

Alpha-less 251

Chapter 251 Jealous Games

Winona sneered to herself, thinking about how to strike back at Tessa in a way that would really hurt.

"Tessic, I didn't mean it. Honestly, I didn't see you," she said in a fake-sweet voice. "Don't worry, I'm not going to fight you over Connor anymore. You like him Be with him."

"Don't disgust me, Winona," Tessa replied, her eyes icy Weren't you the one who used to be head over heels for Connor? What now? Changed your target already?"

Winona bristled. "Changed target? I just realized that some things can't be forced. If Connor doesn't love me, why should I keep humiliating myself?" So what if he had changed targets? Connor never saw her as his girlfriend anyway. Why should she keep chasing him? Evan was a hundred times better than Connor.

"Do you know the Zane family-the Alpha line of the Thornbane Pack?" Winona bragged suddenly. "I finally figured it out. The kind of Alpha I really like is someone like Mr. Evan-strong and commanding."

"How is that my problem?" Tessa shot back without flinching. "Winona, let me warn you-do whatever you want with your life, but if you lay a finger on the Sinclair family, I won't let it slide."

She hadn't even gotten around to settling the photo incident, and now Winona was getting bold again?

Tessa had let it go because of Grandpa's surgery, but Winona was clearly crossing the line now.

Winona laughed mockingly. "Tessa, you've always been jealous of me, haven't you? What now? Jealous again because I'm with Evan? Planning to seduce him too?"

Tessa's eyes narrowed dangerously.

If they weren't in a hospital room-if Walter weren't asleep-she would've taught Winona a real lesson right then and there.

"Winnie, that's enough," Lila warned, afraid things would blow up right in the hospital.

Tessa's tone was cold. "I've been keeping my distance, but don't push things too far. When it all goes wrong, don't come crying to me."

Evan? Winona seriously thought she could win him over?

The real question was: Was Evan aiming for her-or was this about Landon?

Tessa's expression tensed at the thought of how many times Evan had sent assassins after Landon.

"You're just jealous! Winona snapped. "Jealous that I'm going to be the Luna of the Thornbane Pack while you'll always be stuck beneath me!",

"Get her out of here," Tessa said flatly. She had no interest in wasting time arguing with someone this delusional.

Lila could see Tessa's patience wearing thin and quickly dragged Winona away.

"Winnie, are you sure Evan actually likes you? What if he's just using you?"

Tessa's warning echoed in Lila's mind. She was more realistic than Winona.

Before, she had dared to pursue the Thunder Pack's Lawson family only because Winona had once saved Connor and was well-liked by Fiona..

But the Thornbane Pack was on another level. Compared to the Thunder Pack, they were far more powerful. And Evan, as their Alpha, would never spare second glance at a small-time pack like. Frostmoon-let alone take a special interest in Winona

Winona was furious at her mother's doubts. "What are you trying to say? That I'm not worthy of love?" Why shouldn't she be? What did Tessa have that she didn't? She wasn't some useless girl without a wolf.

Lila quickly tried to calm her down. "Winnic, that's not what I meant. It's just that Evan may be strong, but he doesn't exactly have the best reputation. That's why I'm worried."

Evan's power was undeniable-but so was his reputation as a playboy. He had too many women around him.

Not long ago, he was caught in a scandal with the actress Remi. And just like that, he dumped her shortly after.

Could a man like that really fall for Winona?

"I know people talk about him, but that doesn't matter. I'll be his last woman," Winona said, full of confidence.

"All right, go now. And when you have time, buy yourself some new outfits-you can't let those women around Evan outshine you," Lila said, pulling a card out of

her purse.

"There's a hundred and forty thousand dollars on this. Buy whatever you want. Or buy Evan a gift."

Winona beamed and took the card with glee.

As she left happily, Lila's brows drew into a tight frown

She really hoped Winona could make it this time.

Connor was done-there was no hope left.

Fiona had even tried to call her in the past few days, but Lila hadn't dared to

answer.

Now that Winona had set her sights on Evan, even if Connor's legs recovered, she wasn't going to let them. get back together.

Chapter 252 Promises and Priorities

Lila stayed just long enough to chat with Walter after he woke up, then left shortly after.

He had barely opened his eyes before reminding her to help Winona improve herself-to stop thinking about clinging to powerful werewolf elites all day.

That was completely at odds with Lila's worldview.

She believed that with both the Sinclair family and the Frostmoon Pack in decline, the only way to save them was through a marriage alliance with a stronger pack. They didn't see eye to eye at all, so Lila cut the conversation short and left.

"Sigh... With a mother like that, no wonder Winona turned out the way she did. Such talent, completely wasted," Walter muttered. "Forget it, no point talking about them. Why haven't I seen Landie today? Is he busy?"

"He is. He'll be really busy these next few days."

