

## Alpha-less 141

### Chapter 141 Public Execution

Victoria still looked unbothered, convinced that nothing in the world could touch her anymore.

But the moment her assistant showed the surveillance footage to Lucy, her manager's face turned stormy. "Victoria, what the hell is this?" Lucy snapped..

Victoria frowned, clearly annoyed.

"What, are you done pretending you're in charge? I treated you with respect, and now you think you're the boss? Please. You haven't even made it big yet, and you're already throwing diva tantrums? If that's how you're gonna act, then I'm done. I'm not managing a liability like you."

It wasn't until then that Victoria realized something was off. She snatched the phone out of her assistant's hand-and froze.

There it was, crystal-clear footage of her conversation with Tessa in the restaurant.

Every vile word she'd said played back in perfect clarity.

"Oh my god, a goddess? She's just a manipulative snake."

"And I wasted all that time defending a low-grade wolf clan on the internet."

"Beauty Luxe really hit rock bottom, huh? What did they ever do to deserve this lunatic?"

"I never dared to say this before, but honestly, Beauty Luxe makeup is amazing. It's practically the pride of the country!"

"Yeah! I've tried all kinds of international brands lately, and none of them compare to Beauty Luxe's foundation. It doesn't even cake!"

"Victoria's just a two-faced fake!"

The comment sections were flooded-pages and pages of people dragging Victoria.

Then, out of nowhere, someone commented. "I still don't have a full Beauty Luxe collection yet."

And that was it. The phrase went viral.

In the blink of an eye, the same wolf clan netizens who had once bashed Beauty Luxe were now flooding every corner of the internet.

I'm lining up for their new launch the second it drops." "Count me in

Victoria couldn't read anymore. Her whole body was shaking. Just minutes ago, she'd thought she was a step away from success. Now, it was like she'd been hurled from heaven straight into hell. The crash was devastating

"Lucy, what do I do? Please.... you're the only one who can help me." Victoria grabbed.. pranie.

Water BALD Public Execution

Right then, several high-ranking werewolf officers entered the room. Their pheromones were overwhelming-so intense that Victoria's legs gave out beneath

her.

"Wis. Victoria, you're under investigation for five charges, including extortion and blackmail. You'll need to come with us."

I didn't-!" Victoria tried to run, but she couldn't even lift a foot under their crushing presence.

She was dragged away in full view, but by the time reporters arrived, all they managed to capture was the back of the police car disappearing into traffic.

The twist had been so explosive that reporters from everywhere ditched their posts—including those stationed at the Dream Group event—and rushed over to Beauty Luxe's launch.

Beauty Luxe's security detail was completely overwhelmed..

On the other side of town, Isabella had everything ready. The Dream Group

launch was supposed to be the event of the season.

Then, out of nowhere, the press vanished.

"What's going on?" Her voice was tight with irritation.

When no one answered, she barked again, "Did everyone lose their voice? If

there's no press here, who the hell am I launching this for?"

"Isabella... look."

One of her underlings handed her a phone.

The second she saw the video, Isabella's face drained of color. No wonder all the reporters had run.

"What do we do now?" someone asked anxiously. "We've got so much stock lined up. If this launch tanks, we're going to take a massive hit."

Meanwhile, Remi finally showed up—fashionably late and fully dolled up, sunglasses perched high on her

nose.

She glanced around the empty venue. "What the hell? Where is everyone? I spent three hours on this look. No one's taking photos?"

Isabella didn't even bother replying. She didn't have the energy to entertain Remi's dramatics.

"Let's go," she said coldly. She wanted to see just what Beauty Luxe had pulled off.

Back at Beauty Luxe HQ, Harper finally exhaled. She turned to Tessa, eyes full of admiration.

The girl was... brilliant.

In just under two hours, Tessa had taken a PR nightmare and flipped it into a masterclass in media manipulation.

Harper felt lucky-blessed-to be part of this.

Harper's spine straightened instantly. "I won't, Ms. Sinclair. I swear."

"And I won't let you down either." Camille arrived just in time, walking in with elegance and pride.

With the new Beauty Luxe campaign set to debut today, she wouldn't dream of missing it. Not when Tessa was at the helm.

## Chapter 142 Spotlight Shift

Inside Thorne Corp, Nathaniel had already mapped out his entire counterattack strategy against Victoria- only to find it completely unnecessary. Tessa had handled everything herself.

"Alpha, that move from Ms. Sinclair was insane," he said, eyes wide.

The whole thing had been one dramatic twist after another. He could already

picture how hard Beauty Luxe's new launch was about to blow up.

Nathaniel's pupils constricted from excitement—a biological reaction unique to the wolf clan.

Landon sat calmly, looking like he had expected this from the start.

Of course. His Tessa was always this sharp.

From the beginning, Tessa hadn't even seen Victoria as a real threat. Why would she? Victoria was just another omega who relied on drama and stunts. She never stood a chance.

"Aren't you going to the launch?" Nathaniel asked, genuinely confused that his Alpha could stay this composed.

"I'm watching the livestream. That's enough."

