

## Alpha-less 271

### Chapter 271 Finals and Facades

"Okay, got it," Lina answered immediately.

"You don't have to move. No one's going to touch you," Tessa said, stifling a yawn.

"But..." Lina knew how capable Phantom was, but this wasn't some simple issue.

"Just trust me." Tessa held the phone with one hand while using the other to push open the bathroom door. "I've gotta wash up. Finals are tomorrow."

"Finals?"

Lina hadn't even processed that until Tessa mentioned it.

Right-Phantom was just a seventeen-year-old girl. She still had school. Still had

exams.

"Yeah Don't worry. No one's going to touch any of you No one dared lay a hand on Tessa's people.

"Alright, I understand," Lina replied.

After all, their real target was Phantom.

But no one had ever seen Phantom in person, so even finding the Lightwing Order's base didn't actually mean anything.

Tessa arrived at school around 8:30. As soon as Ysabel spotted her, she came rushing over, nearly bowling her down-if Tessa hadn't reacted in time, she would've been sent flying.

"Tessa! I want to be the number-one fan in your fan club!" Ysabel said, starry-eyed.

"Oh, come on. Tessa? A fan club? You serious, Ysabel? You hit your head or something?"

A passing student sneered.

"Yeah! If you're gonna be a fan of someone, it should be someone like Taz-now that's a real heartthrob."

They had all gone to Avery's concert the night before. Just thinking about that handsome drummer Taz had them swooning all over again.

"You're the ones with the problem! Who I'm a fan of has nothing to do with you. Mind your own damn business." Ysabel shot back, clearly annoyed. If only they knew who they were talking about.

If they found out that the Tessa in front of them was the same Taz they were

drooling over last night... she couldn't even imagine their faces.

Still, Tessa probably didn't want anyone knowing who she really was.

"Hmph. Tessa's just as badass as Taz," Ysabel said proudly.

Tessa didn't want to keep the conversation going. "We've got finals. Let's go."

the top

exam hall.

"Winona, how are you so perfect? I mean, it's bad enough you're gorgeous, but you've also got the brains to match. If someone hadn't gotten lucky last time, she would've embarrassed herself big-time. Let's see how she cheats her way through this round."

Winona's clique made sure to speak loud enough for Tessa to hear.

Even though Tessa had aced the last round of exams, in their eyes, she had to have cheated.

"You're just jealous. Our Tessie didn't even study at school for a whole week and she's still gonna wipe the floor with you-believe it or not," Ysabel shot back, completely unapologetic. Having a friend like Tessa was something to be proud of. "Hah. Big talk. First exam room has strict proctors, and no phones are allowed this time. Some people are in for a major slap in the face."

Tessa didn't want to hear another word of this nonsense. She pulled Ysabel straight into the exam room.

"Winnie, see that? She walked away because she's guilty. If Tessa really had the grades, someone with her attitude wouldn't have backed down so easily. Just do your best today and show that shameless girl up."

"She's my sister. Don't talk about her like that," Winona replied, still playing the innocent card.

It didn't matter. As long as she ended up with Evan, Tessa was nothing.

In the face of real power and wealth, grades meant nothing at all.

Chapter 272 The One He Notices

As soon as the exam ended, complaints filled the hallways-everyone was grumbling about how much harder the test had gotten.

Even Winona didn't look too good.

Lately, she had thrown all her focus into Evan. There hadn't been any time to study properly.

Her grades this round would probably suffer.

But what mattered most right now was winning Evan's heart. Everything else came second.

With that thought, Winona relaxed a little.

She stepped out of the school gates and into the Sinclair family's car. Pulling out her phone, she glanced at the screen.

Still no call from Evan today.

Was he already losing interest?

Ms. Winona, isn't that the Thornbane Pack's alpha?"

The driver had just started the car when he spotted Evan ahead, standing with Tessa. The two of them seemed to be talking about something

Winona looked up and immediately saw Evan smiling Tessa. The sight made her deeply uncomfortable/

"Why does Tessa always get the things I try so hard for and still can't have?"

She had bent over backward to please Evan, yet he remained indifferent, always distant and aloof.

Not far away, Ysabel was glaring at Evan with obvious suspicion, "Who are you? What do you want?"

Of course she knew who he was-Thornbane Pack's alpha, Evan. But hadn't Uncle Landon driven him out of Navoris five years ago? Why was he back, and why was he bothering Tessie?

