

## Defy 91

### Chapter 91: A Debt Owed

Violet told herself she wasn't intimidated, but it was a laughable lie. Still, she decided to play it cool.

Sure, Natalie was rich. Really rich. But that didn't mean Violet would treat her any differently than she treated anyone else. Natalie would get whatever attitude she showed her, plain and simple.

As Natalie finally let go of her hand, Violet noted that, so far, the girl didn't seem arrogant. She wasn't looking down on her or sneering, as some elites were prone to do. At least, not intentionally. But there was no denying Natalie exuded that natural aristocratic aura, as if power and influence came as easily as breathing.

Now that Violet thought about it, she had seen Natalie before. She was the first person to clap when Violet had bested Sharon during the dining hall fight. It wasn't until Natalie clapped that the rest of the room followed suit.

A furrow creased Violet's brow. Natalie clearly had a certain sway over the students here. And, more importantly, what was her intention? Violet couldn't tell if Natalie was friend or foe.

At least Elsie's hatred was open and obvious. With Natalie, it was harder to tell. Why was she being so nice? Was it genuine, or was it a calculated facade? Violet wasn't naive; the rich didn't befriend the poor unless there was something to gain.

Was Natalie trying to turn her into her lackey? If so, she was barking up the wrong tree. Violet wasn't some rich brat's ragdoll to use and dumb when bored. And never would. She decided then and there to be careful and observe Natalie's intentions.

Without asking, Natalie plopped down beside Violet on the empty seat and leaned in, a sweet smile on her face. "Now, if I remember correctly, you owe me a tea party."

Oh great.

Violet went red from the embarrassment, fumbling over her words. "I forgot... I didn't mean... Something happened..."

"Don't worry, I know." Natalie giggled, clearly amused by Violet's flustered state. "The news was everywhere..." She leaned in conspiratorially and lowered her voice. "Is it real? Did you and Griffin really do it?"

What in the actual—? Violet's jaw nearly hit the desk. What in the name of the moon were they saying about her now?

She stammered, "I—I'm sorry, but—"

"Of course," Natalie interrupted with another laugh, her tone playful. "You wouldn't tell me something private... Or would you?"

The sudden darkness in Natalie's voice made Violet frown, her discomfort growing. Before she could respond, Natalie laughed again, dispelling the tension. Violet laughed too, though it came out awkwardly. She was officially freaked out.

"In that case," Natalie said with a mischievous smile, "I'll hold onto the debt, Violet Purple. You still owe me one, and I can't wait for us to get to know each other better."

And that was exactly what Violet feared.

Just then, someone cleared her throat. Violet and Natalie looked up to find Lila standing nearby, her expression tight as she stared at Natalie. It was clear she didn't like the girl, eyeing her as if she were some kind of competition. Lila looked at Natalie like some thief who had come to steal the little attention Violet gave her.

Natalie must have picked up on the vibe because she rose to her feet with a grace that could rival a dancer's.

"Until we meet again, Violet." She air-kissed both sides of Violet's cheek and sauntered away, moving to the back of the classroom with the poise of a queen.

"She's weird," Lila muttered once Natalie was gone.

Violet gave Lila a pointed look. "That sounds even weirder coming from you." It was like the kettle calling the pot black.

Lila spun toward her, eyes narrowing. "What do you mean by that?"

But Violet ignored her, pretending to busy herself with her phone—the same phone made by the Avax family. Violet didn't know how she felt about that.

The classroom became a hubbub of activities as students filed in, chatting and joking while waiting for the teacher to arrive. There was a sudden shift in the air when the unmistakable presence of the cardinal alphas filled the doorway.

Griffin, Alaric, Roman, and Asher stepped in like a synchronized force, their dominant aura commanding all eyes on them.

Violet, who had been quietly going through her phone, froze. Her mind racing with thoughts.

What were they doing here? Weren't they far beyond this course? They had three extra years of advanced education on everyone new. Were they so bored that they decided to crash her class?

As if sensing her thoughts, one by one, the alphas' eyes found hers. There was an intense exchange, before they looked ahead and moved to their preferred seats at the back of the room. Except...

Violet's pulse quickened as she noticed Alaric breaking away from the group. He was coming this —no. No way.

"What the—" Violet murmured under her breath, her voice tinged with panic.

Beside her, Lila noticed and looked equally stunned. "Is he...?" she whispered, trailing off as Alaric reached their row.

Before Violet could react, Alaric slid into the seat beside her with an air of casual confidence. Lila's gaze darted between them, her shocked expression same as Violet's.

"Uh, hi?" Violet said, unsure how to respond to the unexpected situation.

Alaric leaned back in his chair, his electric blue eyes settling on her. "How's your hand doing?" he asked smoothly, his voice carrying a hint of genuine curiosity.

Oh. The hand injury. That must be why he was here. He probably just wanted to check on her before leaving her alone. At least, that's what Violet told herself.

"Good as new," Violet replied, holding up her hand to show him with a forced smile. "Now go join your brethren." She shooed him away like one would a child.

But Alaric's lips curved into a mocking smirk. "Who said anything about joining them? I hope you don't mind my company for this class."

"I do mind," Violet shot back immediately, her irritation rising to the surface.

"Don't worry, you'll come to love my company soon enough."

For a split second, the way he smirked reminded her of Asher, and it sent an uneasy shiver down her spine.

Before Violet could formulate a response, the classroom door swung open, and the teacher entered, silence falling in the class as the lesson began.

"Today's lesson focuses on one of the most pivotal moments in our history, the Great War that reshaped our world two centuries ago. A story I'm sure it's familiar with if not all of you. However, today, we'd be revisiting our roots" said Professor Alwen, an older looking man with silver streaks in his hair.

The mention of the Great War immediately silenced any remaining murmurs from the class. The subject of the Great War had always been a sensitive yet intriguing topic for the younger generation who were currently suffering the aftermath of the decisions made by their ancestors. However, there were so many versions of this story it was impossible to tell which one to believe, hence Violet for one was excited for the chance to hear it from an authoritative source.

Alwen began, "After the discovery of the supernatural, precisely the were-kind, humans and werewolves began to live in an uneasy coexistence. While there were prejudices, outright conflict was rare. However, fear and ignorance always have a way of festering into hatred. And now, this brings us to the catalyst of it all, the story of Elena and Kael."

Alwen swiped the screen of the electronic board, bringing it to life. An image of a stunning human woman alongside a striking werewolf appeared. The title beneath them read: Elena and Kael: The Tragic Bond.

Alwen explained. "In a time when tensions between humans and werewolves were on the rise, Elena, a human noble, unknowingly became the mate of Kael, a powerful werewolf alpha. Kael courted her in secret, showing her kindness, protecting her from harm, and even sneaking into human territory to be close to her. Over time, Elena fell in love with him, even though she didn't fully understand the depth of the mate bond. As you already all know, the mate bond is a sacred connection, unbreakable and all-consuming. But not all stories of love end in happiness..."

Violet's pen hovered over her notebook as the man continued, his words captivating her.