Landon had been spending most of his time at the hospital with Walter lately. The bulk of Nightshade Pack and Thorne Corp affairs had been temporarily handed over to Nathaniel-but there was only so much that could be delegated.

On top of that, Tessa had heard that Thorne Corp was currently handling a multibillion-dollar investment project-one that would impact the expansion of the Nightshade Pack. Landon had to take charge personally.

"Tell Landie not to worry about coming if he's busy. I'm almost fully recovered-no need for him to run himself ragged."

"Alright. You just focus on resting. Don't worry about anything else." Tessa had barely finished speaking when Louis opened the door-and walked in with Landon.

He looked like he'd come straight from Thorne Corp, still dressed in his tailored suit.

Landon looked sharp-so handsome it was hard to look away.

"Mr. Thorne, go ahead and chat. I'll take care of everything else," Louis said as Landon set down the dinner he'd brought for them.

"Aren't you really busy? Why'd you come all the way here?"

"No matter how busy I am, I'll still come. And this wasn't anything urgent anyway." He turned to Walter. "Mr. Walter, how are you feeling today?"

"Landie, I'm already feeling much better. I'll probably be discharged in a few days. You don't need to keep running back and forth like this." He gave a tired chuckle. "You and Tessie both-you've been running yourselves into the ground. Tessie, you should head back to school. Isn't your finals week starting Monday?"

And with the one-month deadline approaching, he couldn't help but wonder- would she really be able to take over as acting CEO of Sinclair Corp? These were the things that weighed on his mind.

"I meant you should go back tomorrow. You're my granddaughter, Tessie-Walter Sinclair's granddaughter. You'd better take things seriously, got it?"

The outcome didn't matter to him as much as her attitude. That, he believed, was everything

She couldn't help but be exasperated.

"What's that look for? Not planning to listen to me now? Eat dinner with me, then have Landie take you back to rest. Tomorrow, you're going back to school."

"Alright, alright. But you have to listen to Dr. Samuel while you're here."

Samuel hadn't returned to Yalvaria yet, and with Walter in his care, Tessa could relax a little.

"Don't worry. I'll behave."

After dinner, Landon drove Tessa back to the Wisteria Apartment.

"Get some rest," he said, glancing at the time. He had other matters to take care of tonight.

"Mr. Thorne, you know what I'm capable of. If you need me to handle Evan-" "No need. I've got it." Landon's voice was steady. "Everything is under control." Evan was nothing to him-hardly even worth mentioning.

If it weren't for the ancient accords and the werewolf laws established over the past century, Landon would've torn him apart a dozen times over by now.

"Alright. Good night, then." Tessa didn't press further.

If Landon said he didn't need help, she trusted him.

Still, after everything Evan had done-multiple assassination attempts on Landon,

not to mention coming after her too-he would be punished. That much was certain.

Chapter 253 The Game Begins

By the time Landon reluctantly parted ways with Tessa and arrived at the Silvermoon Estate, the other three were already there. As soon as he walked in, Nathaniel stood up to pull out his chair.

"Alpha, didn't you say you'd be here in twenty minutes? What happened-did something unspeakable happen with Ms. Sinclair?" he asked with a teasing grin "Nathaniel, what are you even thinking?" Cameron chimed in. "If Landon really had done something unspeakable, do you think he'd be here in just twenty minutes? Please. That would take at least two hours. My guess? He hasn't even gotten a taste yet."

Hudson nodded in agreement. "Yeah, with Landon's stamina? Two hours at minimum."

Nathaniel nodded solemnly. "Alpha, I apologize. I clearly underestimated your strength. You love Ms. Sinclair so much, if it were your first time with her, she probably wouldn't be able to walk for three days straight."

That set all three of them off into laughter.

"You three clearly have too much time on your hands if you're busy gossiping about my love life," Landon said flatly.

The tone was mild-but it sent a chill straight through them.

Nathaniel immediately sobered up. "Alpha, Evan's been acting like a peacock lately, doing everything he can to make his presence known. If he wants to die so badly, why not just give him what he wants?"

So what if he was the Alpha of the Thornbane Pack? They'd already driven him out of Navoris five years ago.

Hudson nodded. "Exactly. The Thornbane Pack may have grown stronger over the past few years, but they're still no match for the Nightshade Pack."

The only trouble was Evan's underhanded tactics.

He was sly-full of dirty tricks that made him unpredictable. But when it came to pure strength, he was no match for Landon.

And on top of that, Landon had the three of them.

"Well," Cameron said with a smirk, "if he wants to play, let's play. Been a while since I got my hands dirty. I'm itching for it."

Landon poured himself a glass of red wine and swirled it lazily in the glass.

"In the modern werewolf world, we don't solve everything with blood and claws. Evan wants a piece of this investment deal? Let him in. I'll make sure everything he swallows-he coughs right back up."