"I mean no harm. I just find Ms. Sinclair. intriguing I simply wanted to get to know her Evan replied smoothly, smiling at Tessa as if Ysabel's hostility didn't faze him in the slightest.

Tessa shrugged, unimpressed.

"I'm not interested in being your friend." She never bothered being polite to people she didn't like. "And besides, your girlfriend's watching."

She gave a quittance in Winona's direction.

Evan followed her gaze and caught sight of Winona too "She's not my girlfriend."

Winona had just stepped out of the car and was walking toward them when she heard that. The words hit her like needles sharp and cold.

She'd already been worried that Evan didn't like her.

But hearing him say this out loud—he might as well have punched her in the chest.

Still, the idea that Evan might fall for Tessa was utterly unacceptable.

She straightened her back and walked up to Evan, pretending to be close and casual. "Evan, weren't we supposed to go together? This is my sister, Tessa. Tessa, this is Evan, alpha of the Thornbane Pack."

"Winona, what are you doing? Introducing your boyfriend to your sister? What a shame—he just said you're not his girlfriend," Ysabel taunted her on purpose. Who had been so smug just a moment ago? And now look at her.

Serves her right. Winona had always tried to show off in front of Tessa. Too bad she had nothing worth showing. Kind of pitiful, really.

"Evie, I—" Winona had never called Evan that before. But now, she looked at him with wide, innocent eyes, playing the victim—trying to make it seem like the two of them had been bullying her.

"You two sisters really don't look anything alike," Evan said, ignoring Winona completely and speaking to Tessa.

Tessa didn't want to waste any more time. She threw an arm around Ysabel's shoulders and turned to leave.

"Excuse us."

Evan watched her go, something inside him itching.

It had been a long time since a woman got under his skin like this.

The face, the figure, that fiery attitude-she had him hooked.

And more than that, she was the woman Landon liked,

That made Evan's desire to conquer her burn even hotter.

"Tessa, remember my name. Evan Morrigan, We'll meet again."

Chapter 273 The Mask Slips

Evan watched Tessa's figure disappear into the distance, his face full of interest.

Seeing that expression, Winona's face twisted with jealousy. How could he so openly show he liked Tessa? What about her? Why had he even approached her in the first place?

"Evie, do you really like Tessa? She-"

"Enough, Winona. Since you're Tessa's sister, you can come to me if anything comes up. But let me make one thing clear-I'm not interested in you."

Evan had figured it out. Tessa didn't seem to have much affection for this sister of hers. Trying to get close to Tessa through Winona was a dead end. Better to go straight to the source.

Hearing that, Winona's expression changed drastically.

So it was true-he really was into Tessa.

"Evie, haven't you heard the rumors about, Tessa? I mean, she's my sister, but I have to say it-she's not right for you. She's not worthy of you. All she ever does is hang around with filthy Rogues. She's just a shameless woman."

At her words, Evan's face darkened.

He stared at her in disbelief.

Winona thought he was finally listening. Relieved, she continued.

"I know I shouldn't say this, but Evie, I really like you. I don't want to see you deceived by someone like her. Even if she's my sister, I had to warn you."

"Winona, saying that about Tessa really pisses me off." Evan's pupils narrowed into dangerous slits.

He hadn't been particularly fond of Winona from the start.

But now, hearing her talk like this, he found her truly repulsive.

Tessa was his chosen target now-he wouldn't let anyone smear her, least of all Winona.

Evan loathed fake, jealous she-wolves. His voice carried an unmistakable alpha pressure. "I'm letting this slide because you're her sister. But don't ever show up in front of me again."

With that, he turned to leave.

Winona rushed forward and grabbed his hand, her tone desperate and pleading.

"Evie, don't do this. I really like you. Everything I said is true. You have to believe me."

But Evan yanked his hand free and shoved her aside without a shred of mercy. "Disgusting."

Thrown to the ground, Winona's face was a mask of humiliation.

She had always thought she had everything under control-yet now, things had collapsed completely. What was she supposed to do?

She watched as Evan's car drove away, and all her hatred shifted to Tessa.

That's right. It had to be Tessa. Tessa had seduced Evan. Otherwise, he would never treat her like this!

Winona's eyes burned with venom.

It had to be that face-that damn face of hers. It was too pretty. That was how she lured in so many men. Even the Thornbane Pack's alpha had fallen under her spell!