"However," Alwen went on, his tone darkening, "Elena's father, Lord Desmond, was unaware of their bond. To secure power and wealth, he arranged for her to marry William, the son of Minister Gerard, a man infamous for his hatred of werewolves, having been an advocate for their expulsion from human territories for years."

The screen shifted to show Minister Gerard, a stern-faced man with cold eyes.

"Despite Elena's protests, she was married off to William as her father saw only political and economic gain. Neither did the humans believe nor understand how the mate bond works. Kael, unable to intervene due to the marriage being protected by the human military, is forced to watch his mate wed another man. It was a torment beyond words for him, as the mate bond means that Elena is meant to be his and his alone.

"A few weeks after the wedding, Kael, driven mad by the mate bond, could not stay away from Elena anymore. That fateful night, he found her in her new home, her heart as broken as his and they found comfort in each other..."

Violet didn't need to guess what finding comfort in each other meant, it was clear as day.

"But their romantic reunion ended in tragedy when William returned home early, discovering his wife in the arms of another man, not to mention, a werewolf.

It was an insult to someone like him who has been raised to loath the creatures. Enraged, William tried to fight Kael, but a werewolf's strength is far beyond that of a human. In the ensuing confrontation, Kael lost control and killed William."

A murmur rippled through the classroom right as the screen changed showing a fallen bloody Williams and professor Alwen continued.

"Kael fled the scene, leaving Elena devastated and horrified. She loved Kael, but she never wanted the death of her husband, who, despite their circumstances, had treated her kindly. When Gerard learns that his only son was killed by a werewolf, he is consumed by a thirst for revenge. To Gerard, this wasn't just about his son; it was a sign of werewolves overstepping their boundaries and challenging the humans."

"The death of William," Alwen said, "gave Minister Gerard the perfect excuse to act on his hatred. Using his son's death as a rallying cry, he declared war on werewolves, painting them as savage beasts incapable of coexistence. He played on people's fears and prejudices, turning public sentiment further against werewolves. Most of all, he ordered a manhunt on the werewolf who killed his son "

The screen showed scenes of propaganda posters and armed human soldiers and hunters.

"The werewolves, led by Kael's father, Alpha Magnus, retaliated. He could not allow his son to be captured, especially not by humans who have long treated werewolves with suspicion and hatred. The werewolves are protective of their own, and to them, Kael was only following his natural instincts to protect and claim his mate. Hence, what began as a personal vendetta spiraled into a full-blown war."

"Elena, meanwhile, is caught in the middle of the escalating conflict. She is consumed by guilt and grief; she feels responsible for William's death, and she is torn between her love for Kael and the hatred her people now have for his kind.

The humans saw her as a victim of werewolf savagery, while werewolves saw her as the mate who was stolen from them. In her own little understanding, she believed the chaos would calm once she's gone. So she takes her own life. But it was quite unfortunate that the seed of hatred had already been sown in the minds of humans and werewolves alike, and like a poison, it spread wide.... "

The screen changed to show a lone picture of the beautiful human Elena, the sad yet warm smile on her face made Violet's heart ache.

"The final breaking point came when Gerard ordered his soldiers to attack werewolves' sacred grounds, places where they honored their ancestors and conducted important rituals. The attacks were brutal as several packs recorded the death of many innocent werewolves, including elders and children who were present at the time.

The werewolves, furious at the desecration of their sacred place, fully committed to the war. The packs united under a single banner, led by Alpha Magnus, with Kael by his side, and they launched a large-scale attack against the humans. And so the war of the two realms began, driven by grief, vengeance, and the inability to understand one another. "

#### Chapter 93: Do You Have A Mate bond?

"This is where we learn our greatest lesson that misunderstandings and personal vendettas are able to escalate into disasters that can affect entire civilizations." Professor Alwen summarized the story.

Then he turned to face the class. "Now, I pose a question to you, Who was to blame for this tragedy? Was it Kael, for pursuing his mate despite the risks? Or Was it Minister Gerard, for using his son's death to incite war? Or was it Elena's father, whose greed set the stage for disaster?"

The room began to buzz with murmurs as students considered his question and possible answer. Yet none raised their hand, scared of their answer possibly being wrong as Alwen was known to be a stern teacher and lose points.

Surprisingly, Roman was the first to speak up, leaning back in his seat, and answering as if it were a simple answer. "It's obvious. Gerard is to blame. He used his son's death as an excuse to justify his hatred of werewolves. He wanted war. And he got it."

Alaric shook his head and countered him. "It is true that Gerard's actions were extreme, but Kael is the one who killed William. He knew the risks of pursuing Elena but acted selfishly."

Griffin, always pragmatic, interjected. "But what about Lord Desmond? He treated Elena like a pawn, forcing her into a marriage for his own gain. None of this would've happened if he'd respected her wishes."

Violet was surprised as the debate sparked more discussions among the cardinal alphas. This was the first time she was seeing nearly all of them being this active in class. Moreover, the story of Elena and Kael felt too personal, too raw. She couldn't help but draw parallels to her current situation, caught in the web of the cardinal alphas.

But of course, that awe was shattered the instant a certain Alpha opened his mouth to speak.

"Kael did what any true mate would do." Asher said with his usual smugness, "The bond isn't something you can ignore. He loved Elena enough to fight for her, even at the cost of everything. That's not a mistake nor weakness, it's strength and loyalty."

She should mind her business and not say a word, but Asher fucking Nightshade had a way of getting under her skin and Violet couldn't hold back.

"Strength? Loyalty?" she scoffed. "Kael's so-called 'loyalty' destroyed an entire civilization. Love doesn't justify murder or war. He let his instincts control him, and innocent people paid the price."

And in that moment, it hit Violet that her response was exactly what Asher wanted.

And it was too late to back down.

She could already feel the smugness coming from the bastard, neither would her pride allow her to concede. Violet was far too competitive to let him win this debate.

"And what would you know about love, Violet Purple?" Asher said pointedly. "You speak of morality as if it exists in a perfect little bubble. Kael wasn't acting on whim; he was following the natural order of our kind."

"Natural order of your kind that doesn't destroyed millions of lives," Violet snapped. "Kael could've made a choice. Instead, he let his selfishness and emotions wreak havoc, and now, everyone is paying the price for his actions."

"Emotions are not the same as the mate bond, little purple," Asher countered smoothly, his eyes narrowing slightly.

Violet bristled at the nickname but bit her tongue, knowing he was just trying to get a rise out of her.

"The mate bond transcends the trivial consequences you speak of. It's not just a feeling or a fleeting desire, it's life itself. The mate bond is finding the other half of your soul, the completion of your very being. You can't understand because you've never felt it. Kael wasn't just emotional. He was incomplete. The bond wouldn't allow him to move on until he claimed what was his. William's death was inevitable the moment he married Elena. You don't steal someone's soulmate and expect to walk away unscathed."

Violet's lips curled into a sneer, her voice taunting. "You talk as if you've experienced it firsthand. Do you even have a mate? Or is this just another one of your manipulative stories?"