He already knew she'd do well. He didn't need to be there physically. No matter how far she pushed things, he would always have her back. No matter the fallout, he was ready to clean up behind her.

Back at the venue, the launch began. Harper took the stage herself to host. She started by thanking the press and gave a brief overview of recent events.

"From the very start, Beauty Luxe has had the support of so many loyal friends. This whole situation with Victoria only strengthened our belief that our brand has true staying power. We're more committed than ever to developing products people genuinely love."

She moved right into the big moment.

"And now, please enjoy the global premiere of our newest campaign."

The ad began playing in the background. The second Camille appeared on screen, the crowd gasped.

Nobody had expected this. They all thought Beauty Luxe was done for. And now, here they were- with Camille, the rising star of the wolf clan's film industry, front and center.

Even more shocking? She'd agreed to be the face of the brand after the scandal.

"Is that really Camille?"

"No way. Beauty Luxe pulled this off?"

"I can't believe what I'm seeing."

"She's famous for being picky. She hardly ever agrees to endorsements."

stolen the spotlight completely. Isabella's knees nearly gave out.

"You okay?" someone asked.

"I'm fine. I said I'm fine."

They still had Dream Group. She refused to lose.

The ad ended. It was bold. Powerful. Raw.

"Did you hear? Camille filmed this whole thing without any makeup."

"Seriously? Her skin looked amazing."

"After using Beauty Luxe's products, she looked like a different person. The results were unreal."

Harper returned to the stage.

"And now, please welcome our spokesperson, Ms. Camille."

Camille stepped out, radiant and composed.

Every single pair of eyes in the room locked onto her.

"Good evening. I'm Camille. I'm honored that Beauty Luxe chose me for this campaign."

A reporter stepped up with the obvious question.

"Ms. Camille, with all the recent negative press around Beauty Luxe, why did you still agree to take this endorsement?"

Camille met the question head-on.

"Some people may have walked away from Beauty Luxe because of what Victoria did. But I never doubted the quality of their products—not for a second. So when they approached me, I didn't hesitate."

At the same time, Beauty Luxe's campaign launched across TV and social media. Everyone who'd seen the surveillance footage of Victoria earlier was already talking about how they needed to buy a full set of Beauty Luxe cosmetics.

And now, after watching Camille's ad, even more people were ready to jump in.

Back at Dream Group's venue, Isabella returned to a disaster. Not a single reporter in sight.

"What are we going to do? We've got tons of stock ready. If this flops, the company-

"Shut up." Isabella snapped.

She didn't want to hear it.

She'd promised that this new product line would succeed. They'd already ramped

up production. If this launch failed, even selling herself wouldn't cover the losses.

Tessa was scrolling through Facebook and Twitter.

Every trending tag was about Beauty Luxe.

Tessa looked satisfied. It wasn't perfect-but it was enough.

"What are you looking at?" Camille plopped down beside her.

"I've got to say, I'm in awe," she added, bumping her shoulder gently against Tessa's. A subtle gesture of closeness within the wolf clan.

Tessa didn't say anything.

"Seriously, being your enemy must be brutal. I'm just glad I'm on your side."

She knew Tessa could be merciless with enemies-but loyal to a fault with friends. She might come off cold, but she meant it when she cared.

"They brought it on themselves," Harper chimed in.

"Victoria thought she could ride our brand for clout. She deserves everything that came back to her."

Harper had turned into a full-on fan. She didn't care that Tessa was still an unawakened minor in the wolf clan. As far as she was concerned, Tessa had no flaws. None.

"She got exactly what she deserved," Camille agreed.

"If she liked playing games so much, she should've stuck to acting. Not tried to play Beauty Luxe."



"Alright, Harper. You've got the rest from here. Camille and I are heading out."

"Got it, Ms. Sinclair. This launch is going to be huge."

Tessa didn't look overly concerned.

"You've all worked hard. Whatever happens next, I can live with it."

But with her around, there wasn't much to worry about.

"Mm."

Tessa and Camille headed toward the exit.

"I swear, you're more magnetic than I am. Ever think about trying your hand in showbiz? With your face, you'd blow up overnight."

Tessa's look could be edgy or sweet, cool or warm. People of all ages would love her.

"Not interested. I don't like being photographed."

The attention, the intrusion-she wanted none of it.

"What now, then? The place is crawling with reporters."

But Tessa didn't.

Just then, her phone rang.

She answered.

"Come up to the roof," Landon's voice said on the other end.

## Chapter 143 The Alpha and the Sky

Tessa didn't ask questions. She simply said, "Okay."

Then she led Camille into the elevator and hit the top floor.

"What's going on? Aren't we leaving? Tessa, let me handle the reporters. I can lead them away so you don't have to deal with them."

"No need."

They stepped onto the rooftop terrace, and Camille squinted against the wind.

"Tessie, what are you planning? You're not about to do something crazy, are you?" she joked.

But just then, a helicopter appeared in the sky above them.

Camille froze. What the hell was this now?

Down on the street, the reporters who'd been camped outside all looked up, mouths hanging open.