If she could just ruin that face, everything would change. Evan would come back to her.

At that moment, over at the clam chowder soup shop near the school, Tessa and Ysabel were waiting for their food.

This place was famous for its rich soups made with secret spices-both Tessa and Ysabel loved it.

The only downside was the crowd. It always took a while.

Finally, the server brought over two steaming bowls of soup.

Just then, Winona burst out from the crowd. Her hand shifted into sharp wolf

claws, slashing straight for

Tessa's beautiful face-

Chapter 274 Scorched and Exposed



"Tessie, look out!" Ysabel's pupils shrank in shock. She hadn't awakened her wolf yet-there was no way she could react in time.

Without even turning around, Tessa reached back and seized Winona's wrist. A flicker of silver flashed in her ice-blue eyes.

It was the glow unique to high-rank werewolves, pulsing with overwhelming power.

"Winona, are you trying to die?"

In an instant, Winona froze, completely immobilized.

She was stunned. She had just unleashed every ounce of her wolf power, all to destroy Tessa's face once and for all.

So why-why had she been subdued so easily?

She had no time to think. A second later, her transformed wolf claws were slammed straight into the boiling hot soup.

The clam chowder had just come off the stove. The temperature was scalding. Steam hissed as flesh met the surface-followed by the sizzle of burning skin.

"Ah-!" Winona's scream, laced with a werewolf's signature high-frequency shriek, shattered several nearby glasses.

Fangs bared in agony, she tried to pull her hand from the soup-but she couldn't budge an inch under Tessa's grip.

Searing pain tore through her palm. Tears welled up uncontrollably.

Tessa stared coldly at her sister's howling, twisted expression. "I already gave you

a chance, Winona. Did you really think I wouldn't put you in your place?"

Everyone in the shop-students and staff alike-stood frozen, tense and wide- eyed.

At that moment, Tessa looked just like one of the ancient war wolves from werewolf legend: terrifying. unchallenged.

That bloodthirsty chill radiating from her seemed almost tangible, like it was pressing down on the air itself, paralyzing the instincts of everyone around her.

Even Ysabel was shaken.

Though she hadn't awakened her wolf, she still trembled under the sheer pressure of Tessa's aura. Her body reacted inactively, quivering ever so slightly.

That deep, bone-level dread-she'd only ever felt it once before, in the presence of Uncle Landon, a high-level alpha. And now... she was feeling it from Tessa.

After a long moment, Ysabel finally came to her senses. Tessie, let her go!"

If this kept up, Winona's hand would be ruined.

And with so many people coming and going near the school, it wouldn't look good.

In the shop, Winona's pig-like screams pierced the air.

No one dared speak-except Ysabel.

Only after hearing her voice did Tessa release Winona's wrist.

By then, Winona's wolf-shaped hand had already been boiled to the point where fur and skin peeled off in patches. The acrid scent of burnt hair filled the air.

After reverting to her human form, her hand was swollen and raw, red as fire-a truly ghastly sight.

"Tessa, I'm your sister. How could you be so cruel to me? You-" Winona was crying now, her voice choked with accusation.

"Oh? Wasn't it you who attacked first? All I did was burn your hand. Meanwhile, you were aiming to ruin my face, weren't you? What-my face offends you that much?" Tessa reined in her alpha pressure and stared her down coldly.

"Young lady, her injury's too serious-it won't heal on its own. She needs to go to the hospital, now!" the soup shop owner finally found his voice.

"No worries. It's just a hand. With Ms. Sinclair's net worth, I'm sure everything can be handled with money. I can afford her hand," Tessa said mockingly.

A chill ran down Winona's spine. A bad feeling crept in

She immediately shouted, "Tessa, stop spouting nonsense!"

"Oh? Nonsense?" Tessa's eyes narrowed. "Weren't you the one who sent those photos to Anna for the forum post? I hear Anna's having a rough time these days. What's wrong-you're not planning to help her out?"

She had hit the mark. The truth behind the forum scandal was now out in the open.

Chapter 275 Smoke Clears, Shadows Rise

The crowd of students snapped out of their daze the moment they heard Tessa's words.

"Oh my god! So those photos on the forum-Winona took them? How could she hate her own sister that much?"

"She's always acting like the caring older sister, but the truth is she's just been jealous of Tessa all along!"