The class room fell into a tense silence as Asher's smirk faded, replaced by a rare, serious expression. Without warning, his voice softened, and for the first time, he spoke without the usual edge of mockery.

"No. Not that I know of. But if I did..." His eyes bore into hers, deep and piercing, as if stripping her soul bare. "I would treasure her. She'd be my queen, my everything. I'd dedicate my life to making her happy, to protecting her from anything that could harm her. Nothing would matter more than her."

For a moment, the entire class was frozen, captivated by his words and the raw sincerity in his tone. The air was charged with something Violet couldn't name but desperately wanted to push away. She stared back at him, unable to look away from his smoldering gaze, but that was until Roman's loud, exaggerated whistle shattered the tension.

"Well, that was sexy as hell," Roman declared with a wicked grin. "I think I'm hard right now."

Laughter reverberated through the room, and Violet's face burned red, her gaze darting away from Asher's. Her heart was hammering against her ribs and she could feel every eye on her. Even Lila and Alaric were staring at her strangely.

"What?" she snapped, scowling at them.

They quickly averted their gazes, pretending to focus on something else, but Violet knew better. Asher's words had struck a chord deep within her, and no matter how hard she tried to brush them off, she couldn't.

He's playing a game, Violet reminded herself. That's all this is. Just another one of his manipulations.

Yet the way Asher had looked at her, as if he saw straight into her soul, made Violet's chest tighten in a way she couldn't explain, or ignore.

#### Chapter 94: A Date Tonight

"Moreover," Asher continued, "does it even matter who was at fault? In the end, the strongest side won. That's the only lesson worth learning."

Violet retorted. "Yes, the strongest side—which was the humans—won. In case the were-kind hasn't fully grasped that lesson yet."

Instantaneously, all the werewolves in the classroom tensed and it was not hard to see that considering the way Asher's gaze locked onto Violet with a piercing intensity that sent a shiver down her spine.

"Oh, we very much learned that lesson, Mrs. Purple." His words were calm, but the dark edge in his tone was unmistakable.

It wasn't just the use of her surname for the first time that unsettled Violet, but the weight behind those words. They weren't just a response, but a warning. A promise. Infact. If humans and werewolves were to face off again, history wouldn't repeat itself.

The silence in the room was deafening, the tension thick enough to cut with a knife. Even the other Cardinal alphas seemed to pause, their usual smug expressions briefly replaced with something more serious. For the first time, Violet felt as though she might've touched a nerve she wasn't entirely prepared to deal with.

Professor Alwen clapped his hand, drawing everyone's attention. "Strength alone doesn't make one victorious, Mr. Nightshade. After all, wisdom and unity was what rebuilt the ashes of the war. However, valid points from all sides,"

"Good thing, we have history to remind us that every action, no matter how justified it seems, has consequences. The Great War wasn't caused by one person, it was the result of fear, prejudice, and a failure to communicate."

He returned to his desk and swiped through his tablet computer saying, "For your next assignment, you'll work in pairs, preferably your current seat neighbour, to analyze the events leading up to the war and propose an alternative course of action that could have prevented it. I expect detailed arguments supported by historical evidence."

The classroom instantly filled with groans of dismay. Everyone, except the cardinal alphas, collectively voiced their displeasure at the prospect of such work. Violet rolled her eyes at the dramatic reaction, already planning to team up with her buddy, Lila.

She turned toward her friend, about to ask, when she felt a gloved hand clasp her wrist.

"You're with me," Alaric said coolly, leaving little room for negotiation.

For a split second, Violet stared at him, speechless. Then her expression shifted to one of incredulity, as if saying, Are you kidding me right now?

She immediately tried to pull her arm free, but Alaric's grip was firm, his gloved hand keeping her in place with an almost casual ease.

She arched a brow and said through gritted teeth, "My friend is right here. Go find someone else to bother. Besides, you're smart enough to do this alone, aren't you?" Her tone dripped with sarcasm, recalling his previous stunt in biology when he took all the glory for himself.

"The teacher specifically said to work in pairs. Your friend can find someone else." He claimed.

Violet scowled, refusing to back down. "You have other friends. Go pair up with one of them."

"They're not as smart as you," Alaric said smoothly.

"Flattery won't work on me," Violet shot back. She yanked her arm again, but Alaric's grip was strong, barely noticing her resistance.

Lila, clearly uncomfortable, looked between the two and hesitantly spoke up. "Violet, maybe you should just work with him. It's fine, I can team up with someone else."

But Violet shook her head and glared at Alaric. "No. Friends before dicks," she declared loudly enough that several nearby students turned to look, their expressions ranging from amused to shocked.

"Let's resolve this the simple way," Alaric said. "Let fate decide."

Violet narrowed her eyes suspiciously. "And how exactly do you propose we do that?"

"A game of rock, paper, scissors," he said with a wolfish grin.

Violet blinked at him, stunned by the childish suggestion. "Are you kidding me right now?"

"It's not a bad idea," Lila chimed in, trying to mediate. "I'm not bad at it either so he can't cheat me."

Alaric gestured toward Lila. "See? Even your friend agrees."

Violet groaned, her suspicion still lingering, but she reluctantly nodded. "Fine. Let's get this over with."

Alaric and Lila faced off, hands at the ready. Violet crossed her arms, watching intently. And they began.

The first round ended in a tie as both had thrown out paper. Violet's heart began to race, praying and hoping for Alaric to lose. She was rooting for her friend. The second round ended in another tie, both of them opting for scissors.

By the third round, tension hung thick in the air to the point that even some of the students were watching them. Lila hesitated slightly before throwing out paper, but Alaric's hand came down with scissors. He won instantly, and a triumphant grin spread across his face.

"Yes!" Alaric pumped his fist in celebration.

Lila sighed, looking slightly defeated, and Violet groaned aloud, sharing in her friend's loss.

"Great," She muttered sarcastically. "Now I'm stuck with him."

The bell rang at that moment, signaling the end of class. Alaric rose from his seat and looked down at Violet with happiness. "I'll expect you later tonight," he declared.

Violet shot him a glare. "Don't hold your breath. There's no way I'm showing up at your place. I'm not giving the Oracle more fodder for another scandalous article."

Alaric's eyes gleamed with amusement. "Don't worry. I have a private workshop. We'd be alone."

"That's the scary part of it all," Violet muttered under her breath.

"See you tonight, Violet," Alaric said, ignoring her protest as he walked away, leaving her dreading what lay ahead

As soon as Alaric disappeared, Roman appeared, his signature smirk firmly in place as he leaned casually against the desk beside Violet. "That was an intense showdown with Asher. Care to do it every day? I loved it."

"Fuck off, Roman." Violet glared at him.

Roman laughed heartily at her response, clearly unfazed by her sharp words. His laughter rang in the room, drawing more attention than Violet cared for.

But before she could retort further, Asher appeared out of nowhere, his hand grabbing Roman's shirt collar in one swift motion. The smirk on Roman's face faltered momentarily, replaced by both amusement and mild annoyance.

