

Alpha-less 351

Chapter 351: Every Second Without You

Tessa fell asleep right after her shower. She thought Landon might come find her once everything was settled but clearly, she'd been overthinking it.

Then, early the next morning, someone knocked on her door and woke her up.

Haif-asleep and hair a mess, Tessa shuffled to the door.

The moment she opened it, she came face-to-face with that familiar, handsome face - and the next second, he pulled her into his arms.

"Morning."

Landon held her close, his voice low and husky as he whispered a good morning in her ear.

Tessa was still dazed.

"What are you doing here?"

She'd assumed he'd already gone back to Navoris - especially since he hadn't shown up the night before.

They stood in the doorway, his arms still tight around her. Pressed against his chest, Tessa suddenly realized... she really had missed him.

"What, not gonna let me in?" Landon murmured as he lightly bit her ear, totally unable to help himself.

Her face flushed red, heart racing. Was it even legal to be this flirty so early in the morning?

"Come in," she muttered, trying to wriggle free so he could step inside.

But he didn't let go. Instead, he carried her straight into the room.

One arm wrapped tightly around her waist while the other pushed the door shut. Then, in a smooth motion, he spun around and pinned her against it.

"Tell me. Did you miss me?"

His nose was practically brushing hers, and the sharp pine-scented pheromones poured into her lungs like whiskey.

Tessa suddenly rose onto her toes and pressed a soft kiss to the corner of his lips -answering him with action instead of words.

That tiny gesture lit a fire in Landon.,

He gripped her lower back and pulled her into him hard.

What started as a gentle kiss instantly turned into something else entirely. His tongue slid between her lips with the unrelenting force of an alpha, claiming her without hesitation.

Their entangled shadows danced across the door, the shape of intimacy silhouetted i he morning light.

"Two days, seven hours." He bit her lower lip between breaths, his voice thick with that low, growling timbre unique to wolves. "Every minute and second, I've been thinking about you."

The kiss burned like fire, sending a jolt through Tessa's entire body.

The pine in his pheromones thickened with their shared breath, and her Emma stirred wildly inside her.

Finally, when Tessa was nearly gasping for air, Landon let her go.

He brushed his thumb over her swollen lips, then dipped his head and kissed the corner of her mouth gentle, almost tender gesture, like soothing a startled cub.

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"Tessa, I missed you so much."

Meeting the desire simmering in his deep brown eyes, Tessa panicked a little. She didn't know how to handle his intensity.

Seeing her flustered like that, Landon chuckled and gently pinched her chin.

"All right, I just wanted to tell you that I really missed you." She was still young. No

matter how much he wanted her, he wasn't about to push things too far.

Tessa wrapped her arms around his waist. She didn't say anything - but her embrace told him everything

he needed to know.

Landon smiled softly.

It seemed like he'd made the right choice. A little distance really had deepened their bond.

She was still in her robe. Because of that heated kiss earlier, the sash had come a bit loose, revealing the elegant curve of her collarbone - delicate and completely irresistible.

Landon couldn't help it. He lowered his head and began kissing her there.

"Ah-" Tessa hadn't expected that. He was like a starving vampire finally sinking his teeth into a long-lost feast.

"Did I hurt you? I'm sorry," he said. He really was struggling to keep his emotions in check.

"It's okay."

What else could she say? It didn't really hurt - not exactly. It was more like being struck by lightning, the sensation spreading through her whole body and making her legs go weak.\

Instead of wanting to push him away, she found herself wanting more wanting him

to kiss her harder, deeper, everywhere.

Being with him, she was starting to lose control...

Chapter 352 In His Arms

Landon held her tightly, his pine-scented pheromones wrapping around her like a drug.

If this kept up, she was afraid she might really lose control.

Tessa gently pushed him away.

Landon looked down at her and asked softly, "So? Sleep well?"

Tessa shook her head.

"I want to sleep a little longer. If you've got things to do, go take care of them. Let's have lunch together later, okay?"

Landon probably hadn't gotten much rest either.

He'd been so focused on catching S. Once he finally did, there was no way he hadn't spent hours interrogating him.

And S didn't seem like someone easy to break.

Landon really hadn't slept much. After the interrogation, he immediately deployed cleanup crews to raid the drug sites S had exposed, and coordinated everything else that followed.

He hadn't wrapped things up until just before dawn.

"I'm done with everything. Didn't sleep well last night either. How about we sleep a little more together?" Without waiting for her answer, he scooped her up in his arms and headed for the bed.

Tessa yelped in surprise as he laid her down. She watched nervously as Landon climbed into bed beside

her.

"Relax. I won't do anything you don't want me to." He gave her a soft kiss, then wrapped his arms around her and closed his eyes.