"Now it makes sense. And that Connor guy-didn't she always say she liked him? The moment he couldn't walk anymore, she dropped him and ran straight after van. What kind of person does that?"

"She's a total fake."

The wave of whispers hit Winona like a punch to the chest. Her breathing grew shallow, her heart twisting under the pressure of so many eyes and voices.

"Boss one more bowl of clam chowder. This one's not edible anymore," Tessa said calmly, already tidying up the spilled soup as she sat back down. "Ysabel, eat."

Ysabel looked uncertainly at Winona, who was still curled up in pain. "Are you sure we should just leave her like that?"

"It's fine. All I did was ruin one of her hands."

This time, Tessa hadn't held back. She had used her full wolf strength to inflict permanent damage on Winona's right hand.

She had given her enough chances. Winona had thrown them all away.

Tessa wasn't going to hide the fact that she was a werewolf anymore. The more she tried to lay low and live quietly, the more certain people assumed she was an easy target.

"And she has a phone. She can call the cops or an ambulance. Boss, you've got security cameras in here, right? And everyone here saw it-she was the one trying to destroy my face, wasn't she?"

Winona had originally planned to call the police, but hearing Tessa say that brought Queenie's fate to mind.

In the end, she called for an ambulance.

Her hand was still her livelihood-she needed it for painting. She couldn't afford to lose it.

The owner of the clam chowder shop, a plain middle-aged werewolf, glanced at Tessa's expression and silently went back to the kitchen to prepare her soup.

This girl didn't look like someone to mess with.

Best not to stir to trouble.

Winona watched in disbelief as Tessa sat there, still calm as ever after injuring her like that-still in the

mood to eat.

She wanted so badly to rip that composed, beautiful face apart... but she couldn't.

The owner brought over a fresh, steaming bowl of clam chowder.

Tessa picked up her utensils and began eating slowly and elegantly, as if she hadn't just maimed someone. minutes ago.

"You're not eating? If not, let's go," she said lazily, her voice back to its usual indifferent tone.

The other students who had been quietly watching Tessa all ducked their heads and pretended to sip their soup. No one dared say a word.

Not a single soul had the courage to check on Winona.

Their hearts were pounding with fear and disbelief.

They weren't sure if what they'd felt earlier had been real or not. All the rumors said Tessa was a failure who could never awaken her wolf. But they had clearly felt it-the overwhelming pressure of a high-level werewolf's presence.

It had been tangible, suffocating. Their own instincts had recoiled in fear.

If Tessa really had awakened... and she was a high-rank werewolf... then it suddenly made sense how easily she had overpowered those troublemakers at school.

Winona's tears kept falling as she looked around at everyone's indifference.

She didn't even have the mind to wonder how Tessa had defeated her so thoroughly. She completely ignored that fleeting moment when she had felt the presence of a high-rank werewolf from her sister.

When the ambulance arrived, she silently got on board, and immediately called Lila to file a vicious complaint about Tessa.

Tessa didn't spare her another glance. After finishing the meal with Ysabel, she planned to catch a quick

nap.

After all, there were still more exams in the afternoon.

But they had barely stepped out of the clam chowder shop when Tessa's phone rang.

It was Landon.

She picked up, and his deep, magnetic voice came through.

"Tessa we found the one who hurt Steven."

Chapter 276 Stop Flirting

Tessa froze mid-step when she heard Landon's voice.

"You decide how you want to handle it," Landon said, choosing not to make the call on his own.

After all, it was Tessa's friend who got hurt; the decision should be hers.

"Hmm, I got it. Lock him up for a couple of days first; I deal with it after my finals are over...

"Alright."

With that settled, Landon still couldn't bring himself to hang up. He chatted with Tessa for a bit longer until Nathaniel called him into a meeting. Only then did he reluctantly end the call.

After the afternoon exam, Ysabel and Tessa walked out of the school gates together.

When Ysabel spotted the familiar luxury car, she asked "Why's my uncle here? Are you guys going somewhere? Can I come too?"

These days, the thing Ysabel dreaded most was going home-going home meant getting lectured by her dad

"We're visiting my grandpa; come with us."

"Really? Sure!"

Her whole face lit up.

Tessa brought Ysabel into the car with her.

"Uncle, I'm tagging along with you and Tessie to see her grandpa, okay?" Even though Tessa had already said yes, she still felt the need to check with Landon.

