaining behind, Your Majesty."

Every Alpha in the room waited tensely for Elijah's decision. As an Alpha King, the battlefield was where he belonged. Remaining behind would not sit well with his pride at all.

"Fine," Elijah said stiffly. "I'll stay behind."

Then almost immediately his eyes flashed dangerously.

"However, should anyone ever dare claim I was some cowardly ruler who hid while his warriors fought in his place..." His voice dropped lower. "Then I promise you, I will not take it lightly."

Defy The Alpha(s) - Chapter 899: Answer For Their Crimes[1,244 words]

"Sorry," Violet breathed when Roman's eyes cracked open. "I didn't mean to wake you up, but I needed to speak to you before I left."

Roman immediately pushed himself upright. He had been so exhausted earlier that the moment Adele's healing energy touched him, sleep dragged him under completely.

Not anymore.

"What do you mean leaving?" His gaze snapped toward the other mates scattered around the room occupying different spots like silent bodyguards. "You guys are not seriously planning to leave me behind?"

"You're exhausted," Griffin reminded him.

"I'm better now." Roman frowned stubbornly. "Honestly, Adele barely did anything. When Violet reversed the zombies, I think she healed me too."

That instantly drew the attention of Asher, Alaric and Griffin toward Violet. It was not ordinary attention either, but the sort that made Violet feel like some mysterious artifact they had suddenly discovered another hidden ability from.

Violet blushed furiously beneath the scrutiny. At this point, even she no longer knew the limits of her own powers.

Asher muttered thoughtfully, "So she does possess healing capabilities after all."

Then his stare moved back toward Roman.

"However," he added seriously, "no matter what her powers did, you transformed into a dragon, Roman. I don't know how deep your power reserve goes, but I can guarantee that consumed an insane amount of energy."

"Not to mention," Alaric chimed in, "you were tortured during your captivity."

His expression darkened at the thought.

"I can only imagine the psychological damage that place did to you." He crossed his arms. "Which is exactly why you're not stepping anywhere near that battlefield today. You need rest."

Roman glanced around the room. Four against one. Yeah. This battle was lost already.

"Fine," Roman grumbled dramatically before throwing himself backward onto the bed like an offended child. "Go have fun without me."

He added bitterly, "Though you should all remember there won't be a giant dragon around to save your asses this time."

Violet chortled at that. Honestly, he was so annoyingly adorable.

She leaned closer toward him and whispered conspiratorially, "Be a good boy and I'll tell you about the little surprise I have for you afterward."

Violet almost revealed the pregnancy right there. Almost.

Unfortunately, she knew Roman well enough to understand exactly what would happen next if she did. He would absolutely refuse to let her leave in the name of protecting her. Take the other three mates as perfect examples.

Roman gasped.

"No, you didn't!" he wailed. "How am I supposed to rest now knowing there's a surprise waiting for me?"

He grabbed onto her arm immediately.

"Don't do this to me, Violet. Curiosity is a terrible way to die."

Then the titles started.

"My love?"

"My purple queen?"

"My beautiful menace?"

"My disaster soulmate?"

"My gorgeous future baby mama?"

Violet burst into laughter, not only because of the ridiculous names, but because of how close he unknowingly was to the truth.

At the same time, something painful struck her.

She had laughed more within the few minutes of Roman being back than she had since his disappearance.

Not because her other mates were not funny in their own ways. But Roman was her sunshine. When he disappeared, so did a part of her laughter.

Thank the goddess he was finally back.

"I'm sorry," Violet told him gently. "But you'll have to survive the suspense."

She brushed her fingers against his face softly.

"Just hold onto the faith that I'll come back with good news."

Violet leaned down and gave him what was supposed to be a short goodbye kiss.

Unfortunately, Roman was still Roman. The moment their lips touched, he deepened the kiss immediately.

It had been far too long since he last held his mate properly and there was absolutely no way he intended to let her march off into battle without kissing her thoroughly first.

Usually it was the men going off to war while women kissed them goodbye with tears in their eyes.

Well, he personally did not care about tradition. As long as he got to kiss Violet to his heart's content.

And goddess, he absolutely did.

The feel of his lips back on hers felt like heaven itself and Violet did not realize how deeply she had fallen into Roman's trap until her back was nearly touching the bed as he slowly maneuvered her beneath him.

"Uh-uh. Not happening."

Alaric appeared out of nowhere and physically dragged Violet right out of Roman's arms before things escalated further.

Roman let out a dramatic sigh of disappointment. That would have to do for now. Once this battle was over though, he already had numerous ideas about how they could spend their time together.

"Goodbye, Roman. And for once in your life, actually rest during this period," Alaric instructed while firmly pulling Violet farther away from the danger known as Roman Draven.

Then it was Asher's turn.

"Don't you dare do anything we wouldn't do," he warned. "Use this time to recover properly."

"Yes, mummy," Roman answered with a crooked grin.

Asher released a long suffering sigh. He had almost forgotten how insufferably impossible Roman could be.

Griffin stepped toward him afterward.

"Thank you for saving my father," he said sincerely. "The East Pack owes you a debt."