"Mr. Landon-"

With him lying there, how was she supposed to sleep?

"What is it?" Landon opened his eyes and tightened his hold on her.

Just lying there with the person he loved, even doing nothing at all - it made him feel completely at peace.

"...It's nothing. Go back to sleep."

There was no point in saying anything now anyway.

"Okay, let's sleep."

Maybe it was the exhaustion from staying up all night, but with Tessa beside him, Landon was out in minutes.

As Montedra's Alpha King, he'd always been vigilant

even when alone, he maintained the shallow-sleep.

state unique to wolves, always alert to the slightest movement within miles. But Tessa was the one exception.

With her next to him, he could fully relax, falling into a deep, dreamless sleep - a kind of rest only a mate could give. No alpha-calming spray could compare. Watching him sleep so defenseless at her side made Tessa's heart beat faster.

How was it that the two of them were lying together, yet she was the one wide awake?

She couldn't sleep at all.

So she started counting his eyelashes.

How could a man look this good? It wasn't just that he was handsome he was perfectly handsome.

His eyelashes were so long, so pretty.

After a while, when he still didn't stir, Tessa grew bolder.

At first, she really was just looking - counting his lashes. But then she reached

out and gently touched his face.

Dream's words came back to her - Ethan isn't your type.

She couldn't help wondering... if Dream ever saw Landon, what would she say?

As she stared at him, Tessa's eyelids finally grew heavy - and she drifted off.

The two of them slept like that, wrapped in each other's arms.

No wild passion. No lines crossed. Landon was content just holding her.

By the time they both woke up, it was already past 1 p.m.

They got up, met with Nathaniel, and went to lunch at one of Falindale's high-end restaurants.

"So," Tessa asked during a lull in conversation, "what exactly brought you to Falindale? Isn't Navoris still keeping you busy?"

-Nathaniel answered casually, "Just a minor thing. You're better off not knowing."

The matter involved a classified Nightshade Pack purge operation - not something Tessa could be told.

She didn't press any further.

Later, she found out that Landon had handed S over to Ethan the Werewolf Council's tribunal was now involved. So it probably wasn't anything shady.

Just then, Tessa's phone rang.

When she saw Ethan's name on the screen, she frowned. What could he want now?

He'd already caught S - he should be busy right now.

Seeing her reaction, Landon asked, "Who is it?"

"It's nothing. I'll take it outside."

She stepped out with the phone.

Watching her go, Nathaniel raised an eyebrow. "Alpha, who called Tessa? She left just to answer it?"

Did Tessa have secrets they weren't supposed to know?

Landon didn't respond.

Tessa did have a lot of secrets. But he didn't want to use his authority to dig into them.

He loved her so he wanted her to tell him those things herself, not discover them through investigation.

Even though he suspected that the woman he fought last night might have been Tessa, he hadn't asked. Hadn't checked.

Chapter 353 Three Alphas at One Table

"Sigh... falling for a girl covered in secrets- Alpha, you've really got it rough

Even chasing Ysabel had been hard enough. But Tessa? With everything unknown about her? That had to be worse.

"I'm fine."

Landon was confident. He believed, without a doubt, they'd end up together.

Tessa stepped out of the private room and headed toward the staircase before finally answering the call.

"Yeah? What is it?" She already knew who it was, so she skipped the pleasantries and got straight to the point.

"Tessa, we've wrapped up everything on our end. We're heading back soon. But before that, I want to see you if you're free."

"Right now?"

"Yes. What's wrong? Not a good time?" He really did have something important to discuss.

"How about this? I'll send you my location. Come here." Tessa said.

"Got it. Send it over, I'll be right there." Ethan didn't hesitate.

At this point, his work was mostly done. The interrogation of S was nearly complete the Council had already used memory-tracing to extract the key intel.

Tessa sent him the location.

Landon and Nathaniel both knew Ethan. Sharing a meal shouldn't trigger any pheromone conflict... probably.

When Tessa returned to the room, the food had just been served. As soon as she stepped in, Nathaniel perked up.

"Can we eat now? I'm starving!"

It was almost two. Definitely time to eat.

"You're that hungry?" Tessa hesitated. Inviting Ethan here, would it be rude if they started eating without

him?

"What's that supposed to mean? Why wouldn't we eat? Everyone's already here!"

"Can we wait ten more minutes? Someone else is coming," Tessa said, a little embarrassed. "But if you're really that hungry, go ahead. We can just order again when he gets here."

"Who?" Landon's tone sharpened. That's all he cared about

It was just a phone call

now suddenly another person was coming?