Who was this? Seriously? That arrogant? That dramatic?

The helicopter hovered over the rooftop. A soft ladder unrolled from the side.

Tessa looked at Camille. "Climb."

Camille still had no idea what was going on, but she obeyed. She grabbed the ladder, tapped into her wolf strength, and climbed up with ease.

The moment she pulled herself into the cabin, she came face-to-face with a man she'd never seen before. Her breath caught.

Landon.

He was gorgeous-unfairly so. Even in the entertainment world, this man would be top-tier, But it wasn't just his face. It was the way he carried himself. The power that radiated off of him like heat. He didn't just look powerful. He was power.

Camille instinctively felt his dominance. She couldn't help but stare.

But Landon didn't so much as glance in her direction.

Camille blinked in surprise. Now he had her attention. Most men couldn't look away from her-especially not after she'd awakened her red wolf charm ability.

Down below, Tessa didn't need a single drop of borrowed strength. She grabbed the ladder and climbed like it was nothing.

When she was close, Landon leaned forward and extended his hand. Tessa reached up, took it, and he pulled her effortlessly into the cabin.

The helicopter lifted off and vanished into the night -1

That had to be for Camille, right? Made sense. A movie star like her probably had a powerful backer.

But after a few seconds, their shock turned into excitement.

This story just got better. Their paychecks were about to blow up.

Inside the helicopter, Camille kept glancing between Tessa and Landon.

"Tessa, aren't you going to introduce me?"

"This is Landon. And that's Nathaniel."

Camille's eyes went wide.

"Landon? As in Landon Thorne? Alpha of the Nightshade Pack?"

Tessa nodded.

Camille, who had been perfectly composed until now, suddenly lost it. Her red wolf ears popped into view, trembling from the shock.

Holy crap. This was the most powerful, most respected Alpha in all of Montedra. Mr. Thorne himself.

What kind of people did Tessa surround herself with? One scarier than the next. One more powerful than the last.

And Nathaniel... that had to be Landon's beta.

"Camille. She's a friend of mine."

Landon nodded politely in Camille's direction.

She got it instantly.

As the highest-ranked Alpha, he was way above her in the hierarchy. Of course he wasn't affected by her charm. A man like that had probably seen every kind of beauty imaginable. No wonder she didn't make the slightest impression.

And yet... the way he looked at Tessa-only Tessa-told her everything.

Camille smiled to herself. Landon Thorne was really into this girl.

He had looks, money, power... and he was loyal? Tessa had truly hit the jackpot.

"Tessa, you're incredible. I seriously admire you," Camille said.

Nathaniel couldn't hold back either. "That was one hell of a PR play. Honestly, I'm in awe."

"You're noisy," Tessa said, shooting Nathaniel a look.

Nathaniel looked wounded. He was the beta of the Nightshade Pack, second only

to the Alpha himself. And yet here he was, being treated like a nuisance.

Camille laughed. She hadn't seen Tessa in years, but the girl hadn't

"Tessa, he's threatening me with his eyes," Camille tattled, deadpan. 76%;

"You-" Nathaniel practically choked on air. And sure enough, Tessa turned to look at him. That stare could freeze lava.

"Alpha, I swear I didn't do anything," he protested, but Landon didn't say a word. Nathaniel's shoulders slumped.

"I was wrong."

Camille smirked with satisfaction. That's right. Her backup was just that strong.

Chapter 144 The Alpha, The Snake, and the Spark

At the hospital, Walter was delighted to see Camille again. Back when Tessa was little, she and Camille had been inseparable-always hanging around the Sinclair estate like it was their second home.

"Camille, you haven't come to visit me in foreyer," Walter teased, a smile playing at his wrinkled face. "What, did you forget about this old man?"

Camille giggled as she peeled fruit for him and poured a cup of warm water.

"Mr. Walter, you're just like my real grandfather. How could I forget you? I was just so upset after Tessie got sent to Falindale... I couldn't bring myself to visit."

Back then, she'd been young and powerless. Tessa's fall from grace had haunted her-because she'd been completely unable to help.

"Don't bring up the past," Walter waved it off. "Tessie went to Falindale and still came out shining."

"She did. Tessa's always been the best, no matter where she is."

Camille still had a late-night show to record, so her manager came to pick her up.

Back in the hospital room, Tessa and Landon remained. Landon stayed by Walter's side the entire time, calmly chatting with the old man as if nothing else in the world mattered.

Later that evening, Yardley arrived.

The moment he saw Landon standing beside Tessa, his brow furrowed.

"Who's this?"

With everything that had happened with Beauty Luxe, Yardley didn't believe for one second that Tessa had pulled it off alone. She couldn't have. Not with her age, not with her inexperience. There had to be someone behind her. And if it was this man, then what was he after? Was he eyeing Sinclair Corp?

Because Landon had completely suppressed his Alpha presence out of respect for Walter, Yardley didn't pick up on anything unusual. All he saw was a possible threat.

Walter noticed the shift in his son's expression-and his mood soured instantly.