In today's world, brute strength wasn't everything. Economic growth and strategic power were just as critical.

Money and resources were the true foundation of a pack's strength. Sufficient capital meant better training resources, advanced infrastructure, and elite logistics for the entire pack

But if they botched an investment of this scale, the pack would suffer-crippled by lack of funding. When that happened, the Thornbane Pack would start to crumble from within without Landon lifting a finger.

And Evan-his obsession with self-indulgence came at the expense of his own pack's welfare.

With every bad decision he made, Thornbane Pack's resources grew thinner, and trust among his wolves began to erode. Eventually, he would find himself completely isolated.

Didn't he want to become Montedra's Alpha King?

Fine. Then let his own people abandon him. let him lose even the Thornbane

Alpha seat. That would be the most brutal punishment of all.

"Alpha, you seem especially invested this time," Nathaniel noted. "Evan's tried to

mess with Thorne Corp before and you never even blinked."

"He's getting close to Winona now. But she's not the one he's after."

Of course. It was because of Tessa. Only she could make the Alpha care this much.

The next morning, on her way to school, Tessa saw Evan's car drive past-Winona in the passenger seat

When Evan spotted her, he deliberately slowed the car to a stop.

"That's your sister, right? Tell her to get in," he said to Winona without even looking at her.

Chapter 254 Hunt for the Phantom

Winona stared at Evan in confusion.

"Evan, why do you want her to get in the car? We're almost at school anyway- there's no need to give her a

ride."

It was her first time dealing with a werewolf of Evan's rank, and she instinctively feared him.

She knew she should obey his orders, but she really didn't want Tessa getting into the car.

She was worried that after all her efforts to win Evan over, he might end up falling for Tessa instead.

Even without a wolf and with a bad reputation, Tessa's lace was stunning.

Wasn't that why all those men hovered around her?

"I don't like disobedient women," Evan said flatly.

But even those few words sent a wave of fear through Winona.

"Eyan..." she looked at him helplessly, unsure of what he meant. Was he actually interested in Tessa?

Evan didn't press her. He tapped idly on the steering wheel, looking perfectly calm and patient.

Under the weight of his gaze, Winona had no choice but to call out, "Tessie, hurry up and get in! Ride with us!"

Tessa didn't even glance at her. Without pausing, she kept walking toward school.

Winona clenched her fists.

Tessa was infuriating-never giving her face, no matter the situation.

Now, in front of Evan, Winona's cheeks burned with embarrassment. "Evan, I..."

"Class is starting. Go," he interrupted calmly.

Winona picked up her bag and stepped out of the car, standing beside it.

"Go on," Evan said with a wave.

"You go first. I want to watch you drive off," she replied with a lovestruck expression.

Evan turned the car around and drove away.

So much for using Winona to get close to Tessa... That's clearly not going to work. Time to try something else.

Just as he pulled onto the road, his phone rang.

"Alpha, we finally got a lead on Phantom. She's in Navoris. She hacked into Zane Corp's system last night."

investment battle.

And if they could bring her under their banner, with Phantom's unmatched hacking skills, cracking Thorne Corp's firewall would be child's play. That would allow them to completely sever the Nightshade Pack's economic backbone.

Forget defeating Landon-he'd gut the entire Nightshade Pack and absorb them into his own empire.

"I'm on my way." Just hearing the name Phantom made Evan's glands heat with excitement. He slammed the accelerator.

He was very, very interested in Phantom.

Meanwhile, at Thorne Corp-

"Alpha," Nathaniel reported, "Evan's looking for Phantom too. Last night, Phantom hacked into Zane Corp's system."

"What?" Landon's brow furrowed.

Phantom was always a mystery. If she had targeted Zane Corp, did that mean she was interested in them?

If someone as powerful as Phantom ended up on Evan's side, things could get dangerous.....

Nathaniel continued, "Evan's mobilized all his forces to find Phantom."

Phantom was the founder of the Lightwing Order. Whoever secured her

allegiance would gain an enormous asset-an unrivaled boost in power.

"She hasn't shown up in forever. Why now?" Landon muttered. He couldn't figure it out, so he issued a direct order.

"Mobilize everyone. Find Phantom before Evan does."

"Yes, Alpha," Nathaniel responded and quickly left.

But Phantom came and went like a shadow. Finding her wouldn't be easy...

Chapter 255 Don't Provoke What You Can't Handle

Winona stared after Evan car until it vanished from view, then jogged to catch up with Tessa. She grabbed the hood of Tessa's sweatshirt.

"Tessa, what's your problem? I know you're jealous, but how could you embarrass me like that? Don't you realize how important Evan is to me?"

Damn this Tessa-why is she always so smug and cold?

Tessa's expression turned icy the moment she felt the tug on her hoodie.