"Ethan. You guys know him, right? He said he needed to talk, so I told him to

come here. You don't mind,

do you?*

Guys were usually chill about this stuff.. right?

how

"I mind. Very much." Nathaniel sounded deeply aggrieved. If the guy was coming, why not sooner?
Wit

right when food arrived?

"Then we'll wait." Landon said calmly.

It was just lunch. No big deal.

Why

Nathaniel was speechless. Anything Tessa said, Landon would just go along with that much was clear.

Was this really the same decisive, ruthless alpha they knew?

Ethan followed the coordinates Tessa had sent and soon arrived at the restaurant others to be there too.

but he didn't expect

Landon and Nathaniel both knew Ethan, and vice versa. But all their past encounters had been in official settings - never something this casual.

"Alpha." Ethan gave a polite nod.

Landon returned the greeting with a small nod of his own.

"All right, let's eat first." Tessa's stomach was rumbling too. Of all times, Ethan had to pick now to find her.

The private room fell quiet except for the sound of silverware tapping against plates.

Landon and Nathaniel were always like this around outsiders, and Tessa was never one to talk much anyway.

Thankfully, the food here was good. Everyone ate a decent amount.

asked.

Tessa had a decent appetite. Once she'd finished most of her meal, she finally asked, "Ethan, didn't you say you had something to talk about? Go ahead."

He probably needed to head back to Navoris soon. After all, he was in charge of transporting S back.

Ethan glanced at Landon, who sat silent and unreadable on the other side of the table and whatever he'd meant to say, he swallowed it.

Seeing that, Nathaniel couldn't help but joke, "Ethan, don't tell me you're here to confess or something?"

The way he kept hesitating-

- What else could it be?

The second Nathaniel said that, Landon shot him a cold glare. An alpha's pressure spilled out uncontrollably, and the silverware on the table began to tremble...

Chapter 354 A Beast in the Room

"Alpha, I was just talking nonsense please don't get mad."

Nathaniel smacked himself on the mouth.

What the hell was wrong with him? As a beta of the Shadow Pack, he should know how to keep his emotions in check and know what to say and what not to say...

"Forget it. It's not that urgent anyway. I'll head back first. When you return to Navoris, let me treat you to a meal. Thanks again for today." Ethan still didn't ask what he'd wanted to ask.

Under the weight of Landon's alpha pressure, even the courage to speak was hard to summon.

Tessa didn't press him. She simply nodded.

"We're done eating too. Let's head out."

The four of them walked out together, and Tessa moved to settle the bill. Landon

tried to pay, but she stopped him.

"You're in my territory now. Let me treat you."

Landon didn't argue and let her pay.

"Tessa, I'm heading out. Once you're back in Navoris, get in touch with me. I

really need your help with something important."

Ethan said his piece, then got into the car and left.

Tessa, Landon, and Nathaniel stood there watching him drive off.

"Tessa, don't pay attention to that Ethan guy. I swear, he's totally into you."

Nathaniel huffed. "He even dared act like that in front of our alpha!"

"Nathaniel, you talk too much." Tessa finally spoke. Whether someone liked her or not matter?

What mattered was how she felt.

Nathaniel's mouth twitched.

Was he being disliked right now?

He was just trying to look out for her, okay?

"Alpha, did you hear that...".

"You do talk a lot. Since everything's handled now, head back first."

did that even

"What about you, Alpha?" Nathaniel asked instinctively.

They'd come together - shouldn't they go back together?

Landon gave him a long look. What was up with Nathaniel lately? Couldn't even smell the alpha's desire to

be alone with his mate?

"Do I need to report my every move to you now?" Landon asked dangerously.

"Sorry, Alpha. My bad." Nathaniel immediately backed down. "I'm leaving! Tessa, take care of yourself, okay? All men are beasts and your alpha is the biggest beast of all!"

And with that, Nathaniel launched into his beta-specific sprinting mode and fled.

Tessa was truly speechless.

As for Landon

he stood there stone-faced.

It had clearly been too long since he'd "disciplined" Nathaniel. That beta was getting a little too cocky. Maybe it was time to assign him some punishment -like cleaning ten truckloads of mining waste by

hand.

Tessa spoke up. "Don't you have a lot on your plate? You should head back with Nathaniel. I'll be fine on my own."

"It's not that I'm worried about you," Landon said, taking her hand. "I just want to spend more time with you."

That line came out of his mouth so easily it made Tessa's cheeks flush, a tingling sensation spreading from the glands on the back of her neck.

"Come on. Is there anywhere fun to visit in Falindale? Let's go for a walk."

They'd just eaten, and it'd be good to get some movement in. Going straight back to the hotel... for Landon, that would be nothing short of torture.