"Who he is has nothing to do with you," Walter snapped. "Why are you even here? You used to say Tessa didn't have what it takes. Now she's proved you wrong. Got anything else to say?"

"Dad, I'm just worried about her," Yardley replied, all fake sincerity. "I'm her father. You think I'd do anything to hurt her?"

Walter narrowed his eyes. He'd known this man for over forty years. Yardley was calculating—he never worried about anything that didn't threaten his own position.

"Landon, take Tessa home," Walter said at last, clearly disgusted.

Having a son like this was a disgrace.

father, he held his tongue.

"Dad—who is that guy? What does he want with Tessa? She's still a kid. She could get taken advantage of."

"You're not afraid he'll hurt her," Walter said coldly. "You're afraid he'll threaten your position at Sinclair Corp. When have you ever cared about Tessa?"

"Dad, that's not fair. Everything I've done is for the Sinclair family. You want to hand Sinclair Corp to someone else? Is that what you want?"

Walter didn't answer. He'd had enough.

The conversation ended in silence. Yardley stormed out of the hospital, climbed into his car, and immediately lit a cigarette.

"Find out who that man with Tessa is."

"Yes, sir," replied Liam, seated in the front. Always obedient, always discreet.

"Mr. Sinclair, do you think it's possible that man's been orchestrating everything behind the scenes? Look at Beauty Luxe right now-the numbers don't lie. I'd bet anything Ms. Sinclair's about to be named acting CEO.

Liam didn't believe for a second that a seventeen-year-old girl could pull this off by herself.

"That's why I told you to investigate," Yardley snapped. "You think you'll survive in this company if I lose my position? If she wins, your days here are numbered. You think Tessa's the forgiving type?"

The more he spoke, the more agitated he got.

"Mr. Sinclair... what if she really does win?" Liam hesitated before continuing. "Are you truly ready to hand Sinclair Corp over to her?"

"Absolutely not."

"But judging by how things are going... it's looking more and more likely.

Yardley didn't respond.

His eyes suddenly gleamed with a dangerous red hue. His entire body tensed, and his pheromones shifted -thick, sharp, and heavy. The air around him darkened with it.

That reaction only came from one thing in the wolf clan, deadly intent.

"If it really comes to that," he said quietly, "then Tessa has to be removed."

Chapter 145 The Alpha's Temptation

The moment Tessa woke up the next morning, her phone rang.



"Ms. Sinclair! We did it!" Harper's voice was shaking with excitement. "The second our products launched, they sold out completely!"

Tessa put the call on speaker, stretched out lazily in bed, and let herself relax for the first time in days. Her whole body felt like it had finally exhaled.

"Harper, wasn't this outcome expected?" she replied, voice calm as ever. "Alright, next phase is going to be busy. Once this rush dies down, I'm giving you all a break. Take a trip somewhere overseas-on me."

They'd been under too much pressure for too long. It was time they let themselves breathe.

"Are you serious? That's amazing! I'll tell everyone!"

"Mm-hmm. If you guys have somewhere specific in mind, let me know and I'll arrange it."

"Got it." Harper didn't even try to play humble. Her team had been grinding nonstop lately, running on caffeine and anxiety. A vacation sounded like heaven.

"Do we have a budget limit?" she asked cautiously.

After all, up until yesterday, Beauty Luxe had been bleeding money like a stuck pig. They finally had a big win, but it didn't mean they could afford to splurge. "No budget limit."

Tessa didn't say things she couldn't back up.

On the other end, Harper clamped a hand over the phone's mic.

"Guys! Ms. Sinclair said we're going on an all-expenses-paid international trip.

Where do you wanna go?"

"Wait-did I hear that right? Overseas?"

"Holy crap, we should go to Palmera Island!"

"Palmera Island! Yes!"

"But... isn't that a little expensive? We just started making money."

"Maybe we should wait until we're swimming in profit before we go somewhere like that."

"Harper."

Harper froze. Tessa's voice had cut right through the noise.

She lifted the phone back up to her ear. "Y-Yes?"

"I heard everything. You're going to Palmera Island."

"Well?" one of them asked.

"We're going to Palmera Island."

The room exploded.

"I'm finally going to Palmera Island!"

"And with the whole team! This is gonna be amazing!"

Watching everyone so giddy, Harper couldn't help but feel like all their hard work had finally paid off. Tessa might seem cold on the outside, but she was genuinely good to her people.

In the end, Tessa personally accompanied the Beauty Luxe team on a three-day, two-night getaway to Palmera Island.

Naturally, once Camille and Ysabel caught wind of the trip, they invited themselves along-and somehow, so did Landon and Nathaniel.

Over those three days, Landon and Nathaniel spent every spare moment trying to

steal time alone with the girls they adored. Unfortunately for Landon, Ysabel insisted on sticking to Tessa like glue, leaving little opportunity for quality alone time.

Before they knew it, the trip was over.

By the time they returned to Navoris, it was already past eleven at night. Landon insisted on driving Tessa home and stopped outside her Wisteria apartment building.