Showing up out of nowhere like a third wheel-he was bound to be annoyed.

"Hmm."

Just as she thought-he was as cold as ever.

Ysabel leaned closer to Tessa for warmth. Even though the car heater was running, she still felt cold.

"What's wrong?" Tessa asked.

"Ysabel, sit on your own side. Don't cling to Tessa."

Landon shot her a look.

Ysabel immediately scooted over to the other side of the car.

"You scared her, Mr. Thorne."

But as soon as Tessa said that, Ysabel quickly shook her head and waved her hands.

If Tessie kept siding with her, her uncle might actually ick her out of the car.

Seeing her like that, Landon finally seemed satisfied. He drove them to get something to eat before heading to the hospital.

When the door opened, Tessa saw her grandfather under Samuel's care, walking slowly by the hospital bed as part of his physical therapy.

He looked like he was in good spirits, and only then did she finally feel at ease.

"Grandpa, you need to ease up on the exercise. Recovery's a gradual process; you can't rush it." Tessa went over to support him.

"I know, don't worry." Walter turned his attention to the girl beside Tessa and asked, "Who's this young lady? A friend of Tessie's?"



Tessa never had many close friends, so seeing her bring along such a lovely girl made Walter genuinely happy.

"Nice to meet you, grandpa. I'm Tessa's classmate-and her good friend," Ysabel said with a bright smile.

"This little girl's really something; you look so lucky and blessed," Walter said warmly. "Tessie must really like you! She doesn't have many friends, so I hope you two stay close."

"Don't worry, grandpa! I'll always be by Tessie's side. I'll be her strongest support." Ysabel's eyes sparkled as she spoke, her long lashes fluttering with every word- utterly charming.

Seeing how genuine she was, Walter liked her even more.

"Exactly! Grandpa, even though Tessa doesn't have many friends, the ones she does have are all true and loyal," Samuel chimed in.

They acted like Tessa didn't have any friends, but even picking one at random would be enough to scare most people off.

"Mm, that's good." As long as there were people like them by Tessie's side, she'd never be alone-even after he was gone.

The surgery had gone well, but he was getting old; who knew how many years he had left...

"Oh right, Landie, did you take them to eat yet?" Walter asked with a cheerful smile.

"Don't worry, we ate before coming," Landon replied.

Hearing Walter call her uncle "Landie" nearly made Ysabel burst out laughing, but she held it in at the last second.

In this world, Walter might be the only person brave enough to call the Nightshade Pack's alpha Landie.

Everyone in the room gathered around Walter, warm and joyful. Just then, Lila arrived-with Winona in

## Chapter 277 Winona Brings Drama

As soon as Lila heard that Winona had injured her hand, she rushed to the hospital to stay with her. She'd only just helping with treatment.

While her wound was being dressed, Winona cried like her heart was being ripped out.

The doctor said there was a good chance her hand wouldn't recover; even if it did, it'd never be as nimble as it was before.

Winona had always been proud of her hands-especially since they were what she used to paint. They were her ticket into the elite circles of werewolf nobility

And now, because of Tessa, they were ruined. The moment she saw Tessa, the werewolf power inside her stirred wildly with rage, itching to tear Tessa apart right then and there.

But with so many people around, she didn't dare do anything.

All she could do was complain to Walter. "Grandpa, Tessa hurt my hand; now I can't paint ever again! You have to stand up for me-punish her, and make it harsh!"

Winona could only pin her hopes on Walter. No matter how much he doted on Tessa, he had to understand how serious this was.

Tessa had clearly done it on purpose!

When Winona played the victim first, Ysabel immediately fired back, furious. "You're lying! You were the one who tried to hurt Tessa. She was just defending herself!"

The second Ysabel said that, Landon and Samuel's expressions changed; their eyes turned icy as they looked at Winona.

That wretched woman had tried to hurt Tessa.

"Grandpa, we're both your granddaughters. You can't keep letting Tessa off the hook like this! She's just jealous that I'm with Evan, the alpha of Thornbane Pack- that's why she did this to me," Winona said, twisting the story around.

Walter looked visibly disappointed. Seeing his expression,

Winona couldn't help but cast a smug glance at Tessa. See? Grandpa believes me. He won't let you off the hook.

"Grandpa, what Tessa did was really too much. You have to stand up for me," Winona added, still trying to stir things up.