Whether it was Flex acting up or the primal instincts of his pine pheromones, his whole body urged him to fully mark Tessa to make her his one and only mate.

After all, men were all the same. Put them in a room with the woman they loved, and their thoughts were

especially when that man/was an alpha in his sensitivity cycle.

bound to wander

"There is a place. The view's amazing."

Tessa thought of a spot, then flagged down a taxi by the roadside and got in with Landon.

Just as the car pulled away, another figure rushed out from a nearby building.

Tessa!

Where did she go?

He'd clearly seen her from upstairs just now - how could she be gone already?

"Alpha, what's wrong?" Nathan's beta finally caught up, panting.

"I saw Tessa. She really is in Falmdale." Nathan's pupils glowed faint red.

Chapter 355 Moonbound

Nathan had already been in Falindale for three days. He'd mobilized the entire werewolf underground network, but still couldn't find a trace of Tessa. He'd almost given up on the area altogether.

He never expected to suddenly catch sight of that familiar figure she turned to ash.

Seeing the Alpha like this, the beta beside him clenched his fists.

the one girl he could recognize even if

He knew what that red gleam in Nathan's eyes meant. When the wolf's mark flickered crimson like that, it was a sign the Alpha's possessiveness was nearing collapse.

The girl who had once thrown his world into chaos had returned.

The silver ring on Tessa's ring finger matched the one Nathan wore a pair of Moonchase Bonds he had forged with his own hands.

Inside the bands was a lunar incantation etched with both their blood- a bond nearly as powerful as that between true mates, allowing him to track her location through lunar phases.

Before faking her death, Tessa had deliberately destroyed the resonance stone inside the ring the core component that held the contract together. But Nathan had believed it had been broken by an outside force.

To restore the bond, he had performed a forbidden ritual- the Blood Moon Reforging- Nightshade Pack's altar, offering the blood of one hundred adult wolves in sacrifice.

at the

The ritual had released a crimson fog saturated with wild lunar energy, scorching every werewolf brand within ten miles to black ash. Even the Silvermoon Tribunal from the Council had been dispatched to investigate.

The beta looked at Nathan's trembling fingers with a bitter knot in his throat. The backlash from that forbidden magic had left the Alpha unable to transform for an entire year. Even now, his wolf powers hadn't fully returned.

Now, having finally caught a glimpse of the girl who vanished without a trace this unhinged Alpha might unleash next...

who knew what madness

Meanwhile, Tessa brought Landon to the front gate of Falindale No. 1 High School.

Landon knew this had been her school - though her time here probably hadn't been very pleasant.

"Why aren't we going through the front?"

Tessa was already heading toward the side wall, clearly planning to climb over.

"They don't let people in. And I was kind of a big deal here back in the day."

She led Landon to her usual climbing spot. It had the best access - most importantly, no electric fencing.

"What, you want me to give you a boost?" With Landon's skills, getting over that wall would be no problem.

He reached up with one hand, grabbed the top, and pulled himself up effortlessly.

Then he held out a hand to her.

Tessa didn't hesitate. She grabbed his hand and climbed up after him.

They landed smoothly on the other side.

Since it was winter break, the campus was nearly empty. They strolled through freely.

This had been Tessa's world for two years. Being back here brought a wave of memories.

"It must've been hard, living in Falindale alone." Just thinking about how she'd been exiled here five years ago made his chest tighten.

She had only been twelve then – just a child. She should've been growing up in the protection of her pack, learning basic skills, laughing, thriving... instead, she'd been thrown out and forced to survive alone in this remote city.

Tessa gave a faint smile, remembering what it had been like to arrive here all on her own five years ago.

"It wasn't that bad. If I hadn't come to Falindale, I wouldn't be who I am now."

A lot of things in life depended on how you chose to see them.

Landon took her hand as they walked along the school's soccer field.

If only I'd met her sooner.

If only I'd known her then, I would've protected her, kept her from all that pain and isolation.

But there were no ifs in this world.

After two laps around the field, Tessa got a little tired and sat down. Landon laid back beside her.

It was a good day – rare sunlight had broken through the winter gloom, and it felt warm and gentle on

their skin.

Landon hadn't expected her to bring him here. But he liked it.

He regretted not being able to go to high school or college with her. He couldn't help wondering if maybe he was too old for her.

They spent over an hour wandering around Falindale No. 1. Tessa was just starting to doze off when her phone rang it was Dream.

She stood and walked a few steps away to answer it.

Landon felt a hint of disappointment that she wouldn't take the call next to him.

Chapter 356 Run With Me

As soon as she answered the call, Dream's voice came through, excited.

"Tessa, good news! The two hundred million is in-

money's in the account!"

So that guy had kept his word after all.