"Get some sleep," he said softly.

"Mm."

He didn't want to leave. Even after spending three full days with her, it still hadn't felt like enough.

If only I'd met her a few years earlier.

"Goodnight." Tessa turned toward the building.

Landon reached out and gently took hold of her wrist.

She looked back, only for him to pull her into his arms.

"Tessa," he said, voice low and rough, "what am I going to do? I don't think I can wait for you to grow up anymore."

Tessa tilted her chin up to look at him, completely unfazed.

"Mr. Thorne, you're the Alpha of the Nightshade Pack. All you have to do is crook

a finger, and every beautiful, powerful female werewolf in the country would come running. You really don't have to-mmph

She didn't even get to finish.

Before she could say another .....

## Chapter 146 The Kiss That Shook Her Core

Landon's kiss came fast and hard, laced with the unmistakable possessiveness of an Alpha.

One hand cupped the back of her head. The other locked firmly around her waist. In an instant, the sharp scent of pine pheromones filled the air, wrapping around the two of them like wildfire.

Tessa could feel his fangs grazing against her lips-lightly, deliberately. It was an intimate gesture, unique to their kind.

"Mmph..." Her protest dissolved the moment it reached his mouth.

His tongue pushed past her defenses with a force that brooked no refusal.

Her fingers curled unconsciously into the fabric of his shirt, clinging tightly as his pounding heartbeat thundered beneath her touch. Heat flared at the nape of her neck, radiating from the dormant gland hidden beneath her skin. Her knees nearly gave out under her.

Even Emma-usually so quiet-was stirred awake, restless beneath the surface.

If Tessa hadn't forced herself to keep control, Emma might've revealed herself on instinct.

By the time Landon finally pulled back, both of them were breathless.

His golden eyes narrowed under the hallway light, glinting with something primal.

His thumb swept gently across her lips, now swollen and red.

"Still feel like testing me with talk like that?" His voice was husky, nearly dangerous.

Tessa had no energy left to snap back. Her chest rose and fell as she leaned against him, completely overwhelmed by the intensity of his pheromones. Her heart felt like it was trying to escape her ribcage.

After a moment, she braced a hand against his chest and gave a weak push. Landon reluctantly let her go.

He straightened her collar with surprising tenderness, then stepped back, restraint written all over him. "Go inside. If you stay out here any longer... I might not stop next time."

Tessa didn't say a word. She turned bright red and rushed through the door without another glance.

Outside, Landon stood still, watching until the door fully shut and her silhouette disappeared from view. Only then did he force himself to turn away.

He climbed into the car, preparing to head back and deal with the mountain of work waiting for him.

But before he could start the engine, a familiar voice echoed in his mind.

That kiss just now-I think I felt our mate.

Flex's voice was clear, serious.

Maybe I imagined it, Flex admitted. It was faint. Fleeting. But it made me excited. I wanted to come out so badly. Then he groaned dramatically, Can't you hurry up and make her ours already? Her kiss was too sweet... I need more.

You think I don't want to? Landon replied, pinching the bridge of his nose. Be patient. She's still a minor. Just a little longer.

He was trying to convince Flex. But really, he was trying to convince himself.

As the engine started and the car rolled slowly into the dark, he exhaled.

Inside Wisteria Apartment, Tessa sat with a hand pressed to her chest. It took her a long time to calm her breathing and steady her heart.

That guy. He kissed her again-without asking.

She didn't hate it. But his kisses were always too intense, too dominant. Every time, he overwhelmed her with his pheromones until she completely lost control of herself.

Her face flushed as the memory hit her like a second wave.

And Emma... The usually well-behaved wolf had almost broken through.

Once she confirmed Landon was gone, she summoned Emma without hesitation. Before she could speak, Emma beat her to it.

I'm sorry," the wolf said quickly. "I almost blew your cover. But I didn't fully reveal myself. Landon's wolf won't have noticed."

essa narrowed her eyes. "What happened? Why did you almost come out like that?"

don't know. I just felt something... a presence that felt familiar. Like I was being called. I couldn't help it."

A familiar presence?" Tessa repeated. "You mean, Landon's wolf... is also a White Wolf?"

didn't fully manifest, so I couldn't see him. But he's definitely rare. Ancient like me. That's why I almost st control."

mma's voice softened. "But I'll be careful next time. I won't put you in that position again."

Alright." Tessa didn't doubt her.

s for Landon's wolf being something ancient... it didn't surprise her. She had awakened as a White Wolf, the rarest of all bloodlines. It made sense that the strongest Alpha in Montedra would be just as unique.

ill, she couldn't deny it-she was curious.

hat kind of wolf did he carry inside him?

wasn't time to find out yet.

it one day, she would

Chapter 147 That Name Again

Tessa headed to the hospital right after school.

But when she got there, she was met with an empty hospital room.

Her grandfather was gone.

After tracking down a nurse and pressing for answers, she learned Walter had already been discharged and sent home.