"Alright, alright, I'm leaving," Roman said, chuckling as Asher began to drag him away.

Asher's piercing eyes briefly met Violet's. His expression was unreadable, neither did he say a word. Instead, he turned his attention back to Roman, dragging his cardinal brother out of the room.

#### Chapter 95: Her Endgame

After two more lessons that day, combat skills and defense training class had Violet heading to the locker room to change into her sports gear.

Unlike the first time, she and Elsie Lancaster were unfortunately in the locker room at the same time. Hence, the locker room was heavy with tension, the kind that felt very suffocating. And the reason was obvious.

The animosity between her and Elsie Lancaster had become a spectacle, a game the entire academy seemed eager to watch play out.

Elsie was surrounded by her pack of ever-present lackeys. She didn't even look at Violet at first, but the cold fire in her eyes spoke volumes. Violet could tell that the girl despised her, and while the feeling was mutual, she had no intention of engaging.

Violet had fought her way through too many battles to fall for something as obvious as a public confrontation. Still, the air between them crackled with unspoken hostility.

Moreover to fight over a man? That was not not happening. Violet had her pride.

And it seems Elsie thought the same as well.

And then, there was Natalie Avax, who sat gracefully on the bench, watching it all with keen interest.

She wasn't surrounded by minions or sycophants like Elsie. Instead, she sat alone, but it was the kind of solitude that commanded respect, not pity. Natalie silently radiated control, and her sharp, observing gaze unnerved Violet.

Natalie caught Violet's eye and waved, a polite smile gracing her lips. Violet returned the gesture, but not wholeheartedly.

Something about Natalie felt... dangerous. She wasn't outright malicious like Elsie, but her quiet, calculating nature made Violet uneasy. She was almost like Asher, the kind of person who watched everything, collected secrets, and wielded them like weapons.

Dressed in her West House green sports gear, Violet prepared to leave the locker room. Unfortunately, so did Elsie. They met at the doorway, standing toe-to-toe. Everyone in the room seemed to hold their breath, and waited for the fight to begin.

Elsie's gaze was daring, as though she expected Violet to step aside like a good little subordinate. But Violet wasn't about to give her the satisfaction. Instead, she gave a mockingly elaborate bow and gestured to the door.

"After you, Your Highness," Violet said with biting sarcasm.

Elsie's eyes narrowed, her lips twitching in restrained anger. But rather than rise to the bait, she straightened, lifting her chin with arrogance.

"Next time, hold the door properly, peasant," she said coldly, sauntering out like a queen on a red carpet.

Her lackeys burst into laughter, their giggles grating on Violet's nerves. But Violet wasn't done. Just as they tried to pass through, she let go of the door and the heavy wood nearly slammed into the first girl.

"You—!" the girl sputtered, her face red with anger.

Violet smirked. "Sorry. Her Highness should find a proper doorman for her servants."

One of Elsie's lackeys stepped forward, a scowl on her face. "You bitch! Who do you think you're calling a servant? Maybe I should teach you a lesson!"

Before the girl could act, Natalie stepped in, her voice cutting through the tensed air like a blade. "Angel."

The girl froze, hesitantly turning toward Natalie with defiance and said. "Don't interfere, Natalie. This is between me and her."

"Really?" Natalie's replied, her smile razor-thin. "Are you sure you're in a position to teach anyone a lesson? Or have you forgotten the rules of the elites?"

"What rules?" Angel demanded, though her voice wavered slightly.

Natalie pulled out her sleek, high-end phone that was far more advanced than Violet's, and displayed the latest Moonfeed rankings. Violet's name was right there, nestled in the top three alongside Elsie and Natalie.

Seeing that, Violet's brows shot up in surprise. She hadn't been keeping track of her ranking. She honestly didn't care about that.

"As of now," Natalie announced, her voice carrying authority, "Elsie, I, and dear Violet here are the top three on the leaderboard. You know what that means, don't you?"

Angel's face turned pale. The top three had immunity. No one could challenge or harm them without facing severe consequences.

"So," Natalie continued, her voice dripping with faux sweetness, "do you still want to 'teach her a lesson'?"

"N-no," Angel stammered, backing down.

"I didn't hear you," Natalie said, her tone icy.

"No!" Angel shouted, her cheeks turning red with embarrassment. This was not the way she had planned things to go.

Natalie let out a smile that didn't reach her eyes as she leaned in closer. "Good girl. Now, remember this moment the next time before you make threats you can't back up. After all, what if Violet had gotten angry?"

"What's going on here?" Elsie's right-hand lackey, Grace, entered, assessing the situation with her sharp gaze.

Violet knew at once that it was Elsie that sent Grace over. She probably was missing her sycophants used to following her about like flies.

Natalie's demeanor suddenly turned cheerful and she placed her arm around Angel's shoulder. "Nothing at all. Just a friendly conversation. Right, Angel?"

Angel nodded hurriedly, her earlier bravado completely gone.

"It's true." She nodded nervously.

Violet watched the interaction, wondering if Angel responded because she was scared of Natalie or she just didn't want the matter to blow over.

"Let's go," Grace said curtly, leading the group out. The girls followed quickly, eager to escape Natalie's unnerving presence.

Once they were gone, Violet turned to Natalie. "Thanks for the help, but I could've handled it myself."

Natalie looped her arm through Violet's, her smile wide and insincere. "Don't be like that. We're practically sisters now, being in the top three and all."

Uncomfortable, Violet pulled her arm free and faced her. "What do you really want, Natalie?"

Natalie tucked a strand of hair behind her ear, her expression coy. "Why are you so suspicious of me?"

"Drop the act," Violet said firmly. "What's your endgame?"

Natalie's demeanor became unsettling, her voice dropping to a whisper as she leaned in. "An enemy's enemy is a friend."

#### Chapter 96: Are You Ready To Bleed

The combat training was held in Lunaris training hall. The hall itself was huge and the walls were racks of weapons, blades of all shapes, staffs, shields, and other tools of combat. Each of them were well

polished and gleaming under the fluorescent lights. The air in the room had a faint metallic tang, likely from the sweat and steel that had seen countless training sessions before.

"Are we going to war or what?" Violet couldn't help but ask as she glanced around the room. This curriculum had not even been an option back at her old school, but Lunaris never stops surprising her.

She and Lila stood together amidst the crowd of other students who also were curious like her.

"So, do you know what we're in for?" she asked her human encyclopedia aka Lila.

But even Lila shook her head. "This is my first time too. But from what I've heard, the class is intense. There is lots of physical training and little breaks. People say it's brutal, but somehow, they still seem excited about it."

"Hmmm?" Violet tilted her head, surprised. "Excited? Are they insane?"

Before Lila could respond, the doors to the hall burst open, and a heavy silence blanketed the room. The combat teacher, a towering werewolf with a grizzled beard and piercing green eyes, entered the hall.

His mere presence alone was intimidating, and Violet felt her stomach twist with unease. There would be no mercy with this man, that much was clear.

But he wasn't alone.