"Good. Now don't do anything like that again." Dream still wasn't strong enough to take on a dangerous drug lord by herself especially not one who specialized in creating that mutated variant of Soulrot

Venom.

Dream rubbed her nose.

"Okay, okay, I got it. Don't worry! Next time, I'll just go in swinging!"

Her shooting skills were solid, but in terms of pure hand-to-hand combat into wolf power-she still had a long way to go.

especially without tapping

"By the way, where are you right now? If you haven't left Falindale yet, I was gonna take you out tonight- show you a good time!"

Word had it that the most luxurious club in town had brought in some illusionist cat shifters. Business had been booming.

"No need. I might be heading back to Navoris tonight." Christmas was coming up. It was about time to go back the old man had already called her multiple times to hurry home.

"Leaving already?" Dream sounded genuinely disappointed. "You finally came back, and you can't even stay a few more days with me?"

She was all alone out here it was miserable.

"I can't. My grandpa wants me home."

the

"Fine! If I miss you, I'll just go to Navoris and find you!" Dream said breezily. After all, in her pack and family's eyes, she was already the rebellious runaway girl. Whether she stayed in Falindale or left didn't matter anymore.

"Okay."

After hanging up, Tessa walked back to Landon and held out her hand.

"Let's go. Didn't you say we were heading back to Navoris?" He still had plenty waiting for him there - if he delayed any longer, he'd only be more swamped when he got back.

"Are you done with everything here in Falindale? I can wait for you if you're not."

It wasn't like he had to leave right away. Besides, the preparations for her birthday banquet in Navoris were just about finished.

"It's all handled. Nothing big left. You really didn't have to come all the way here." She knew he probably wasn't here just for her - but/still, she couldn't help saying

it.

Landon took her hand - but instead of getting up, he tugged her down onto him.

"Don't overthink it. I had other business in Falindale too."

"Mm."

Tessa thought he'd tell her what that "business" was. But he didn't.

Whatever he could tell her, he already had. The rest... telling her would only drag her into danger.

And he would never do that.

"Let me go." Tessa pushed against the field with both hands, trying to get up

around her waist, refusing to budge.

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but his arms locked firmly

"Don't overthink things." He wasn't hiding anything out of guilt - he just didn't want her getting hurt.

His world was full of danger. Full of chaos and uncertainty.

The only thing he wanted to give her... was happiness.

Tessa scoffed softly. Did she really seem like the type to overthink everything?

Seeing her like that - so adorably defiant — Landon couldn't help himself. He cupped her face and kissed her lightly.

"Who's there?!"

Just then, a werewolf security guard doing his rounds spotted them out on the field something.

clearly up to

"Sh*t."

Interrupted mid-moment, Landon cursed, then quickly stood and grabbed his girl's hand.

He took off running, dragging her along with him.

Tessa followed without resistance, letting him pull her along as they dashed across the school grounds.

Her lips curled into a smile.

Being pulled along like this – not needing to think, just running with him it felt like freedom.

Like the time she'd run through the empty woods as a white wolf, chasing the aurora, scattering the morning dew beneath her paws. Wild. Weightless. Free.

She glanced at Landon running ahead of her.

And in that moment, Tessa thought- if he kept holding her hand like this, leading the way...

She wouldn't mind running with him for the rest of her life.

Chapter 357 The One Who Returned

"Stop right there!"

The werewolf security guard panted as he chased after them.

Tessa just laughed even harder, her smile bright and unrestrained.

Landon turned and caught a glimpse of that smile and in that split second, his heart thumped wildly.

He felt it again. That rush. That flutter.

He was falling for her all over again this bold, dazzling version of Tessa. She shone so brightly it was impossible to look away.

This time, instead of climbing the wall, Tessa led Landon straight out through the front gate.

Once they were off school grounds, the guard naturally stopped chasing.

Even after they left the school behind, Landon was still holding her hand as they strolled down the street.

That little dash had left Tessa's cheeks flushed a vivid red. She looked lively, radiant.

Looking at her beautiful profile, Landon asked, "How do you want to get back?"

Tessa shot back, "What about you?"

"Let's drive. No rush anyway - and we can enjoy the scenery on the way."

"Sure." Tessa had no objections.

They went back to the hotel, packed up their things, and hit the road.

By the time Nathan arrived at the hotel, Tessa and Landon had just left.

"Alpha, she's gone. And she left with another man." The beta reported what he'd found.

Nathan punched the wall. The shockwave from his wolf force cracked the surface with web-like fractures of ice.

"Damn it."

Why did he have to be just one step too late?

He'd followed the last traces of the Moonchase Bond's residual energy all the he was giving up now.

here way

there was no way

"Alpha, we should go. There's still official business waiting for you back at Frost Pack," the beta reminded him.