"Let go." Her eyes slid to the side, cold and sharp with an invisible pressure behind them.

Winona flinched at the tone but still refused to release her grip.

"I'm warning you-Evan's mine. Don't even think about trying to seduce him, or- ah!"

Before she could finish, Tessa spun and caught Winona's wrist in a flash, twisting it hard.

Winona let out a shrill cry, her face turning pale.

"Tessa, let go..." she whimpered, her voice weak from the pain.

It had been a while since Tessa last taught her a lesson. Winona had almost forgotten just how terrifying she could be.

Tessa's grip tightened slightly. "Weren't you acting all proud just now? What happened-cat got your tongue?"

Winona was in too much pain to answer. Sweat rolled down her temples in thick beads.

With a sneer, Tessa finally flung her away. Winona staggered back, cradling her wrist, eyes full of panic and disbelief.

Tessa watched her reaction with amusement.

"If you're so afraid of me, why do you keep provoking me? What's wrong with you? Are you that desperate?"

"You-" Winona gasped. She actually dared to insult me like that?

"I didn't bother with you because you weren't worth my time. What? Already

forgotten about the little stunt with the photos? How's Anna doing these days? Not so great, right?"

Tessa knew exactly how Anna was doing.

The mention of Anna made Winona's heart skip a beat

"Tessa, so what? You don't have proof."

"Proof?" Tessa's smile turned cold. "I don't need proof. If I feel like it, I'll make sure

you never use that hand to draw again. Think I'm bluffing?"

Tessa was satisfied by the bloodless look on her face.

"So stay quiet and live your pitiful little life. Don't mess with people who can crush you."

With that, she turned and walked off coolly.

Winona trembled with fury. "Damn it."

She kicked the tree next to her in frustration.

She was deeply dissatisfied with how things were going Why hasn't she won even once since Tessa got back from Falindale?

could

After two periods review classes, Tessa was already bored. remember everything after just one read-why sit through mindless repetition?

She pulled out her earbuds and rested her head on the desk, listening to music.

She didn't stir until someone tapped lightly on her desk

She looked up and saw Nico.

It was the first time they'd spoken since the incident.

He looked taller than before, but his eyes were duller now-like the light had gone out.

"Do you need something?"

Last time, she had made it clear-she had no feelings for him. So why was he here now?

"I heard your grandfather had surgery... I didn't get a chance to visit. Is he doing okay? Are you okay?"

What he really wanted was to know if she was okay. The moment he heard she was back at school, he couldn't help but come find her.

"I'm fine. Thanks for asking."

"Tessa... I'm really sorry about what happened last time. I was wondering... could we still be friends?"

Nico finally spoke what was in his heart. He just wanted to stay by her side.

If she hadn't known he liked her, she wouldn't have minded keeping him around as a friend. But knowing that made it impossible.

"Nico, I don't need any more friends."

Whatever light ad flickered back into Nico's eyes dimmed again.

"Oh..

Watching him, Tessa wasn't sure if she was being too harsh. But she couldn't give him false hope.

Better to be blunt than to drag it out and hurt him more in the end.

"I know."

She didn't like him. That much was clear. She wasn't going to give him even a sliver of opportunity.

"Here," Nico said, pulling a pack of gum from his uniform pocket. Her favorite flavor.

He handed it to her, then turned and walked away.

The moment Nico found Tessa, Sharon heard about it,

She lit a cigarette, exhaling a ring of smoke with a cold laugh.

Tessa... such a restless little girl. Still trying to seduce my son?

Perfect timing. My father's Werewolf Mercenaries haven't had a mission in a while.

Let's see how she handles a proper lesson.

Chapter 256 No Patience for Fools

After evening classes ended, Tessa walked out of the building with Ysabel. 85%

Ysabel hadn't been in the best mood lately. Her dad was watching her too closely, barely letting her leave the house.

"Tessie, I just want to go somewhere no one can find me. If I could do that... maybe I could finally do what I love."

All she wanted was to sing-it wasn't like she was trying to do something terrible. But her dad still wouldn't allow it.

"Ysabel, if singing is really what you want, then don't give up. Dreams only work if you fight for them."

Ysabel looked at her quietly.

"Tessie, I really envy you... the way you live so freely." Maybe that was what drew her to Tessa in the first place-seeing that kind of untouchable confidence in her eyes.

"You can be the best singer in the werewolf world," Tessa said with full sincerity. "Oh, right! Avery Band's got a concert tomorrow night. Let's go see it together." Avery Band was riding

high lately-every concert a packed, high-energy show

Getting tickets to one was nearly impossible.

"I want to go! I tried to buy a ticket last night but couldn't get one in time," Ysabel said, clearly bummed. Avery Band was ridiculously popular, and their lead singer, Avery, had basically become every girl's dream guy in Montedra.