Walter shook his head, disappointed. "Winona, you're my granddaughter too. But how could y do something like this? Tessa is your sister. If you hadn't hurt her, why would she ever do this to y

Winona was completely stunned. She never expected Walter to say that.

"Grandpa, my hand is ruined, and you're still siding with Tessa? We're both your granddaughters-how can you treat us so differently?"

Tessa shot her a look. Gosh, this girl's such a drama queen.

"Grandpa needs to rest. You can leave now," Tessa said oldly.

Winona stared hatefully at both Tessa and Walter.

"What gives you the right to treat me this way? Am I no part of the Sinclair family too? I've already awakened my wolf, but in your eyes, it's always just been that useless, wolf-less Tessa!"

The moment the words left her mouth, the room's temperature seemed to plummet.

Landon and Samuel's gazes grew even colder.

Lila sensed danger immediately. She rushed to pull Winona aside. "Wanwan, what are you even saying right now? That's enough-let's go home. Your grandfather needs rest"

"Mom, you're taking their side too? My hand's ruined and no one's even saying a word about it?"

"What do you want, then? If you'd like, I can make sure both your hands match," Tessa said, already fed up. She didn't want to hear another word.

"You!"

Winona was so furious she lost control. Her uninjured left hand shifted into a wolf claw, and she lunged straight at Tessa.

But before she could even brush the edge of Tessa's clothes, Landon had already pulled Tessa tightly into his arms.

He released his alpha pressure, his sharp brown eyes locking onto Winona. "Out of respect for Walter, I'll let this go if you get out right now; otherwise, you won't live long enough to regret it."

He only held back because he understood Walter's position. But if Tessa had been hurt today-even slightly-not even Walter could've stopped him.

"You'd better be grateful she didn't get hurt. Because if she had, I would've cut off both your hands-and no one would've dared to say a word."

Chapter 278 Tessa's Revenge Plans

Winona stood frozen in place, too terrified to say a single word.

Landon's alpha pressure had only flared for an instant, but everyone-Winona included-had felt the suffocating weight of it.

Until now, she'd always assumed Landon was just a handsome, ordinary werewolf; but the power he'd just released struck fear into her very bones-made her want to submit,

That kind of pressure could only come from a werewolf far, far above her in rank...

Walter looked Landon over, clearly surprised.

He'd thought Landon was just a regular member of the Nightshade Pack. But that moment of sheer alpha dominance made Walter realize-Landon wasn't someone simple.

"Mrs Sinclair, take her home. Keep a closer eye on her next time; otherwise, don't blame me for what happens," Landon said coldly to Lila.

Lila had also been shaken by the force radiating off of him.

She didn't dare say a word; she grabbed Winona and quickly left. Who exactly was this man Mr. Walter casually called Landie? How could he possess that kind of power?

Tessa and the others stayed in the room with Walter for a while longer. Walter was getting older, and he liked having people around. But by the time it was past ten at night, it was clear he needed rest-and they needed to leave.

"You all should head home. Tessie and Ysabel have finals tomorrow, right? Do your best on the tests; if you ace them, I'll treat you both to a big feast."

He hated to part with them, but still waved them off.

"Okay, grandpa. You get some rest; I'll come back and see you soon."

She still had a few things to deal with; now that Walter was recovering this well, she felt truly at ease.

"Landie, take good care of Tessa. I don't care who you are-if you ever hurt her, I'll risk my life to make you pay," Walter said.

He'd already guessed Landon's identity-someone of a rank even he, back when he led the Snowmoon Pack, had never come close to.

Even though he'd seen for himself how much Landon cared about Tessa, he still had to say the words-still had to warn him.

"Don't worry, grandpa. I'll treat Tessa right-I swear it." Landon started to lift his hand, ready to make an oath..

Walter stopped him. "Alright, alright. I know you two are good kids. Now go on-I need to get some rest."

After they left the hospital room, Tessa stopped by to check on Steven.

Revenge Plans

a few more days of rest, r'd be good as new.

Tessa chatted with him briefly before heading out.

She didn't have time, to deal with the person who hurt Steven just yet; but she

could at least send a little warning to whoever was behind it.

Landon hadn't told her who ordered the attack-but she could guess.

Avery Band was under SkyEcho Entertainment, and SkyEcho's biggest shareholder now was Evan-the alpha of Thornbane Pack.