Frost Pack was the largest in Yalvaria. Nathan was a powerful alpha - widely considered the strong contender to become the next state Alpha King.

If it hadn't been for the forbidden ritual he performed three years ago, which backfired, he might have already claimed Montedra's crown.

Worse, that ritual had required blood sacrifices from captured Montedra werewolves. It had enraged Landon to the point that he launched a war under the name of the the Moon Delty. The fighting only stopped after countless Frost Pack warriors were slaughtered.

Landon had declared that if Nathan ever dared step foot in Montedra again, he'd make sure he never left alive.

Being in Montedra at all was already a risk. And now they'd stirred up trouble looking for someone? If Landon found out, they might not make it out alive...

"I'm not leaving without Tessa." Nathan's voice was cold and final. No matter what, he wasn't letting her slip away again.

"Alpha-"

Nathan turned his pressure-filled gaze on the beta, who immediately fell silent. Still, for the sake of his Alpha's safety, the beta forced himself to speak.

"If your father finds out you're risking everything again for Tessa, the old Alpha won't let her off easy" Nathan snapped. In a flash, his wolf claws slashed across the beta's cheek, leaving three bleeding gashes. "My business doesn't need your commentary." He wanted only one thing now - to find Tessa, and make sure she could never leave him again.

Just thinking about her - that face, so eerily like the one in his memory - sent a blood-red shimmer rippling through the wolf markings in his pupils.

Yes. From the moment he'd seen Tessa in Yalvaria, he had vowed to make her his.

That girl walking alone under the rain with an umbrella - her side profile had been identical to his lost mate. Even the curve of her brow had the haunting symmetry of something carved by the the Moon Deity herself.

Ever since that Blood Moon night five years ago - the night he lost his destined mate - his wolf had been on the verge of madness. The soul of his wolf pounded endlessly against the mental walls of his consciousness, snarling, howling.

He and his wolf had never been able to accept that loss.

Until he saw Tessa.

Her face, the faint butterfly-marked birthmark on the back of her neck

every detail rattled his very

core.

In that moment, his wolf curled into a trembling pup in the depths of his spirit, and

let out a whimper for the first time in years.

Even if her mate mark hadn't awakened yet... even if her wolf soul was still dormant...

He and his wolf had already decided: this was a sign from the the Moon Deity. His destined m
reborn in shattered soul form/

It had to be their endless prayers that moved the goddess to bring her back this way.

had been

Chapter 358 Territory and Tethers

"Keep searching," Nathan said coldly.

All these years, he had never truly believed that Tessa was dead.

Now that he'd finally found a real lead, there was no way he was letting it go.

Nathan irritably turned the silver ring on his finger.

Damn it. If it hadn't been for the Silvermoon Judges interrupting the ritual back then, he would've fully repaired the bond ring. Instead, he was left relying on occasional, unstable resonance to sense her general direction and going through hell just to chase her down.

Right then, the beta's phone rang.

the former alpha- his whole body tensed. This was bad. Really bad.

When he saw who was calling the former alpha

But no matter how reluctant he was, he couldn't ignore the call. As soon as he picked up and heard the voice on the other end - the piercing howl of the Arctic wolf- a chill ran down his spine even through the receiver.

"Alpha, it's the former alpha." The beta held out the phone with both hands, utterly respectful.

Nathan glanced at him. His gaze was like a lone wolf whose prey had just been taken – so cold it made the beta's wolf ears pop out from fright.

This had nothing to do with him. He hadn't ratted Nathan out to the old man!

Nathan took the phone with a look of pure resistance.

His father's voice came through with commanding pressure. "Return to Falindale immediately. Don't make me recall you through the clan brand."

The moment the call ended, Nathan crushed the phone in his hand. Wolf aura burst uncontrollably from his body.

But he couldn't disobey his father.

After all, when the forbidden ritual backfired and shattered his beast core three years ago, it was his father who repaired his wolf'soul using his own life essence.

During Nathan's long recovery, it was his father who protected the entire Frost Pack alone, Every order from him wasn't just a command - it was instinct etched into blood and bone.

The beta stood off to the side, too terrified to breathe.

"Fine. We'll go back for now. Keep people looking. If you can't find Tessa within a week..." Nathan trailed off coldly. As he opened the car door, the metal crunched under his grip, leaving five deep claw marks. "Don't bother showing your face/again."

The beta's face twisted with stress.

A soul-bond search that had failed for three years Landon's home turf?

now he was expected to succeed in a week, a

That was like sending a pup to fight a dragon.