"I have tickets." Avery had sent them to her a week ago, but she hadn't planned on going-until now.

Now that Ysabel was in a slump, she might as well go with her.

"Seriously?" Ysabel's whole face lit up. In that moment, it was like she'd come back to life. Avery Band was her absolute favorite.

"Seriously"

Yep-just a regular teenage girl. Sometimes joy really was that simple.

When they reached the school gate, the Thorne family's car was already waiting. Seeing the driver there made Ysabel sigh.

But remembering the concert tomorrow night immediately lifted her spirits.

"Tessie, can you ask Uncle Landon to come pick me up tomorrow? Otherwise, there's no way I'll be able to

sneak out."

She wanted to rebel-but she didn't have the strength for it yet.

Tessa chuckled. "Alright, don't worry. I'll have your Uncle Landon pick you up."

"I'm heading out. You get some rest!" Ysabel called from the car, waving at her.

Tessa waved back, then turned and started walking toward Wisteria Apartment. But she hadn't gone far when she noticed it someone was tailing her..

She frowned, already annoyed.

This again? These people can't come up with something more original?

Same old tricks. Same useless intimidation.

She stopped walking altogether and leaned casually against a wall, waiting for whoever was following her

to come out.

And sure enough, when she didn't keep walking, a few then burst out of hiding- massive, muscular male werewolves closing in fast.

Their bodies radiated aggressive pheromones, muscles coiled tight, eyes glittering with bloodlust.

Tattoos on their arms marked them as part of the Mistwolf Mercenaries-nothing but trouble.

Tessa unwrapped a piece of gum and popped it into her mouth, chewing lazily.

It had been a while since she'd had a proper workout. These guys were perfect timing.

"Young lady, do you know who we are?" one of them growled.

Tessa didn't even bother responding to such a stupid line. Seriously, could they be any more cliché?

"Whatever it is, say it quick," she replied coolly. "If you're here to fight, just get on with it."

After evening classes ended, Tessa walked out of the building with Ysabel. 85%

Ysabel hadn't been in the best mood lately. Her dad was watching her too closely, barely letting her leave the house.

"Tessie, I just want to go somewhere no one can find me. If I could do that... maybe I could finally do what I love."

All she wanted was to sing-it wasn't like she was trying to do something terrible. But her dad still wouldn't allow it.

"Ysabel, if singing is really what you want, then don't give up. Dreams only work if you fight for them."

Ysabel looked at her quietly.

"Tessie, I really envy you... the way you live so freely." Maybe that was what drew her to Tessa in the first place-seeing that kind of untouchable confidence in her eyes.

"You can be the best singer in the werewolf world," Tessa said with full sincerity. "Oh, right! Avery Band's got a concert tomorrow night. Let's go see it together." Avery Band was riding

high lately-every concert a packed, high-energy show

Getting tickets to one was nearly impossible.

"I want to go! I tried to buy a ticket last night but couldn't get one in time," Ysabel said, clearly bummed. Avery Band was ridiculously popular, and their lead singer, Avery, had basically become every girl's dream guy in Montedra.

"I have tickets." Avery had sent them to her a week ago, but she hadn't planned on going-until now.

Now that Ysabel was in a slump, she might as well go with her.

"Seriously?" Ysabel's whole face lit up. In that moment, it was like she'd come back to life. Avery Band was her absolute favorite.

"Seriously"

Yep-just a regular teenage girl. Sometimes joy really was that simple.

When they reached the school gate, the Thorne family's car was already waiting. Seeing the driver there made Ysabel sigh.

But remembering the concert tomorrow night immediately lifted her spirits.

"Tessie, can you ask Uncle Landon to come pick me up tomorrow? Otherwise, there's no way I'll be able to

sneak out."

She wanted to rebel-but she didn't have the strength for it yet.

Tessa chuckled. "Alright, don't worry. I'll have your Uncle Landon pick you up."

"I'm heading out. You get some rest!" Ysabel called from the car, waving at her.

Tessa waved back, then turned and started walking toward Wisteria Apartment. But she hadn't gone far when she noticed it someone was tailing her..

She frowned, already annoyed.

This again? These people can't come up with something more original?

Same old tricks. Same useless intimidation.

She stopped walking altogether and leaned casually against a wall, waiting for whoever was following her

to come out.

And sure enough, when she didn't keep walking, a few then burst out of hiding- massive, muscular male werewolves closing in fast.

Their bodies radiated aggressive pheromones, muscles coiled tight, eyes glittering with bloodlust.

Tattoos on their arms marked them as part of the Mistwolf Mercenaries-nothing but trouble.

Tessa unwrapped a piece of gum and popped it into her mouth, chewing lazily.

It had been a while since she'd had a proper workout. These guys were perfect timing.