Before the concert, Avery had signed a high-stakes agreement with SkyEcho Entertainment, if the show didn't go on, SkyEcho Entertainment would gain ownership of the band completely-turning them into a money-printing machine locked into service forever.

So if Steven's hand got injured... the person who stood to gain the most was Evan.

Tessa's eyes narrowed dangerously.

"What is it?" Landon, who was driving, noticed the shift in her mood. He glanced sideways at her.

"It's nothing. Just tired."

"It is getting late. Try to rest; I'll make you breakfast in the morning."

"Mr. Thorne, you really don't have to-"

"But making you breakfast makes me feel happy," Landon cut her off, voice warm and tender.

Meeting his deep, affectionate gaze, Tessa's heart skipped a beat; she quickly looked away. "Do what you want."

Landon smiled, in a very good mood, when he noticed the tips of her ears turning red.

The next morning, Landon made Tessa a nutritious breakfast, then personally drove her to the testing site before heading off to Thorne Corp.

As soon as he stepped into the office, Nathaniel rushed in, full of excitement. "Alpha! Did you hear? Zane Corp's system got hacked again! Who do you think's got it out for Evan this bad? Every few days, they break into his system! I bet he didn't sleep at all last night!"

"Phantom, probably."

Who else could it be? Didn't Evan already hire top-tier cybersecurity experts?

And yet, they still hadn't managed to catch Phantom.

"You think it's really him?" Nathaniel got even more hyped. Looked like Phantom couldn't stand Evan either.

No wonder he's my idol, his taste in people is spot-on!

Thanks to the repeated hacks, Zane Corp was in chaos; they didn't even need to lift a finger-Zane Corp was already falling apart on its own...

Chapter 279 Ysabel Discovers Academic Rock Bottom

At that moment, the one responsible for all of it-Tess was fast asleep in the exam room.

She'd her test long ago; the remaining time was perfect for a nap.

At first, the proctor wasn't thrilled to see her sleeping. But when he walked past and saw her test paper- filled from top to bottom and nearly flawless-he silently walked away.

People always gave a little extra grace to geniuses.

After three grueling days, finals had finally come to an end. One by one, the students of First High stumbled out of the school like they'd been hit by a freight train.

After the first day of exams, they still had enough energy to rant about how cruel the test writers were. But now, no one had the strength to even complain.

Ysabel felt the same way.

She followed behind Tessa, head drooping, not saying a word. Seeing her like that, Tessa couldn't help but try to comfort her.

"It's okay; it's just one exam. And this one really was brutal. Even if you didn't do well, it's not the end of the world."



"Tessa, don't try to make me feel better. I saw your test when you turned it in- every page was filled." "Well, Ysabel, let me put it this way, you don't need to compare yourself to me. Just look at how everyone else did. One glance at their faces and you'll know how hellish this exam was."

She wasn't like the others; trying to measure up to her was a one-way ticket to a confidence crisis.

Ysabel looked around at her classmates-every single one of them looked like the light had gone out in their eyes.

Seeing how defeated everyone looked made her feel a little better. "You're right. If everyone did badly, then it's not such a big deal if I did too."

As the two of them left the school, they spotted Landon's car again.

"My uncle's not seriously here for the exam, is he? It's just finals, does he really need to come out for that?"

Getting crushed by Tessa's grades was one thing;

but her uncle showing up like this? That was just too much. The two of them walked toward the sleek silver Lamborghini.

Ysabel opened the back door, got in, and closed it behind her.

Tessa was speechless.

Still, she opened the passenger door and climbed in without a word.

"Uncle, you weren't seriously waiting here the whole time, were you?"

Discovers Academic Rock Bottom

"Don't flatter yourself."

She didn't think she was overthinking it at all.

"Tessie, didn't you say you were going back to Falindale after finals? When are you going? Can I come with you?"

Tessa nodded. "Yeah, I need to go back. But there are still things here I haven't ."

The Sinclair Corp shareholder meeting was about to take place.

Beauty Luxe was still selling like crazy; the new product line was doing really well too.

All that was left was the meeting. Once everything here was wrapped up, she'd carve out a few days to head to Falindale.

"Will you be back for Christmas?" Landon, who had been quiet until now, finally spoke.

"I will. Grandpa's getting discharged soon, and I want to spend Christmas with him."

The mention of Christmas made Tessa think of something else-her birthday fell just a few days afterward.