Behind him, the Cardinal Alphas followed, their mere presence enough to part the crowd like the Red Sea. Their commanding auras made the already tense atmosphere even heavier. Violet's gaze flicked to Elsie on the far side of the hall, noting how her sharp eyes were fixed on the Alphas, particularly Asher.

Before Violet could process the moment, the teacher's voice thundered through the hall, making her jump. "Drop! Give me twenty push-ups right now!"

Confused murmurs broke out among the students. "What?" someone whispered, but the instructor roared, "MAKE THAT THIRTY!"

The students scrambled to comply, dropping to the floor, groaning as they pushed against the polished ground. Violet's arms shook with effort, and just when she thought it couldn't get worse, the man's emotionless voice rang out again. "Thirty-five."

A collective cry of protest rose, but it was silenced by his next command. "Forty!"

Complaints only made it worse, they all realized. Violet pressed her lips together, determined not to make a sound.

It was even reliving when she noticed they were not alone and cardinal alphas were participating. But while most students struggled, the Alphas performed the push-ups without effort.

Her eyes were especially drawn to Griffin, his biceps flexing with each push-up, the sheer strength and control mesmerizing her. It was, without a doubt, the sexiest thing she'd ever seen.

Griffin's eyes met hers mid-push-up, and he winked, a sly smile tugging at his lips. Violet felt her face heat up as she realized she had been staring. Unfortunately, her distraction cost her as her hand slipped on a bead of sweat, and she collapsed to the floor.

Laughter erupted around her, echoing through the hall.

"I got it on camera!" a girl exclaimed, but her triumph was short-lived. The teacher stormed toward her, snatched the phone from her hand, and hurled it against the wall. The crack of shattering glass silenced the room.

"DO YOU THINK MY CLASS IS A JOKE?!" he roared, spit flying as he loomed over the girl.

But the student could not answer, shocked by what just happened.

"STOP MOPING AND ANSWER ME! YES OR NO!"

"N-no, sir," she repeated, her voice trembling.

"SO WHY WERE YOU JOKING AROUND IN MY CLASS?"

"It won't happen again, sir," she whispered, her head bowed, tears threatening to spill.

"GOOD FOR YOU!" He spun around to face the rest of the class. "UP ON YOUR FEET NOW!"

The number of push ups wasn't even met yet but no one dared to complain. Exhausted but terrified, the students obeyed without hesitation. Violet nearly felt sorry for the girl—nearly. She had learned quickly that pity wouldn't get anyone through this class.

"My name is Malakai," he announced, his steely gaze sweeping over the group, "but you will address me as Commander. Is that understood?"

"Yes, sir!" the class responded in unison.

"DID I HEAR THAT RIGHT?"

"Yes—no! Commander!" the students corrected themselves hastily, their voices a confused cacophony.

For once, Malakai didn't shout. He paced the room, his piercing eyes studying each student like a hawk. When his gaze landed on Violet, it lingered. Her heart pounded as she recalled the earlier scene. His expression was unreadable, but she felt judged all the same.

Violet swallowed hard. Great. First impression ruined.

The room settled into an uneasy silence as Commander Malakai stood tall before the gathered students.

"Welcome to Combat Skills & Defense Training," he began. "Today, you will learn what it means to endure. To fight. To survive. If you think this is just another class, you're wrong. This is the only class that will save your life when you're cornered and outnumbered. If you're not ready to bleed, you don't belong here."

A heavy pause followed his words, his statement sinking into the minds of every student present.

Malakai continued. "For the benefit of the new students, we'll begin with the basics. I will go over the drills and help you adjust to your new reality. Make no mistake, this reality is not optional. It's not something you can opt out of because you feel like it. This is life or death."

He folded his muscular arms across his chest and added, "Before we begin, are there any questions?"

The room remained silent, the students exchanging uneasy glances. No one dared to raise their hand, not wanting to draw the commander's attention, or wrath. Violet shifted awkwardly on her feet, thankful that the spotlight wasn't on her.

Just as Malakai's patience seemed to waver and he was about to move on, a hand shot up from the back of the room.

All heads turned as Dion asked with genuine curiosity, "You said, 'when we're surrounded and outnumbered.' But we're just students here. Why would we ever be in that situation, commander?"

The question hung in the air, and for a moment, Violet thought Malakai might explode. Instead, he fixed Dion with a cold, calculating stare that could have frozen fire.

"You're already a target," Malakai said, his voice firm but menacing. "Every single one of you, by virtue of being a student at Lunaris Academy, has a bullseye on your back. There are people, humans and werewolves alike, who despise the alliance this academy represents. They would see it destroyed. And that's not even mentioning the rogues, hunters, and other supernatural creatures out there who would gladly take your lives."

It was not surprising when murmurs filled the room after Malakai's ominous words. Most of the whispers came from the newer students who were digesting this chilling revelation.

The seasoned elite students, however, seemed utterly unimpressed, their expressions bordering on boredom as if they'd heard it all before. It was clear they were eager for the newcomers to leave so the pace of the class could return to their liking.

Malakai's eyes swept over the room, his sharp tone cutting through the noise. "Or did you think werewolves were the only supernatural beings in your world, humans?" His last word was laced with disdain, as though he pitied their ignorance.

Hands clasped behind his back, Malakai began to pace the room. "The Fae, vampires, witches, wendigos, they're all real. Some, like the Fae, live right under our noses, their glamour allowing them to blend in seamlessly. Vampires, the natural enemies of werewolves, lurk in the shadows, their cunning unmatched. Witches? They're nearly indistinguishable from humans, but their cursed powers make them formidable. Wendigos, on the other hand, only step out of the dark to fulfill their insatiable hunger for flesh. And these are just a few examples."

The room fell into a heavy silence as the students hung onto his every word, their faces pale with unease. Violet in question could feel her pulse pounding in her ears. If the great War nearly rendered earth into a wasteland. She didn't want to see another war again.

"Some of these creatures exist in their own realms," Malakai continued, "emerging only when the barriers between worlds thin, especially during celestial phenomena, or when they see an opportunity to strike. But make no mistake, none of them are willing to repeat the mistakes the wolves made during the Great War. If they ever were to expose themselves, it will be because they are certain of victory."

A heavy silence settled over the room, broken only by the faint shuffling of feet as the students shifted uncomfortably. She was suddenly conscious of the people around her. How many of her classmates might be more than they seemed? Was she surrounded by humans, or something else entirely? The very idea sent a chill down her spine.

"Fortunately," Malakai said, breaking the silence, "none of these creatures have openly declared war on humanity or proved to be an imminent threat that we couldn't take care of. However, this is not a war school. Here, you will primarily learn to defend yourself against the threats we know of, the hunters, rogues, and, yes, even the wolf shifter."

At the mention of wolf shifters, every head turned toward the cardinal alphas. Asher met their gazes with an intense, unyielding stare that radiated authority and menace. His expression seemed to dare anyone to speak out against him. The students, one by one, averted their eyes, intimidated by his presence. The other alphas, although quieter, remained equally imposing.