"Young lady, do you know who we are?" one of them growled.

Tessa didn't even bother responding to such a stupid line. Seriously, could they be any more cliché?

"Whatever it is, say it quick," she replied coolly. "If you're here to fight, just get on with it."

Chapter 257 More Than They Bargained For

The Werewolf Mercenaries exchanged confused glances.

This... wasn't the reaction they'd expected.

Madam Dawson said the girl was just some useless mut without a wolf Wasn't

she supposed to be trembling in fear by now?

"You're not going to make a move? Then I'll go first."

But before Tessa could do anything, Nico appeared beside her, stepping in front to shield her.

"Who sent you?" he snapped. "I told you-no one touches her."

Nico had known his mother wouldn't let Tessa off that easily.

After evening classes, he'd seen Tessa leave with Ysabel, so he quietly followed. And sure enough- he walked right into this mess.

Tessa was the only girl he'd ever liked. Even if she didn't like him back, he wasn't going to let anyone hurt her

"Mr. Nico..."

The mercenaries looked uneasy seeing him. They all knew Nico's temper. But this was Madam Dawson's order-what could they do?

"Mr. Nico, Madam Dawson's just doing this for your own good. Don't make things harder for us. Go home, okay? We swear, we're just here to scare her a little. That's all."

Scare her?

Tessa raised an eyebrow at the mercenaries. "Well, I'll admit-you do look a little scary." With faces like theirs, a kid would probably burst into tears on sight.

"You-" One of them scowled. What the hell kind of girl says that out loud? Their faces weren't that bad, were they? Did she really have to insult them? Outrageous. Just plain rude.

"Mr. Nico, you see? We're not bullying her-she's the one bullying us!"

What kind of girl was this? They were clearly not people to mess with, and here

she was roasting their looks like it was nothing.

Nico ignored them. He turned to Tessa. "Go home, Tessa. Now."

She looked at the mercenaries, not sure if he could really handle this.

"Nico, you don't have to get involved." There was no reason for him to get on Sharon's bad side just for her. That woman was his mother, after all.

But Nico shook his head. "This happened because of me. How could I just stand by? No matter what, I have

"Mr. Nico... if you do this. Madam Dawson's going to make you pay. You know what she's like."

"If that's how it is, then I won't be polite," Tessa said, tugging her hoodie up over her head. She gave Nico a little shove out of the way. If she beat these guys herself maybe Sharon wouldn't hold it against him.

"Tessa!" Nico panicked. She has no idea what these men are capable of. They were the real deal-killers with blood on their hands.

But Tessa? She wasn't fazed in the slightest.

The mercenaries were the first to strike. They moved in a flash, lunging like starving wolves toward her.

One of them swung his fist, claws slicing the air with a sharp gust-like a growl made flesh.

Tessa twisted sideways, avoiding the hit. Her eyes glinted coldly as she slammed her foot into his knee.

With a sickening crack, the man howled and collapsed on one leg.

In a blur of motion, Tessa launched herself at the next mercenary. She grabbed his wrist and snapped it with a brutal twist-

"Aaaagh!" His scream tore through the air, followed by the distinct crunch of breaking bone.

They were ruthless? She was worse.

They were dangerous? She was deadlier

In under five minutes, Tessa had them all on the ground. Then, one by one, she stacked them like logs- nice and neat-before dusting her hands off like it was nothing.

"Haven't had a good workout in a while. Get up. Let's go again."

Chapter 258 Not Worth the Trouble

The Werewolf Mercenaries stared at Tessa in horror. They were already covered

in bruises and scrapes, and she was asking for a round two?

They couldn't sense a single trace of a wolf in her-but she'd taken them all down single-handedly and was only slightly out of breath.

It was terrifying. Absolutely terrifying.

"Still want to go again?" Tessa asked as she yawned, clearly unimpressed. So tired lately. Now I'm just sleepy.

"Ms. Sinclair, we're sorry! We didn't mean to bother you. Please-let us go!" they begged.

They were supposed to be elite members of the Mistwolf Mercenaries, and yet she'd taken them out like they were nothing. Not even enough to warm up with.

"Then fck off," Tessa muttered, lifting her eyes lazily. "You do know how to fck off, don't you?"

"...What?"

The mercenaries were fuming.

Did she really just say that? Out loud?

Wasn't this kind of humiliation a little much?

"You don't want to?" she asked, raising an eyebrow.

One of the mercs-a burly guy with a long scar down his face-didn't hesitate. He immediately dropped to the ground and started rolling away like a boulder.

"Scarface! Are you serious right now? What about your dignity?" one of them yelled.

Scarface glanced back. "You've still got dignity, huh? Then you stay here and take the beating. Why are you worried about me?"

He wasn't sticking around to get wrecked again. He really was rolling away on the street, full surrender.

