

Alpha-less 361

Chapter 361 No One Takes Her

Tessa calmly wrapped her arms around Landon's neck.

After spending so much time with him, she knew him well enough to be sure as long as she didn't give her consent, he would never cross the line.

So she wasn't worried at all. In fact, she had the mind to admire the way his muscles flexed around her when he held her tighter.

Samuel's voice suddenly echoed in her mind – Landon, as Montedra's Alpha King, is powerful and dominant. His needs must be intense too.

And just like that, her thoughts wandered.

Even just being held like this, she could feel the hard muscles beneath his shirt. If she were lying naked on top of him, panting into his chest... the image was ridiculously sensual-

It wasn't until he placed her on the bed that she snapped out of it, her face instantly flushing red.

Landon pulled the blanket up over both of them. When he noticed her blushing, he chuckled softly.

"Don't worry. Sure, I'd love to do something. But now that you've given me such a noble title, of course I won't do a thing."

Tessa grew more flustered. But she definitely couldn't let him find out what she'd just been thinking. Doing her best to act composed, she said, "Just being honest. You really are a gentleman."

"All right. You've had a long day. Don't think about anything else. Just sleep. Once you're out, I'll leave," Landon said gently.

"Okay."

Right then, she was especially well-behaved - even her voice sounded soft and sleepy.

And it was that gentle, sleepy version of Tessa that hit Landon the hardest. Right in the heart.

Her long lashes drooped over her bright eyes. Landon leaned in and kissed her gently on the forehead, then closed his eyes too.

That kiss made Tessa open hers again.

But when she saw his eyes were already shut, she didn't say anything. Instead, she snuggled closer.

This version of Landon - calm and still

was someone she just wanted to lean on.

Resting against his shoulder, breathing in his pine-scented pheromones, Tessa quickly fell asleep.

Once he was sure she was deeply asleep, Landon finally, reluctantly, got up and left her room.

Ysabel was already asleep.

Only Nathaniel was in the living room.

As soon as Landon walked in, Nathaniel stood up and reported, "Alpha, someone

in Falindale is asking

around about Tessa."

He'd been trying to tell Landon, but hadn't found the right time.

Nathaniel then asked, "Are we sure Tessa's return this time was really that simple?"

Landon's mind flashed to the slender figure he'd fought in Falindale - the one who'd tangled with him blow for blow but he didn't respond to Nathaniel's question. Instead, he gave an order.

"Find out who it is."

Whoever had the nerve to openly search for Tessa... whether friend or foe, they needed to know.

"I've had people looking into it, but it's weird - we've got nothing so far." Nathaniel frowned again.

Landon raised a brow. "So this is the extent of your ability?"

You can't even identify a single person, and you still have time to talk nonsense?

Nathaniel cried injustice. "Alpha, this really isn't on me! You know how strange the people around Tessa are. They're all insanely powerful. Not being able to trace them isn't surprising!"

"Honestly, Tessa's just not a normal person. One minute she's tied to the Werewolf International Medical Corps, the next it's that S-tier healer Samuel... now there's another unknown force. Alpha, falling for someone like her - don't you feel any pressure?"

They never knew what might happen next. Who might show up one day and take her away.

Didn't that scare him?

Landon grinned arrogantly. "You think there's anyone in this world who can take Tessa away from me?"

He had chosen her. Whether she was his destined mate or not

it didn't matter.

He had decided. She was the one.

No one could take her from him.

"Keep mobilizing Nightshade Pack's resources. And don't let Tessa find out - I

don't want her worrying."

"Yes, Alpha."

Chapter 362 Family Conversations

Early the next morning, when Ysabel and Tessa woke up, Nathaniel had already brought breakfast

After eating, Tessa planned to return to the Sinclair family estate waiting for her to come home..

her grandfather had been eagerly

The elders of the Thorne family also called Landon, asking him to bring Ysabel back early to help prepare for Christmas.

During breakfast, Ysabel kept complaining.

She really didn't want to go back so soon.

She finally got out for a bit of course she wanted to enjoy herself a little longer.

Before parting, Ysabel reminded Tessa repeatedly, "Tessa, you have to remember if Avery Band comes back, you must invite me to dinner with them!"

"Mm. Don't worry. Once they're back, I'll call you."

Tessa was already preparing to launch her entertainment company. In the future, Ysabel would be considered one of Avery Band's juniors. It wouldn't hurt for them to get familiar.

Miracle would also be teaching Ysabel a few things about singing.

After breakfast, everyone went their separate ways.

Landon personally drove Tessa back to the Sinclair family estate.