It would be her eighteenth birthday; on that day, her wolf, Emma, would finally be able to sense who her destined mate was.

Thinking of that, Tessa sneaked a glance at Landon beside her, a quiet hope blooming in her heart. What if he's the one?

And over the past few weeks, she'd come to believe that Landon was someone she could truly trust. She had made up her mind-on her eighteenth birthday, she would tell him the secret of her White Wolf and let Emma meet Landon's wolf for the first time...

Chapter 280 Landon Just Declared War

When Tessa said she'd be back for Christmas, Landonmply gave a quiet "Mm" in response, offering nothing more.

Ysabel shot him a surprised look.

If this were the old days, Landon would've already asked to tag along with Tessa

to Falindale; now, he hadn't said a word. That wasn't normal-not at all.

And sure enough, back then, Landon would've jumped at any excuse to be around Tessa.

But right now, he had something more important to handle-planning her eighteenth birthday.

Tessa's birthday was just a few days after Christmas. It would be the first time he celebrated it with her; of course he had to go

all out.

Even though, like Ysabel, Tessa hadn't awakened her wolf yet, her eighteenth birthday was still a major milestone. He was determined to give her a celebration she'd never forget.

After dropping Ysabel off at the Thorne Residence, Landon finally turned to Tessa. "Where to?"

"To the Avery Band villa. The address is at Apartment One."

She'd promised earlier to treat them to a meal. Now that exams were over, she finally had time.

Besides, she hadn't forgotten-Landon still had the person who'd hurt Steven locked up. It was time to deal with that...

"Alright."

Knowing she planned to handle the Steven situation today, Landon naturally insisted on going with her.

"Mr. Thorne, you don't have to stay with me the whole time."

She could handle this on her own.

"Mm."

Landon started the car and drove straight to Apartment One.

Steven was thrilled to see Tessa arrive.

"Tessa, you're finally here! Come on, let me give you a tour of our base."

"Sure."

Tessa didn't turn down Steven's enthusiasm.

Steven eagerly pulled her away, leaving Landon alone in the living room.

The space was large, styled in a casual layout with clearly defined zones.

Avery, seeing the man who was constantly glued to Tessa's side, scowled. "We've already brought the guy

Landon glanced at him-clearly hostile-and calmly sat down on the lounge sofa. "I came with her. You think I'd leave her alone here with a bunch of guys like you?"

"You..." Avery choked. "We've been her friends for years Who even are you to her? You don't trust us? We don't trust you either!"

Landon friend."

gave a slight smile, his voice laced with childish provocation. "You're just her friends. I'm her boy-

"What? No way!" Avery blew up.

Tessa-someone that cold and distant-had a boyfriend? He hadn't even had a chance to confess yet... Landon glanced at Avery's outburst with lazy amusement. "If you don't believe me, go ask her yourself."

Tessa had no idea about the conversation happening downstairs. Right then, she was following Steven through the halls as he showed her a room they'd prepared just for her.

"Tessa, ever since you left, no matter where we go, we always save a room for you."

Steven pushed open the door.

Inside, the decor was unmistakably her style.

It even held many of her old belongings

"At first, I couldn't understand why you left. All this-our captain set it up for you."

The captain always seemed cold and aloof, but deep down, he was incredibly sentimental.

Tessa gently touched the old drum set she used to play

She really did miss those days.

"Steven... thank you."

Tessa pondered. Thank you, for always standing by my side. Thank you, for never thinking of leaving me behind.

Steven's cheeks flushed bright red.

"Tessa, why are you being so formal all of a sudden? That's not like you; it's weirding me out, you know?"

"Alright, alright—I'm here today to deal with what happened at the last concert. Let's go."

The second she brought it up, Steven looked a little uneasy.

"Tessa... let's just drop it, okay? My hand's fine now. There's no need to pursue it any further..."

Tessa frowned and cut him off. "I told you I'd make this right. I don't care who's behind it. As long as I'm here, you've got nothing to be afraid of."

Hearing her stand up for him like that moved Steven deeply—but when he thought about who was behind it all, he couldn't help but worry Tessa might get hurt.

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"But it was Evan who ordered it—do you know who Evan is?"

Evan—major shareholder of SkyEcho Entertainment and alpha of Thornbane

Pack. He wasn't someone to cross lightly.

"Yeah, I know," Tessa said, unfazed. "So what?"