"For those of you who thought Lunaris was simply a prestigious stepping stone," Malakai said, addressing the entire class, "let me disabuse you of that notion. This academy will elevate you to heights you never imagined, yes, but it is also a battlefield. Accept this truth now, and you may yet survive."

His eyes scanned the room, lingering on each student as if challenging them to prove their worth. "No more questions? Good. Now, sit your asses down and watch as the alphas give you a preview of what I have in store for you."

The students scrambled to obey, hastily finding spots on the bare floor having learned their lesson the first time. Violet sank down beside Lila, her eyes drawn once more to the cardinal alphas as they began discussing amongst themselves. There was a natural divide between them, Griffin and Alaric stood on one side with Asher and Roman on the other.

However, the dissension between them was noticeable to everyone watching.

Asher stepped forward, his body language exuding challenge, but Roman grabbed his arm, whispering something into his ear. After a moment's hesitation, Asher relented, though his sharp gaze lingered on Griffin as if silently promising a future confrontation.

"They're taking votes on who's going to demonstrate," Dion said suddenly, plopping down beside Violet. His voice startled her, pulling her attention away from the alphas.

"Figures," Violet replied, her tone dry. She tore her gaze from the alphas to glance at Dion, who offered her a friendly smile.

"Hello, Lila," Dion added, nodding toward her.

"Hi, Dion," Lila replied with a small wave, her smile bright despite the taut atmosphere.

Violet did not say anything about the guy sitting next to her. Dion, like Lila, had somehow managed to worm his way into her life. She just let it be. Violet has realized fighting these things would only leave her exhausted.

"So, in one word, Griffin and Roman are going to fight?" Violet stated the obvious.

"Yes," Dion replied, leaning back on his palms as if the unfolding drama was a perfectly normal day for him.

"Who do you think would win?" she asked, genuinely curious.

"Depends..." Dion trailed off, watching the alphas intently.

"Depends on what?"

"If it's purely a test of strength, with or without his ability, Griffin's got it in the bag."

"And otherwise?"

"Otherwise, Roman has his wits, cunning, and, let's not forget, the influence of Asher. Roman's not just brawn; he's got brains. Griffin's sheer size and power only gives him an edge. Still, anything can happen, so there's your tactical answer." Dion answered, clearly enjoying Violet's intrigued expression.

Violet turned her attention back to the alphas, impressed by Dion's analysis. On the far side of the room, Commander Malakai was speaking with Griffin and Roman. Then, with a booming voice, the commander addressed the rest of the class.

"Listen up! You're about to witness what a real fight looks like. Griffin and Roman will demonstrate, so watch carefully."

The air grew thick with anticipation and students leaned forward to catch every detail of the fight.

And then, in one swift move, Griffin tore his white shirt off his body.

But the sound of the fabric ripping was quickly drowned out by a chorus of gasps and screams from the female students. It was so loud that the commander had to cover his ears with his palm.

Violet blinked, her jaw dropping as she stared, unable to help herself. Every inch of Griffin's body was sculpted, his muscles rippling like they were carved from stone. There wasn't a single ounce of fat on him, and when her gaze involuntarily dipped lower to his eight-pack abs, she felt a flush rise to her cheeks. The gods help her. Was it hot in here, or was it just Griffin?

"Are you drooling?" Dion teased, his voice snapping her out of her trance.

"No!" Violet hissed, trying to compose herself, though she could still feel the heat creeping up her neck.

Before she could fully recover, another wave of screams filled the room. God no. And just as she thought, it was Roman's turn.

Unlike Griffin's caveman theatrics, Roman deliberately unbuttoned his shirt slowly with an air of calmness. Once he removed it, he turned to Elsie, who stood nearby, and handed it to her with a small smile.

The room erupted.

The gesture was subtle, but the girls in the class treated it like the most romantic act they'd ever seen. Elsie, ever the poised queen, took the shirt without even glancing at him, her cool demeanor oozing entitlement. It was as if she were silently saying, This is the treatment I deserve.

The contrast between Griffin's raw masculinity and Roman's smooth charm wasn't lost on anyone. Violet, however, found herself rolling her eyes. Of course, Elsie gets her little moment of glory, she thought.

Violet tried to convince herself she wasn't jealous. No, definitely not. She was just annoyed by the way Elsie accepted Roman's gesture like it was her birthright, her cool, detached expression only adding to Violet's irritation. The girl acted as if the world owed her every ounce of adoration.

And then it hit Violet. Roman had made his choice. Out of all the women in Lunaris, really Elsie? she really couldn't fathom it.

But then again, when she thought about it, Roman and Elsie deserved each other. A womanizer and a bitch? What great children they would make.

Handsome cute children though. So annoying.

Violet wondered if Roman knew that Elsie—the so-called future prize —had her sights set on Asher?

Of course, he had to know. Roman wasn't stupid, and he and Asher were practically inseparable. If anyone knew the truth, it was him.

No, this was none of her business, Violet told herself.

Yet, despite her inner grumbling, Violet couldn't deny the anticipation rising in the room. Every student was hanging on to what was about to happen next, their excitement high in the air.

The commander stepped back, his booming voice breaking through the noise. "Let the fight begin!"

And it did.

#### Chapter 98: Unwilling Partner

The moment Griffin and Roman stepped into the center of the training hall, the atmosphere became serious. Although the commander said this was going to be a drill, the way Roman and Griffin eyed each other was enough proof it was going to be intense.

The commander barely announced the start when Roman, quick as a striking serpent, darted forward and landed a solid punch to Griffin's face. The sharp crack sounded in the hall, and blood smeared across Griffin's lips.

Violet's jaw literally dropped to the ground. Was this really what the commander wanted from them? This wasn't sparring; it was a brawl. If indeed, this was a drill, then they might as well be signing their death certificates.

Griffin wiped the blood from his mouth, his eyes narrowing in fury. The sight of the crimson streak across his hand provoked him. And just like that, his face twisted into a snarl as he charged at Roman with the force of a freight train.

Roman moved to dodge him, but Griffin's strength and unrelenting barrage of punches were impossible to avoid entirely.

The sound of fists meeting flesh filled the room, and Violet winced even though she was never one to shy away from violence.

That was going to hurt for sure.

Blood splattered onto the floor as the two alphas clashed like titans, the dance of power versus speed quite mesmerizing.

Around her, the werewolves roared their approval, cheering as though this was some gladiator's fight. They had got to be kidding her.

Her gaze shifted to the commander, and the one person she expected to intervene stood with his arms crossed, watching the fight intently with an analytical expression.

Unfortunately, the fight became so fierce that the students were forced to scramble out of the way as Roman and Griffin rolled across the ground, engaged.

When Roman managed to slam Griffin down, the sheer force of their bodies sent vibrations through the floor, and Violet couldn't help but gasp.

The violence was raw and unrestrained, and it was becoming increasingly difficult to predict who would be the winner. Roman's speed and agility kept Griffin on his toes, but Griffin's great strength was just as formidable.