No shame in knowing when you're beaten.

That girl hits hard.

"...Fine," said another guy-the square-jawed one. His voice was much quieter

now.

Sure, he used to think he was strong. But clearly, times had changed.

There were people way tougher than him out there.

If rolling gets me out of this, then fine-I'll roll.

Watching the massive mercenaries awkwardly roll down the street like logs, Tessa finally looked somewhat satisfied.

He had never seen Tessa like this.

Everyone always looked down on her for not awakening her wolf, but she was stronger than most who had -strong enough to take down elite Mistwolf Mercenaries on her own.

And that strength... only made her more captivating.

When she turned and caught him staring, Tessa subconsciously touched her face.

"Do I have something on my face?" she asked. He'd been staring for way too long.

"No... It's just... you look like you're glowing," Nico said softly.

Now he finally understood why so many people were drawn to her. A girl like Tessa-she was magnetic.

Tessa had no idea how to respond to that.

But when she turned around again, she saw someone else: Landon, standing not

far away, posture tall and commanding.

She didn't know how long he'd been standing there.

Walking over to him, she asked, "Why are you here?"

"I missed you." Just three simple words-but they made the back of her neck flush with heat.

She didn't notice how the tips of her ears were turning red, clearly visible under the moonlight.

"Mr. Thorne..." she muttered. Why did he have to say things like that? Do things like that? Everything he does feels like a tease.

"What's wrong? I just missed you."

"Okay... I get it." Her cheeks were getting warmer by the second.

Turning back to Nico, she said, "If there's nothing else, I'll be heading out."

"Tessa..." Nico didn't want to give up. But the way she looked at that man-it wasn't the way she looked at him.

Tessa raised an eyebrow. "Something else?"

In the end, Nico just shook his head.

"I won't let them bother you again," he said. "This ends here."

"I don't care," Tessa replied coolly. Then she turned and walked off with Landon.

Watching them from behind-the tall, striking man with that commanding Alpha presence, and the quiet, graceful girl who seemed to warm in his presence-it all looked so natural, so easy.

She was cold to everyone else. But with him, she seemed warm.

So... she does like him, Nico thought.

Chapter 259 The Quiet Between Storms

"Sharon gave you trouble again," Landon said, frowning slightly.

Looked like Sharon had too much time on her hands. Maybe it was time someone gave her a little something to keep her busy.

"Yeah, you know how she is. The second something doesn't go her way, she throws a fit." Tessa really didn't have anything good to say about that woman. "Keep an eye on Evan. Sharon's not worth worrying about."

"I know. You don't have to worry about me," Tessa replied. She already knew Evan wasn't someone to take lightly. He was sly-always playing dirty.

The fact that he was cozying up to Winona now? He was probably aiming for Tessa all along.

But Winona was too confident to see it. No matter what anyone told her, she wouldn't believe it.

When they got to Wisteria Apartment, Tessa went to take a shower. Landon, meanwhile, pulled out his laptop and started reviewing files related to Thorne Corp's latest investment case.

When she came back out, she saw him leaning against the couch, completely focused on his emails. He was so focused, so composed-it was hard to look away. A man like that... was hard not to admire.

"It's late. Are you still planning to go back?" Tessa asked casually, no hidden meaning behind it.

But the heat in his gaze made it clear he'd misunderstood.

"I didn't mean anything by that. Just asking," she said quickly.

Forget it. Landon's always been a walking hormone storm anyway. Even when

he's doing nothing, he makes people feel like he's flirting."

Landon reached out and gently pulled her into his arms.

With her resting against him, he kept typing, his laptop still balanced on one hand.

"Is it that complicated?" she asked. This was the first time she'd seen him this absorbed in work.

"It's manageable," he said. Just complicated enough. If he wanted to destroy Zane Corp's economic foundation and leave Evan with nothing, he'd need to be precise.

Even though Thorne Corp was the largest conglomerate in Montedra, all the other financial powers combined couldn't be underestimated. With stakes this high, no one could be easily manipulated.

Noticing how tired he looked, Tessa reached up and gently rubbed the back of his head.

"That feels good, Landon murmured, letting out a content sigh. He gave up sitting upright and rested his head on her lap instead, letting her keep massaging him.

He closed his eyes, relaxing completely into her touch.

Without realizing it, he drifted off.

Tessa looked down at the day is the duke or comedy boost asleep in her lap. Here, they're on quad, m

For the first time in years, the fate of a peace

She knew it was fate, the decade when Kim would how to break home to the cost

will, de

fam

But seeing him like this, calm and seated, the cradles bring her to Ross

I just want to stay like this a little longer, the thought of best friends

For five years, peace had been a luxury, She'd grown to chaos, to war

But with Landon, she found herself dreaming of something greater, something serene After about half an hour, Landon stirred. When he opened his eyes, he saw Tessa draped to, still leaning on the couch, her hands resting, gently on his head. The sight was too much to resist.