Roman immediately perked up at that.

Honestly, he had numerous things he desperately wanted to tell Griffin regarding the quality bonding time spent with his father during captivity. Sadly, that conversation would have to wait.

"Perfect," Roman replied brightly. "Because I already have several favors in mind for the East Pack."

The dangerous gleam in his eyes immediately made Griffin regret speaking.

He visibly groaned beneath his breath, suddenly worried he might have accidentally doomed himself by giving Roman unlimited leverage.

Then they finally left him behind.

Meanwhile, Alpha King Elijah stood upon the academy balcony silently observing the departure below.

The witch Samantha had already opened the portal using the exact same transportation method Angus's witches employed during the previous attack.

One after another, wolves began stepping through the glowing tear in space alongside Violet and her mates.

Elijah watched all of it with an unreadable face.

"Your Majesty," Christian called carefully from behind him.

Elijah slowly turned toward his beta.

Christian bowed respectfully before straightening again.

"Should I establish communication with President Roy?" he asked. "I believe we should move quickly before the situation worsens."

To his complete shock, Elijah answered,

"That won't be necessary."

Christian stared at him in disbelief.

"Excuse me?"

Elijah turned fully toward him now.

"You heard Caspian," he stated. "The virus could rebound. There is still no absolute guarantee Violet is truly the cure."

"But Your Majesty—" Christian tried to protest, but Elijah cut him off instantly with a single deadly look.

Silence fell.

"Christian," Elijah called quietly, "you have served as my beta for longer than most people can remember." The implication behind those words was impossible to miss.

"Would you like to stop now?"

The threat was crystal clear. Defy him, or walk away.

Christian lowered his head immediately.

"No, Your Majesty." His voice turned stiff. "Your wish is my command."

Satisfied, Elijah turned back toward the battlefield preparations below. More wolves disappeared through the portal one after another.

Then the Alpha King finally spoke what truly rested inside his heart.

"The humans slaughtered our females, and for years that crime has gone unanswered."

His gaze gleamed fiendishly.

"It is time humans learn what loss feels like too."

Defy The Alpha(s) - Chapter 900: Death To Them All[1,554 words]

Duskmoon Village was a ghost town.

At least, that was what it appeared to be when Violet and her mates stepped through the portal.

Not a single villager greeted them. No children ran through the streets. No livestock wandered between the houses. Even the wind seemed reluctant to pass through the crooked wooden buildings.

There was just silence.

The wolves emerged from the portal one after another, spilling into the empty village square. As instructed, they gave Violet and her mates a respectful distance, spreading outward to secure the area.

The stillness was unnerving, until a thin ribbon of gray smoke emerged from deeper within the village.

"Am I the only one seeing this?" Griffin asked.

"What the hell?" Alaric breathed, eyes narrowed with suspicion.

The smoke rolled across the ground and slipped between abandoned houses, crawled over fences, and flowed through the grass. It rushed toward them and Violet barely had time to do anything before it washed over her.

The effect was immediate as a violent wave of revulsion slammed into her chest. Every instinct screamed at her to leave. For her to get away from this village as if some dangerous beast lived in it and was coming hurriedly for her. The monster would rip her apart and consume her whole.

Violet's pulse spiked and her stomach twisted. For one terrifying second, she genuinely considered turning around and sprinting back through the portal.

Then Thalia exploded inside her head.

ENOUGH!

The roar shattered the foreign emotion.

Violet staggered.

"Someone's messing with us," Thalia hissed.

The fog lifted and the realization hit Violet.

Micah had mentioned the wards designed to keep strangers away. However, this was nothing like a confusing spell but a psychological warfare.

The terror had been so intense it felt like she was drowning in it. Unless someone had upgraded it.

"Nice trick," Violet muttered.

She had to give it to Angus and his witches, they were really creative.

Unfortunately, the wolves weren't handling it nearly as well. The panic had blown out throughout the square.

"Something's wrong!"

"We need to get out of here!"

"Leave now!"

"Back to the portal!"

Several wolves turned and ran only to collide with newcomers still emerging from the portal. Bodies crashed together. People were shouting while some were falling.

Within seconds, complete chaos had taken over.

The fear wasn't merely influencing their thoughts, but amplifying every survival impulse. Right now, they had nothing but the desperate need to escape this place.

And nowhere was that more obvious than Griffin. He gripped her so tightly it was like iron.

"We're leaving."

"Griffin—"

"We're leaving, Violet." His voice was strained and frantic.

He even pulled her closer as if keeping her physically attached to him could somehow protect her.

"It's not safe. We have to go now." He said while his eyes darted around the village, hunting threats that weren't there.

"LET GO OF HER." Asher thundered, an edge of danger entered his expression.

He knew the spell was affecting Griffin and he wasn't acting rationally. That didn't mean he'd tolerate anyone manhandling their mate.

Griffin turned toward him, a low growl escaping his throat. The protective instinct twisting beneath the enchantment was rapidly becoming aggression.

The atmosphere tensed. One wrong move and the Cardinal Alphas would start fighting each other.