As the fight dragged on, Violet noticed that Roman speed was starting to falter and his moves became predictable. Griffin was tired as well, but he showed no sign of stopping either.

The two alphas locked each other in a vicious chokehold, their muscles straining as they each tried to overpower the other. Their faces became red with the veins on their neck bulging, and it became a battle of endurance.

Everyone watched in stunned silence, unsure whether they were witnessing a fight or a death match. And finally, the commander stepped forward and broke the tension.

"Thank you for the wonderful demonstration," he said evenly, cutting through the din of heavy breathing and shuffling feet.

But neither Griffin nor Roman seemed to hear him. More like they ignored him. They gripped each other tightly, neither of them willing to concede.

And that got the commander's attention, his eyes darkening.

"I said, that's enough!" He thundered.

At his roar, the two alphas reluctantly released each other, gasping for air. Their chests heaved as they glared at one another, each still unwilling to back down. It was known to everybody that out of all the cardinal alphas, Griffin and Roman were the most fierce rivals.

Alaric was the first to move, stepping forward to offer Griffin a hand. Although Griffin was still seething, he allowed his friend to pull him up. Asher in turn, sauntered over to Roman, and helped him to his feet, patting him on the back for a fight well done.

Both combatants were battered and bruised. Griffin's busted lip had already sealed, though faint bruises lingered around his jaw. Roman, however, bore the brunt of the battle of a swollen black eye and a split cheek that were healing slower than he would have liked.

Murmurs rippled through the hall as Griffin and Roman exited to tend to their wounds. The room was buzzing with energy, the raw intensity of their fight still hanging in the air. The commander, however, was far from impressed.

"Although that was not the drill I was looking forward to..." Malakai muttered under his breath, his tone dry with disapproval. "I won't have humans dying under my watch," he continued, louder this time. "Nonetheless, learn from what you saw."

Learn what? Violet thought with a wry smirk. How to get my face smashed in by two oversized egos? Great lesson.

The commander clapped his hands, snapping the class's attention back to him. "Now," he barked, "we're moving on to today's drill. Imagine you've been overpowered by someone stronger than you. How do you get out of the situation? For this exercise, Alpha Asher will demonstrate. And he'll need a willing partner, preferably a human."

At his words, the girls in the room practically lit up. The excitement was obvious as hands shot into the air and voices clamored for attention.

"Pick me, Asher!"

"No, me!"

"Asher, over here!"

"Use me Asher, I don't care!"

The cacophony of eager volunteers made Violet cringe. What in the moon was wrong with these people? She glanced around at the desperate crowd.

And then, as if the gods had a cruel sense of humor, Elsie Lancaster stepped forward with a bored expression, swaying her hips. She walked with purpose, her eyes locked on Asher, as if she was the only logical choice he needed. It was the kind of confidence that made everyone else fall silent.

But Asher didn't even glance at her.

Instead, to Violet's absolute horror, he began walking toward her.

Oh, hell no.

Panic set in. Violet's fight-or-flight instincts kicked in, and without thinking, she turned on her heel and bolted.

"Get back here, little purple!" Asher called after her, his voice dripping with amusement.

But Violet wasn't about to stick around. "Not happening, you asshole!" she yelled over her shoulder, weaving between the students like her life depended on it.

Well, it actually did.

#### Chapter 99: Free Yourself

She didn't get far. Asher's long strides closed the gap in seconds, and before she could react, his arm looped around her waist and he lifted her off the ground as if she weighed nothing. Violet kicked and flailed wildly, shouting at the top of her lungs.

"You bastard!" she screamed, thrashing in his grip. "The commander said willing partner! I'm not willing!"

But Asher was unfazed by her protests, and carried her back toward the center of the hall. Students watched with varying degrees of shock, disbelief, jealousy, and awe. Some laughed outright, while others whispered behind their hands.

As they passed Elsie, Violet reached out in desperation, her hand brushing the other girl's arm as she pleaded. "Do something!"

But Elsie didn't budge. She stood rooted to the spot, her icy glare fixed on Violet as if she stole her moment. The intensity of her stare was so sharp it felt like she would bore a hole through her head.

Great. Just great. Violet resigned herself to her fate, her limbs still tense but no longer struggling as Asher deposited her unceremoniously in the middle of the training area.

The moment Violet's feet touched the ground, she ran, determined to escape. But it was quite unfortunate that Asher had anticipated her move. He grabbed the back of her sportswear with infuriating ease, yanking her backward.

His smug grin only deepened as he said, "Nice try, little purple."

He grabbed Violet by the shoulder and turned her towards the commander, saying, "Commander, I've found my partner." he said with mock formality.

Violet glared daggers at Asher, her jaw tightening as she prepared to protest. The commander faced them, his steely gaze assessing the situation. Violet met his eyes without flinching. If she was going down, she wasn't going down quietly.

"You said it had to be a willing partner," Violet challenged him, notwithstanding his intimidating aura.

The commander's expression didn't change as he said. "An unwilling partner is the perfect subject for this scenario. Most victims don't willingly enter such situations, and your ferocity," he added, motioning to her, "makes this demonstration all the more realistic. Quick thinking, Asher. Excellent choice."

Violet's jaw dropped. Was this guy serious? She was the one being dragged into this against her will, and yet Asher was the one getting praised? She stared at the commander, aggrieved and utterly baffled.

"This is outrageous, Commander." Violet muttered under her breath, clenching her fists.

The commander ignored her, turning to address the class instead. "Before I teach you how to handle yourself in a situation like this," he began, his voice carrying easily across the room, "Asher will demonstrate just how helpless you can be when overpowered. At the same time, we'll observe how our 'victim,' Violet, attempts to escape. Watch closely. Begin."

With that, the commander stepped aside, leaving Violet standing in the center of the arena with Asher. Her heart raced, adrenaline and indignation surging through her veins.

Asher's smirk returned, predatory and full of confidence. "Ready, Violet?" he drawled, his voice low and taunting.

"I'll punch that smile off your face." She spat.

"You can try."

The crowd watched in tense anticipation, the room buzzing with whispered bets and speculation as the "fun" was about to begin.

Asher's arms wrapped around Violet in an iron grip before she could blink, his strength overwhelming as he immobilized her.

The room was silent as the students watched her every move like vultures circling prey. The humiliation of being manhandled in front of them, burned in her chest. For the first time in her life, Violet felt utterly powerless, and she hated it.

Her blood boiled as Asher leaned down, his lips close to her ear, his voice dripping with mockery. "Is that all you've got, little purple? I thought you were stronger than this." His chuckle was maddening, feeding the fire in her veins as she thrashed against him.

But what truly made her snap was his next move. Asher tilted her head toward his, holding her still as he whispered, "This is why you need me, my little purple queen. I could fight for you, wipe out every enemy in your path, protect you from everything. You'd never have to lift a finger." His lips brushed against her cheek in a mocking kiss, sealing her fury.

The room erupted with muffled laughter and whispers, the other students clearly amused by her helpless state. Violet saw red. No. Not today. She refused to be humiliated by him any longer.