While Nathan was frantically chasing shadows, Tessa was enjoying a relaxed ride in Landon's car

They were driving back to Navoris, and the scenery along the way was beautiful. Landon didn't drive fast. There was no need to rush.

It was rare for the two of them to have some peaceful, private time together short. he wasn't eager to cut it

By the time they arrived in Navoris, it was already past 7 p.m. Ysabel had found out Tessa was returning and insisted on having dinner together. She and Nathaniel had been waiting at the freeway exit.

So when Landon saw Nathaniel's car right after getting off the highway, he genuinely considered pretending not to see them and just driving away.

What was with these two?

They could fall in love all they wanted - but did they have to do it in front of him?

He finally had a moment alone with Tessa...

But of course, Nathaniel had no idea what Landon was thinking. The second he saw their car, he waved enthusiastically.

Faced with such energy, Landon had no choice but to pull over.

As soon as the car stopped, Ysabel ran over and knocked on the window.

Tessa rolled it down and saw her beaming face.

"Tessa, you're finally back! You have no idea how much I missed you."

She'd already been waiting over an hour just for this dinner. That was real dedication.

"I told you both to wait at Silvermoon Estate. Why come all the way out here?" Ysabel bit her lip. "I couldn't wait. I just had to see you

not even one extra minute."

I'm just her driver, okay? You don't know what I went through "Exactly! Alpha, don't look at me like that trying to stop her. She insisted on coming here to pick up Tessa!" Nathaniel quickly explained to his now- sulking Alpha.

This girl

every time something involved Tessa, she became way too enthusiastic.

If only she were that enthusiastic with him...

Chapter 359 Uninvited Guests

Inside the private room at Silvermoon Estate, the moment the four of them sat down, Ysabel started chatting nonstop with Tessa.

"Alpha, Ethan really pulled off something big this time."

While the two girls talked, Nathaniel, bored, turned to Landon to bring it up.

"Yeah." Landon gave a flat response.

With a case this major solved, of course it counted as a huge achievement.

"He's useful. His wolf soul is strong and clean."

"Alpha always has a good eye," Nathaniel said, laying it on a bit thick - but it was true. The Alpha King's instincts were sharper than all of theirs.

And Ethan really was promising. The only question was whether they could bring him over to their side.

With Tessa and Ysabel present, neither Landon nor Nathaniel mentioned much about the S case.

"Tessa, when is Avery Band coming back? Will there be a performance before Christmas?" Ysabel asked eagerly.

"Their contract issues have been resolved. They'll be back tomorrow. But with the holidays coming up and my entertainment company not open yet, the concerts will start next year."

Christmas was almost here. It was time to enjoy the holiday first.

"That's too bad. It's been so long since I heard Avery Band perform!*

"Most people think they've been blacklisted," Nathaniel added, sharing a rumor he'd recently heard.

Tessa answered calmly. "Let that rumor keep spreading. A lot of their fans are already angry with Tianle, aren't they?"

Evan had dared to push Miracle and the others around of course, he had to pay the price.

"Tessa, you're still holding a grudge over Evan?" Nathaniel asked.

Seriously, offending Tessa really was a miserable fate. This grudge had been going for months.

"He messed with Avery Band. I won't let him live peacefully." And she absolutely had the ability to make sure of it.

"Okay, let's stop talking about Evan" Ysabel said, clearly uninterested in that man.

"When Avery Band is back, will you have dinner with them? If so, take me with you!"

She was a diehard fan. Getting to eat with them would be a dream.

"Probably." Tessa had already asked them to start preparing for a new album. "I'll call you."

After dinner, they ended up going to a movie Ysabel's idea

and by the time it ended, it was alr

past eleven.

Ysabel looked at Landon and asked hopefully. "Can I stay over at Wisteria Apartment with Tessa tonight? I have so much I want to talk to her about!"

"Are you going to Wisteria Apartment or the Sinclair house?" Landon asked Tessa instead of responding to Ysabel.

Tessa thought for a moment.

"It's late. I'll stay at Wisteria Apartment tonight and go to the Sinclair house tomorrow." If she went now, she'd wake up her grandfather.

"Okay. I'll stay with you for a bit at Wisteria Apartment then. Ysabel was completely ignored.

Had they just not heard her question? Or had they heard it and pretended not to?

Determined, Ysabel linked arms with Tessa and tried again. "Tessa, can I stay the night with you at Wisteria Apartment? Christmas is coming, and everyone's going to be busy - it'll be hard to find time to hang out."

Tessa nodded.

Overjoyed by the answer, Ysabel beamed. "I knew you were the best!"

Landon didn't want to be apart from Tessa. Nathaniel didn't want to be apart from Ysabel. So in the end, the four of them all returned to Wisteria Apartment together.