Ironically, Alaric appeared completely unaffected. Perhaps it was the constant electrical current running through his body. Every time the enchantment tried to sink its claws into his mind, the crackling energy disrupted it before it could fully take root, like static scrambling a signal.

Meanwhile Griffin's expression darkened.

Fear, protectiveness, possessiveness and desperation all blended into a volatile cocktail. His wolf wanted Violet safe and his mates were actively trying to stop him.

The combination was not helping.

"Move," Griffin warned.

"No," Asher answered.

The air vibrated with such raw tension that a fight was seconds away.

Then Violet lost patience.

One moment Griffin was standing and the next his world flipped. There was a loud thud as Griffin hit the ground flat on his back and the breath exploded from his lungs.

Asher and Alaric stared at the scene with complete bewilderment because Griffin Hale was enormous and Violet had just tossed him aside like an inconvenient piece of furniture.

Griffin groaned from the ground, still trying to process what had happened.

Wait a minute—was the baby okay?

Both of their gazes immediately dropped toward Violet.

Normally they would have launched into a full interrogation except one look at Violet's face killed every single question.

She looked annoyed as hell and nobody was brave enough to test that mood.

Violet released a long exasperated breath.

"Finally."

Then she turned toward the village border.

Darkness unfurled from inside of her and spread outward in every direction. It swept across the village like a tidal wave, colliding with the invisible spell and devouring it whole.

Behind her, the chaos had reached its peak with wolves wrestling each other. Others struggled to reach the portal while several were actively trying to climb over one another.

The enchantment broke and everything stopped instantly. One by one, the wolves froze as the fear broke. Confusion washed over them as they wondered what the hell they had been doing.

Violet raised both hands, drawing their attention.

"Just now, there was a spell in the air. Our enemies upped their game, triggering fear and panic. But don't worry, it has been handled."

Relief visibly swept through the army. In the end, their messiah was reliable.

Then surprised gasps followed.

"Look."

"Over there."

"They're finally here."

Violet frowned and turned toward the village to see what the sudden commotion was for. For a brief second there, she genuinely wondered if she was hallucinating. The village that had appeared completely abandoned minutes ago was no longer empty.

Wolves now stood armed for war carrying silver rifles. Interspersed among them were the witches clothed in various colored robes, their fingers slightly glowing with gathered magic. The illusion hiding them had finally dropped.

A slow smirk spread across Violet's face.

Finally.

She stepped forward. Her mates, Griffin, Alaric and Alaric moved with her while the army behind them instinctively shifted into formation.

Violet stopped several yards from the opposing force, maintaining a respectful distance between both armies.

She addressed them, her voice echoing across the battlefield.

"We're not here for you but for your leader, Angus. We are brothers and sisters. Whether you choose to acknowledge it or not, we all belong to the same people."

She said pointedly referring to the wolves.

"The werekind population is already dangerously low after years of war, conflict, and division. We cannot afford another massacre. So lay down your weapons, hand Angus over peacefully, and your lives will be spared. Nobody else needs to die today."

Silence followed. For one hopeful second, it seemed as though her words had reached them. Then a massive figure stepped forward from the enemy ranks.

Edward. One of Angus' most loyal generals.

The huge wolf shifter planted his weapon into the ground and stared directly at Violet.

"These people before you," he boomed loudly enough for both armies to hear, "are enemies of the new world our Supreme Leader intends to build."

His voice rose even further.

"They are obstacles to progress. Therefore, death to them all!"

"DEATH TO THEM ALL!"

The response thundered back instantly. His people roared for blood.

Violet sighed and slowly cracked her neck.

Alright. If that was their answer.

In the end, she did give them a chance to change their mind.

Edward lifted his arm.

"NOW!"

At once five witches stepped from the ranks, their voices merging into a chorus of spell.

Fire exploded from the earth and several wolves on Violet's side stumbled backward in alarm as pillars of flame erupted between both armies. Within seconds the blaze connected into a towering wall stretching across the battlefield.

Cheers erupted from Angus' side. The sudden display of power visibly boosted their confidence. Except it didn't last for long.

Violet casually lifted one hand and, as effortlessly as opening a curtain, she pushed it aside. The inferno split cleanly down the middle as the flames rolled harmlessly away from the battlefield.

The cheering stopped. Every face on Angus' side froze.

Violet scoffed. Then she unleashed a roar powerful enough to shake the village.

"For our freedom!"

"FOR OUR FREEDOM!" The answering roar from her army shook the ground itself.

The wolves charged with a deafening battle cry.

As both forces closed the distance, soldiers on both sides shifted as massive wolves burst into existence while others remained human to operate their weapons. The witches raised their hands as spells to cast their spells.

The battlefield became a storm of movement. The distance vanishing with both armies seconds from colliding. Violet released her darkness and it exploded outward like a black tidal wave, swallowing the battlefield in a single blink.

Just like that, the space became empty as nothing remained of Angus' forces. Not a single soldier or witch. All of them were gone.

The wolves charging beside Violet stumbled to a halt so abruptly that several nearly crashed into one another.

Nobody spoke or moved. All of them lowered their weapons in shock.

Finally someone voiced the thought every single person was having.

"What the fuck?"