Tessa sighed, feeling a wave of helplessness crash over her. That old man was so damn stubborn. He hadn't wanted to stay in the hospital in the first place. It had taken her forever to convince him to stay for observation. And now, the moment she left for three days, he took the opportunity to sneak back home.

She flagged down a cab and rerouted to the Sinclair residence.

The moment she walked through the front door, Lila greeted her with a bright smile and immediately told the maid to bring water.

"Tessie, you're back! Have some water first-your grandfather's in the study."

Beauty Luxe was selling like crazy now, and with Tessa being the likely candidate for Sinclair Corp's next executive CEO, Lila's attitude had done a full one-eighty.

After all, no matter how she used to feel, Tessa was still her daughter. If the company ended up in Tessa's hands, maybe she'd still have a way to stay relevant. Maybe she'd even benefit from it.

"I'm not thirsty."

Tessa walked straight to Walter's private study. The room was lined with rare wolf clan artifacts and ancient

texts.

Walter was hunched over a desk, examining an old wolf clan manuscript through a magnifying glass. He looked up the second she walked in.

"You're back. Have you eaten?"

Tessa narrowed her eyes. "Grandpa, you are so disobedient. I told you to stay put in the hospital, and I was gone for three days! Three days! And you used that time to sneak out?"

Walter just chuckled. "Come on, Tessie, don't be so uptight. I feel fine. My body's strong as ever."

Tessa threw up her hands. There was no reasoning with this man.

"By the way," Walter added, "Beauty Luxe is doing really well now. You need to keep an eye on your father. He's not letting go of this so easily."

"Grandpa, I told you already. You gave me Sinclair Corp. Let me handle it."



"It's not that I don't trust you. It's just... your father..." Walter trailed off with a sigh.

He handed her a folder. "I found a few strong...

"Don't worry, I can take care of myself."

Walter looked at her for a moment, then his tone softened. "Tessie... do you blame me? If I hadn't on your shoulders, you wouldn't be in danger. You're only seventeen. You haven't even awakened your wolf

put this

yet."

"If anything happens to you because of me... I'll never forgive myself."

"Grandpa," she said, voice steady, "I've never blamed you."

Besides, she was strong enough now.

Yardley? He wasn't worth losing sleep over.

Later that afternoon, the driver picked her and Winona up and started heading back to school.

Once the car doors were shut, Winona dropped the act completely.

"So, feeling proud of yourself now, huh?"

Only the driver was around-and he was loyal to Lila. No more need to pretend.

Tessa closed her eyes, leaning her head back against the seat. She didn't bother responding.

"What, too good to talk to me now? Just because you happened to save Beauty Luxe? Big deal. If I'd been given the same opportunity, I would've done just as well."

Tessa finally cracked one eye open and gave her a sideways glance. "Then maybe you should go find a bankrupt company to save. That way, you won't have so much pent-up resentment."

"Hmph. Don't act like you're better than me. Grandpa never even gave me the chance."

"Then don't yell at me about it. It makes you look petty."

"You-"

Tessa didn't enjoy arguing with people, but when she did choose to speak, Winona was no match for her.

Winona suddenly smirked. "You're enjoying this, aren't you? Don't get too comfortable. Connor's coming back from Thunder Pack. As soon as he's back, we're getting engaged. And soon after, we'll be mates."

She looked smug, satisfied.

No matter what Tessa accomplished, she'd never get Connor.

Tessa blinked slowly. "Connor?"

She hadn't heard that name in years. So long, in fact, she had to wonder-

Did I really ever know him at all?

Chapter 148 You Can Keep Him

"That's right. You can pine after him all you want, but you'll never be his mate!" Winona sneered, her voice dripping with satisfaction. "You think the Thunder Pack's Alpha family would ever let some scandal-ridden nobody like you into their bloodline?"

She felt a thrill just saying it out loud-for the first time since Tessa returned, she actually felt like she'd won.

Tessa didn't even blink. Her voice was icy as she replied, "Yardley and Lila treat you like a precious gem. Sinclair family poured every ounce of its resources into grooming you. You awakened your wolf early, sure -but all you've done with that head start is cling to men. That's your value? Fine. If that makes you feel proud, go ahead. I'm not interested."

"You say that now, but you're just bitter you lost. That's all." Winona scoffed. She didn't think there was anything shameful about it.

This was how the werewolf world worked. If a lesser clan managed to secure ties to a stronger one, that was just good strategy. Tessa didn't even have a wolf-what the hell did she have to be smug about?

The truth was obvious to Winona, Tessa was jealous. Jealous that she was going to marry Connor, heir to the second most powerful pack in the country.

And Tessa never would.

Tessa let out a soft, dismissive laugh and looked away, refusing to entertain the conversation another second. Talking to Winona was like trying to reason with a brick wall.

Pointless.

The car pulled up to campus. Tessa opened the door and got out without sparing Winona a single glance.

Winona sat there, fuming. She'd finally gotten the upper hand-and yet, in front of Tessa, that superiority vanished without a trace. Why did she always end up feeling like she was the one being looked down on?

Everything had been shifting since Tessa's return. The changes were subtle, but they terrified Winona. And she couldn't do a damn thing about it.