Thankfully, the apartment was big enough - plenty of room for four people. After they got back, Ysabel showered and was about to go chat with Tessa. But just as she reached Tessa's door, her uncle stepped in front of her.

"Ysabel, I know you really like Tessa. But she's been busy all day, drove for hours, and even went out to a movie with you."

Ysabel suddenly felt guilty.

She hadn't realized how exhausted Tessa already was.

"So whatever you want to say, say it tomorrow."

And with that, Landon opened Tessa's door - and walked right in himself.

Ysabel stood there, stunned.

If Tessa was so tired... what was he going in there for?

Double standard. This was a blatant double standard.

But she didn't have the guts to knock on the door. If she dared to go in now, her

uncle would definitely throw her out of the apartment himself.

Chapter 360 Trouble in the Room

When Tessa stepped out of the shower and saw Landon in her room, she didn't even find it surprising anymore.

"Where's Ysabel? Didn't she say she was coming over after her shower?"

"I ran into her. She said she had a great time today and wanted to get some rest early" Landon lied without hesitation.

"Oh..." Tessa raised an eyebrow but didn't press it. She simply kept drying her hair as she walked over.

"You should get some sleep too. You've been driving all day you must be exhausted." Landon was probably the most tired of them all.

"I'm not tired."

As the alpha of the Nightshade Pack, his stamina and energy far exceeded that of most werewolves.

He got up, took the towel from her hands, and motioned for her to sit on the couch. Then he started drying her hair for her.

"Mr. Landon, I can do it-"

Landon gently but firmly pressed down on her shoulders. "I know you can. But I want to do it. Just sit back and relax."

Tessa didn't argue again, letting him take over.

His hands were soft and steady, pressing lightly along her scalp. It felt so good that Tessa closed her eyes..

Just then, her phone lit up.

"You got a message," Landon said after glancing at the screen.

Tessa opened her eyes and reached for her phone.

Her hair was already mostly dry. Landon now sat with her on the single-seater couch - which had once felt spacious, but now felt tight with the two of them squeezed in.

So Landon simply pulled her into his lap.

From that angle, she could see his sharp jawline and those long, defined lashes...

"Who was it?" Landon reminded her, she still hadn't read the message.

With his pine-scented pheromones all around her, Tessa had been completely distracted. Only after his prompt did she glance at her phone.

"Samuel."

She got up off his lap.

"You should head out. I need to call him."

Reluctantly, Landon let go.

"Go ahead. I'll wait here."

Tessa stepped onto the balcony and dialed Samuel's number.

He picked up instantly.

"Tessa! You finally remembered to call me! So? Did you make it back from Falindale yet?"

"Yeah. Why?"

"Nothing major. Just letting you know- Nathan's back in Yalvaria."

"Oh." She really didn't feel like talking about Nathan.

"Don't let your guard down. Word is he saw you in Falindale, and now he's got

people out looking for you everywhere."

Tessa frowned in confusion.

He saw her

and then just left?

Samuel seemed to guess what she was thinking. "Apparently something happened with his father. That's why he went back."

He'd told her to stay put in Navoris for a reason. It was Landon's core territory - Nathan wouldn't dare make a move here.

"Okay. Got it. It's late. I'm tired."

"What? I've been worried sick about you, and now you want to hang up after just a few minutes? You heartless girl."

"Landon's still in my room."

"What?! You and Landon are in the same room?!" Samuel's voice shot up. "Tessa, I'm warning you! Landon is a grown man - a highly possessive Montedra Alpha King, no less! You're still a teenage girl. Just the two of you alone in a room at night - it's dangerous!"

Before he could say more, Tessa hung up.

Honestly, Samuel could be so annoying sometimes.

She walked back inside and approached Landon.

"Why are you still here?"

"Waiting for you."

"Waiting for what? Samuel says I'm underage and that you better behave yourself."

Landon frowned. "What's that got to do with him? Tessa, that Samuel's no good. Let's not talk to him anymore."

Tessa: "You two really do have the exact same opinion of each other"

Hadn't Samuel said something similar before?

"I'm nothing like him," Landon said, clearly irritated by the comparison.

"Oh."

Tessa didn't argue. If Landon said he was different, then he was different.

Landon looked a little hurt. "So in your eyes, I'm just some beast waiting to pounce?"

"Not at all. Honestly, you're very gentlemanly."

Tessa had never doubted that.

"Then since I'm such a gentleman, and it's already late, can I leave now and let you sleep?"

Landon gave a helpless laugh, reaching over to flick her nose affectionately. After all that talking, this was her whole plan to get rid of him?

Not letting her off so easily, Landon picked her up and strode straight toward her bed...