He pushed himself up and kissed her-the lips he had longed to taste for so long Tessa's eyes fluttered open, and the first thing she saw was Landon's face-then his kiss, warm and facilitar carrying that unmistakable scent of pine from his pheromones.

Without thinking, she kissed him back.

Feeling her response, Landon deepened the kiss. He shifted over her, pressing her geatly into the couch his lips more demanding now.

The kiss was intense. Tessa could barely keep up, but she didn't push him awes

Landon's arms wrapped around her, pulling her closer. The strength of his werewolf aura sarged, pouring all his longing into the kiss.

Tessa's heart pounded in response. Her hands moved instinctively, brushing across his back as she returned his passion.

Their emotions flared like fire, spreading unchecked through the quiet apartment....

Chapter 260 The Edge of Control

Landon could feel his deske reaching a breaking point His hands moved instinctively, starting to pull off Tessa's clothes.

Flex growled excitedly in his mind. "Oh, she wants it too. Mark her! Make her one with us! Let her become our mate-completely!"

Tessa felt a sudden chill across her chest and finally realized her clothes were already halfway off. If this continued, things were going to spiral out of control.

She turned her head to avoid Landon's kiss and pushed at him, panting. "Mr... Mr. Thorne..."

Landon's eyes, reddened from desire, widened when he saw her trembling slightly. In an instant, he flipped over and rolled to the side.

He lay flat on the couch, chest heaving as he tried to calm himself. Frustration and lingering heat warred inside him.

What was he doing? She was seventeen-just a girl. He must've scared her half to death.

But the taste of her was too sweet. Only God knew how much willpower it took to tear himself away from her. The worst part was that he could see it, touch it-just not have it. And that kind of torment was maddening.

Tessa immediately pulled her half-removed clothes back into place, her face and ears burning so red they could drip blood.

She had clearly felt the hard, thick pressure of him just now.

And honestly, with how he kissed and touched her, her underwear had already gotten wet. They had come dangerously close to going too far.

It was the most physically intimate she had ever been with a man, and now she didn't even know how to

react.

After several minutes, once he had calmed down, Landon pulled her back into his

arms.

"I'm sorry. Did I scare you just now?" His voice was low and a little hoarse. He probably looked like a monster. No matter how strong she was, when it came to intimacy, she was still just a seventeen-year-old girl.

Tessa didn't dare admit that she had reacted too.

"I almost lost control. I couldn't help it. In front of you, the self-control I've always been proud of... it just doesn't work."

Tessa didn't know how to face him anymore, Blushing, she slipped out of his arms. "I'm tired. I'm going to

bed."

But the moment she stood up, he reached out again and caught her wrist. His brown eyes still held a lingering heat, and his voice came out rough.

"Can I stay over tonight? Don't worry-I'll just cuddle and maybe kiss you a little. Nothing more."

No matter what, he would wait until she came of age. She was still too young. He wasn't that reckless.

Tessa gave him a sharp look. "And that's already not enough?"

"Just one more kiss."

Landon shamelessly leaned in and stole a kiss from her lips.

"Alright, now go to bed. And lock the door..I don't trust myself," he said with a teasing smile.

If he really wanted to, even ten locks couldn't stop him. But Tessa trusted him.

He had shown restraint, even in the heat of the moment. She knew Landon wouldn't touch her without her permission.

"You should get some rest too. Don't stay up too late."

With that, she fled to her bedroom like her tail was on fire.

She lay in bed with her hands pressed to her flushed cheeks, completely unable

to sleep.

The feeling was so strange. It was her first time losing sleep over a man.

She wondered if he was still working.

Tessa grabbed a handful of her hair in frustration.

"Damn it... I forgot to ask him to pick up Ysabel for the concert tomorrow." She was annoyed with herself. A pretty face really did mess with your head.

But since he was spending the night, she could just remind him in the morning. Still wide awake, Tessa picked up her phone and checked her messages. Avery had sent several texts in a row.

Avery: You better come to tomorrow's concert.

Avery: If you don't show up, we're over.

Avery: Whatever, even if you don't come, I forgive you. I'm not cutting you off.

Avery: You heartless woman. Even if I did cut you off, you wouldn't care anyway, would you?!

He even spammed her with crying emojis. It was basically a full screen takeover.

Tessa replied:

I'll be there tomorrow. But if you make me go onstage, I swear I'll flip.

Just as she sent it and was about to sleep, Avery called.

Tessa, are you really coming tomorrow? Really?"

band, after all. Performing wasn't easy.

"Tessa... are you really not coming back? If you come back, I'll give you my lead vocalist spot. Deal?" Avery's voice sounded a little too soft. Almost pleading