But Connor was coming back. Once they got engaged, once she was officially tied to the Thunder Pack's Alpha family, everyone would envy her-including Tessa.

Once she became Connor's mate, Tessa could never touch her again.

"Ms. Winona, we should go. Class is about to start," the driver reminded her gently.

Winona composed herself and finally stepped out of the car.

That afternoon, Tessa only half-listened in class. She'd mastered the material weeks ago.

Sitting through lectures felt like a waste of time, but her grandfather wanted her here, and she wasn't going to upset him.

Senior year was nothing but back-to-back exams.

As they stepped out of school, Tessa caught sight of someone waiting just outside the gate.

"Tessa! Over here!" Donald waved enthusiastically the moment he saw her.

She pretended not to see him and kept walking.

Donald, undeterred, walked straight up and blocked her path.

"What do you want?" Tessa frowned.

They barely knew each other. Aside from seeing him once at the Sinclair Corp shareholders' meeting, they'd had zero interaction. And now, they were rivals- both in the running for executive CEO.

"Tessa, why so cold? Don't you think I look good today?" Donald beamed proudly, tugging at his bright red suit jacket.

It was eye-searingly loud. He looked like a traffic hazard.

"Hey girl, what do you think?" he asked Ysabel with a wink.

Ysabel didn't even hesitate. "I honestly don't see anything worth looking at. Move."

"Feisty, huh."

"Donald," Tessa said flatly, "why are you here?"

People were starting to notice. Curious glances and hushed whispers followed them from nearby students.

"Nothing much. I just wanted to congratulate you," Donald said. "Beauty Luxe's comeback? That's impressive."

"Thanks."

Tessa turned and kept walking with Ysabel.

But Donald wasn't done. He reached out and grabbed her shoulder.

Her expression darkened.

You've got to be kidding me.

Without missing a beat, Tessa grabbed his wrist, twisted, and flipped him clean over her shoulder. The sound of his body slamming against the pavement was loud enough to turn even more heads.

"Ah-!" Donald let out a sharp cry, stunned.

He hadn't expected a girl without a wolf to move like that. He hadn't even had time to react.

"Donald, are you okay!" His assistant ran over, panicking.

Donald lay on the ground, face flushed red. He was one of the Violette Pack's All-

1...

1.....

"Let's go."

She walked off with Ysabel, cold and unbothered.

Donald's assistant clenched his fists. "She's dead. I swear I'll make her pay for this."

Chapter 149 And She's Still Haunting You

Donald yanked his assistant back. "What the hell are you doing?"

"I'm gonna go teach her a lesson!" the assistant said without hesitation. "She's just some high schooler without a wolf. I could take her down in two scc-ow!"

Donald kicked him hard enough to send him stumbling. "Are you trying to get yourself killed? Back off. And don't touch her again."

The assistant blinked in disbelief. "Are you serious?"

Donald adjusted his jacket, still watching Tessa's retreating figure. "Don't you think she's kind of... spicy?"

The assistant's mouth twitched. Only Donald would say that. First, he defied his family to invest in Sinclair Corp instead of staying with the Violette Pack. And now, he was openly interested in a girl who just body- slammed him to the pavement in front of a crowd.

Tessa, meanwhile, had no idea her quick reflex had just earned her another unwanted admirer.

That evening, Winona skipped night classes and went straight to the Lawson estate. She had an invitation from Fiona-the Luna of the Thunder Pack-to join her in picking up Connor from the airport.

Before heading out, Winona went home, touched up her makeup, and changed into a particularly elegant dress.

When Fiona saw her, she was clearly pleased. "Come on, it's about time. Winona, now that Connor's back for good, this is your chance. Don't let it slip away."

"I understand, Madam Lawson."

"And don't be shy. Connor's the quiet type, so if he doesn't make a move, you should. Be bold."

Compared to Tessa, Winona was everything Fiona wanted in a daughter-in-law. She was soft-spoken, obedient, and most importantly, she'd once saved Connor's life.

At least, that's what everyone believed.

The Lawson family driver took them to the airport. Winona was nervous-she hadn't seen Connor in three years.

What if he changed? What if he doesn't remember me? What if he started dating someone overseas?

Fiona noticed her fidgeting and gently patted her hand. "Don't worry. You saved his life, remember? He used to treat you so well."

Winona nodded. Yeah, everyone thought she'd saved him that day. And no one cared enough to look any deeper.

Then she saw him.

nearby werewolves gave him a wide berth.

Winona's heart raced.

"Connor, welcome back." She smiled and tried to sound casual, but her voice came out a little breathy.

"Yeah," Connor replied flatly.

"Seriously, what's with you?" Fiona frowned. "You can't say anything nicer? What's with the attitude?"

Winona quickly stepped in to smooth things over. "It's fine, Madam Lawson. It's been a while. I'm sure he just needs time to readjust."

"Let's get going. We can talk more at home. I'll arrange a dinner soon with your parents," Fiona said, clearly already planning a wedding in her mind.