With a surge of adrenaline, Violet summoned every ounce of strength and fury she possessed. She slammed her head backward with all her might, connecting with Asher's nose in a resounding crack. Asher staggered back, blood streaming from his nostrils, his smirk wiped clean.

Pain exploded in Violet's own skull, a splitting headache that made her vision blur. But she wasn't done. Gritting her teeth, she spun around just as Asher reached for her again. This time, she drove her knee into his groin with precision. Asher let out a guttural groan, doubling over as his legs buckled beneath him.

"And that's not all," Violet hissed through clenched teeth, her anger blinding her to the pain in her own body. With a roar, she headbutted him once more, this time from the front, sending him sprawling to the ground.

The entire room fell into stunned silence. Violet's chest heaved as she stood over Asher, who was clutching his member and groaning in pain.

Her vision swam, and the throbbing in her skull intensified, but she forced herself to stand tall. She turned to face the equally dumbfounded commander and said, "And that is how I'd get myself out of the situation."

The words barely left her lips before her body gave out. The pain and exhaustion finally overwhelmed Violet, and she collapsed to the floor, unconscious.

The last thing she heard was the sharp intake of breath from the crowd, followed by the commander's booming voice. "Class dismissed. Get her to the infirmary. Now!"

## Chapter 100: Say Sorry

"Welcome back to the land of the living."

Those were the first words Violet heard as her eyes fluttered open. The familiar voice belonged to Adele, the ever-sarcastic healer who seemed to enjoy finding humor in Violet's misfortunes.

"Where am I?" Violet groaned, her head pounding as her vision adjusted. She instinctively reached for the back of her head, wincing slightly at the residual pain.

"Did you also hit your brain in the fight?" Adele quipped, her tone laced with dry humor. "Where do you think you are? If not the infirmary, or did you imagine I'd be treating you in the dormitory like last time? Do you know how expensive it is to hire me for home service? Girl, I'm a healer, and there are literally less than ten of my kind in the entire world." She boasted.

Violet rolled her eyes and shot back, "And yet you choose to extend your honored services to a school full of angry and horny teenagers?"

Adele let out a laugh, unfazed by the jab. "Ha! Nice one, Violet. But for your information, it was the Alpha King's order. He wanted me here to keep an eye on the cardinal alphas. He wouldn't want anything to happen to his heirs. As we all know, he's... well, let's just say the throne can't be left vacant anytime soon."

Violet raised a brow, studying Adele. "So, in one word, you're his spy?"

Adele froze mid-movement, her hand hovering just above Violet's head. She let out a heavy sigh. "Sometimes I can't decide if I hate you or love you," she muttered.

Violet smirked. "So, have you reported me to him as well?"

Adele rolled her eyes. "You give yourself far too much credit. You think the Alpha King cares about every girl that crosses paths with his heirs? Please. I've already told you who they'll end up with in the end, and neither you nor Asher can change that."

She placed her glowing green hand on Violet's head, the healing energy seeping in. When the light receded, she nodded. "You're perfectly healthy. However, try to stay out of trouble this time. I'm really getting tired of seeing your face here. And you might not always have Alaric dragging you here. I already told you, stay away from the hospital."

"You think I did this on purpose to gain access into the hospital?" Violet was annoyed with her assumption.

"Weather you did it on purpose or not, you should be conscious of situations that would land you there! Fighting Asher was a stupid decision."

"I didn't choose to fight him!" Violet snapped. "Asher picked me to humiliate me in front of everyone. What was I supposed to do? Roll over and let him do whatever he wanted?"

Adele pinched the bridge of her nose, muttering something under her breath before responding. "I shouldn't have agreed to keep an eye on you. You're too much trouble."

Violet's eyes widened. "Wait. Someone asked you to keep an eye on me? Who? Who asked you?"

Adele gave her a pointed look, unimpressed by her curiosity. "Who else? The one obsessed with your existence."

Violet's heart skipped a beat. "Asher?" she asked, her voice a mix of disbelief and irritation. "But... why would he—?"

Adele cut her off with a scoff. "You two are toxic for each other. But you know what? Do whatever you both want. I'm done playing referee."

Before Violet could press her further, Adele waved her off. "You're good to go whenever you're ready," she said dismissively, turning away.

Unbeknownst to Violet, Adele pulled out from her pocket the syringe of blood she had taken from Violet while she was unconscious. There was something strange about that girl and she intended to find out.

Left alone, Violet sat on the edge of the bed, her thoughts spinning. Asher asked Adele to keep an eye on her? Was it out of genuine concern? Or was it just another way for him to maintain control?

Violet fell back onto the bed, her eyes fixed on the ceiling as if it had all the answers she sought.

Almost immediately, the white curtain giving her privacy was pushed aside with a sharp snap, startling Violet out of her thoughts. She looked up, her heart nearly stopping when she recognized the figure standing in front of her.

Asher Fucking Nightshade.

For a moment, Violet forgot how to breathe. Her gaze locked onto his, the tension in the air thick and suffocating. Asher's sharp features were as unreadable as ever, but his eyes burned with something she couldn't decipher. He wasn't wearing his usual glasses, and there was a small bandage across the bridge of his nose.

Please don't tell me I broke his nose, Violet thought, shuddering at the realization. She was alone with him in a confined space, and he had every opportunity to make her pay. Her heart thundered in her chest as she watched him step closer, each measured stride bringing him nearer.

"Asher...." she began, her voice shaky, but before she could say more, he was standing right in front of her.

Without warning, Asher reached out, grabbing a fistful of her hair. The sudden, sharp tug made her yelp in pain, but any further protest was silenced when his lips crashed against hers.

Holy Creator of the Universe.

The kiss left her stunned, her mind reeling. For a split second, she was frozen, unable to process what was happening. Then the reality hit her—Asher Nightshade just kissed her. Violet's heart pounded like a drum, every nerve in her body sparking to life.

But even when he stopped, Asher didn't move away. He stayed there, his face close enough with his intense eyes boring into hers as if silently asking a question... as if waiting for her permission.

She shouldn't allow this. Violet knew she shouldn't. This was wrong on so many levels. He was her tormentor, her nightmare in every waking moment. And yet...

Perhaps Adele was right. Perhaps they were toxic for each other because, instead of pushing him away, Violet grabbed his face with both hands and kissed him back.

The second their lips met again, it was no longer tentative or questioning. It was fiery, desperate, feverish. Asher's tongue found hers, tangling together in a heated rhythm. Violet moaned softly, her fingers digging into his hair as she pulled him closer, their bodies pressing together.

The kiss was raw and explosive, as if they were releasing every ounce of frustration, anger, and tension they'd ever felt toward each other. It was a dance of emotions neither of them could name, the rage, passion, relief, and something deeper they didn't dare acknowledge, all mingling together.

They didn't stop. Asher and Violet couldn't stop. It was as though they were trying to devour each other, to erase the memory of how close they'd come to killing each other on the training hall floor.

If this was Asher's way of saying 'sorry' then she might not so much hate it....