Even if the Sinclair family and Frostmoon Pack were losing power, Winona still made a decent candidate. And Fiona had no problem helping elevate their status- as long as the girl stayed loyal.

"Of course, Madam Lawson," Winona replied, her tone perfectly obedient.

Then Connor suddenly spoke.

"Tessa's back from Falindale?"

The temperature in the car plummeted.

Fiona's face turned ice cold. "Why are you asking about her?"



Connor didn't answer.

Fiona's voice rose, laced with disgust. "She's a disgrace to the werewolf community. Honestly, we're better off pretending she doesn't exist."

Connor frowned. "Mom, you're being unfair. You've always judged her too harshly."

"Oh, so now I'm the problem?" Fiona snapped. "Tell me one thing she's done that deserves my respect."

As they argued, Winona's fists clenched in her lap. Her fingernails dug into her palm.

Tessa. Again. It was always Tessa.

After three years apart, Connor couldn't even look her in the eye-but the first name out of his mouth was hers.

Why won't you just disappear already, Tessa?

Chapter 150 She Doesn't Even Look at Him 0.,76%Ë

On Sunday, the Sinclair and Lawson families had arranged to meet at Maison Laurel, one of the most exclusive restaurants in Navoris. Yardley arrived early with his wife and daughters. Walter hadn't come-he wasn't feeling well enough.

The Lawsons hadn't arrived yet, so Yardley took the opportunity to lean in toward Winona and whisper, "Winnic, you'd better handle this well. If we can get the Thunder Pack's Alpha family on our side, we can bring Sinclair Corp back under our control."

Sinclair Corp was the main source of income for the Frostmoon Pack. Now that Beauty Luxe was thriving under Tessa's leadership, if she really did become the company's executive CEO, their financial future would be in her hands.

Yardley refused to let that happen.

ust then, the Lawsons arrived.

Connor's father-Thunder Pack's last Alpha-had died five years ago in a war with the vampires. The current Alpha was Connor's uncle. Since he'd never found a mate and chose to remain single, the Luna title ad stayed with Connor's mother, Fiona.

Connor was the strongest and youngest werewolf of his generation. Unless something changed drastically, e was next in line to lead the Thunder Pack.

ona still oversaw most of his major life decisions, and she had already made up her mind about one thing Connor and Winona.

soon as the two of them stepped into the private dining room, Yardley sprang up like a spring-loaded ippet.

iona, it's been too long. And Connor-look at you. Even more handsome than before."

nnor didn't return the enthusiasm. His expression was cool, bordering on disinterested.

Connor, where are your manners?" Fiona scolded.

he ignored her and instead asked, "Where's Tessa? She's not here?"

temperature in the room dropped like someone had opened a freezer.

Yardley didn't know how to respond.

heard she was back. Isn't she part of the Sinclair family?" Connor asked again, calmly.

nnor, you know how Tessie is," Winona quickly interjected with a forced smile. "We asked her to come. just... didn't want to."

" He didn't press any further and took his seat without another word.

ryone else quietly let out a breath of relief.

Qugh

plans.

"Engaged?" Connor's brows twitched, the first real reaction he'd shown all evening.

+8 Pearls

"Well, you and Winona are already close, aren't you?" Fiona said matter-of-factly. "Now that you're back; there's no reason to delay."

Winona's palms were damp. Her nerves were rattling like loose change in a jar. Something was off. Connor was looking at her differently. Coldly. Distantly. Could it be... had he found out?

Had he learned the truth-that she wasn't the one who saved him?

Still, she kept her smile in place and spoke with practiced softness. "Madam

Lawson, there's no need to rush. If Connor doesn't want to-"

"Winnie, what are you saying?" Yardley interrupted, his smile frozen but his tone sharp. "Of course you're getting engaged."

"No 'buts," Fiona added. "I'll have someone pick a date. Once you graduate, we'll hold the ceremony. You'll be properly mated by then."

Connor exhaled slowly through his nose, clearly displeased, but said nothing

more.

Winona relaxed just a bit, but something still gnawed at her. He wasn't acting like someone about to marry the girl he loved. He wasn't acting like someone who even liked her.

After the meal, the two families walked out of the private dining room-only to run straight into Tessa.

The moment Winona saw her, her breath caught and she instinctively stepped back.

What is she doing here?

She can't seriously be here for Connor... right?

Yardley's eyes narrowed. Damn that girl. What was she doing here now?

Even Fiona frowned slightly at the sight of her.

Lila rushed up to Tessa and leaned in close, hissing, "Why are you here? Today's

an important day for your sister. Don't you dare cause trouble."

Tessa glanced over at Fiona and Connor, then let out a quiet laugh.

Did the Lawsons own Maison Laurel now? If they could dine here, why couldn't she?

"Mind your damn business," she said coldly, brushing past Lila like she wasn't even there.

She kept walking-her destination was still ahead.

From the second she appeared, Connor's eyes hadn't left her. He followed her every step with silent intensity.

But Tessa didn't look at him once. She didn't el-

invisible.

Connor reached out and grabbed her arm.