At the gate, Tessa asked, "Want to come in?" He hadn't seen her grandfather in a while, after all.

"I'll come by in a few days to visit him. Help me say hi for now."

"Okay."

Just as Tessa was about to get out of the car, Landon grabbed her wrist and pulled her into a hug before letting her go.

"Go on in."

The thought of parting from her again made him reluctant.

Tessa leaned in and gave him a kiss on the corner of his lips. "See you next time." Only after watching her walk inside did Landon finally start the car and drive away. Inside the Sinclair estate, Tessa walked into the living room and saw Cedric playing chess with her grandfather.

She knew Cedric had been practically living at the office lately, working nonstop on the Stellar Mines case - a mineral vein that stretched across the Frostmoon, Iron, and Ivory Packs. It contained rare ores that could be used to forge silver- engraved wolf daggers, enough to arm a medium-sized pack for the next 14:01 Sun, 25 May

twenty years.

As the alpha of Frostmoon Pack, Cedric had to fight tooth and nail in the tri-pack negotiations to win the best share for his people.

Now that Christmas was around the corner and the Werewolf Council was going

on break, he finally had the chance to come home and spend the holidays with family.

Hearing footsteps, the old man looked up. When he saw Tessa, he immediately stood up.

"Our Tessa's back! Why were you gone so long?" he grumbled with obvious affection.

The older he got, the more he wanted the kids close by. He knew it was selfish, but he just couldn't help it.

"Grandpa, I was only gone for three days." She'd originally planned to stay in Falindale for a week, but once Landon showed up, she returned early with him.

"Only three days? Felt more like forever!"

Tessa nodded politely toward Cedric.

He got up from the couch too. Seeing how much she'd grown, he couldn't help but sigh. "Our Tessa really is all grown up."

This little sister of his had always been quiet and reserved - not as lively as Winona - but she saw things more clearly than most.

"You two haven't seen each other in a while. Spend some time catching up."

Just then, the old man's phone rang. He stepped into his study to take the call, leaving Cedric and Tessa alone.

"Did everything go okay in Falindale?" Cedric asked the moment they sat down. Tessa wasn't great at small talk. She simply nodded.

no matter what, he's still our father. I just hope "Tessa, we're family. I know what Dad did was wrong, but no matter what, he's still our father. I just hope

you can-"

Tessa frowned slightly.

So this was why Cedric had come home? To lecture her?

"I know." She had her own judgment about how to handle things.

Cedric went on. "Christmas is coming. He's been alone all this time... I was thinking of letting him come home for the holiday. You don't mind, right?"

Tessa frowned again. "Does Grandpa know about this?"

Chapter 363 The Rift Deepens

Cedric shook his head.

"I haven't decided yet. I wanted to talk to you first." After all, this was something that directly involved her

"I'm not okay with it," Tessa rejected him flatly.

Yardley only ever cared about his own interests. Just for the sake of Sinclair Corp, he'd gone so far as to have Grandpa kidnapped. Who knew what he'd do next?

Cedric kept his tone patient. "Tessa, Dad already told me what happened. No matter what, we're still family. There's no need for things to get this ugly." Everything used to be fine, didn't it?

So how had things fallen apart so quickly since Tessa came back?

He'd been tied up for months dealing with Frostmoon Pack's affairs. Now that he was finally home, he just wanted the family to get along again.

The second Tessa saw his expression, she understood what he was thinking.

"Cedric, are you saying that if I hadn't come back, none of this would've happened?"

Tessa was sharp. It only took one look from him for her to figure it out.

And that was exactly why she could never get close to Cedric.

"I don't care what he told you. The moment he hurt Grandpa, I made my decision- he's not coming back!" she said again, firmly drawing her line.

"Tessa, there's got to be some kind of misunderstanding. Why would Dad hurt Grandpa? He's his own father."

Even now, Cedric refused to believe Yardley was capable of doing such a thing.

Sure, he'd seen plenty of ugly power struggles within the family. But still, he didn't want to believe Tessa would treat her own father like this.

Tessa let out a cold, mocking laugh.

Here we go again. Just like five years ago, he only listened to one side of the story and made up his mind

about her.

And now he had the nerve to come here and lecture her?

"Cedric, some alpha of Frostmoon Pack you are. Honestly, I'm not impressed."

So Yardley just had to say a few words and he bought it?

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"In that case, go ahead and make your own decision. I don't care," Tessa said, standing up and heading upstairs. She wasn't going to waste mother word on him.

Winona, who'd been hiding nearby eavesdropping, finally darted out.

Told you she wouldn't listen! That woman's always been cold and selfish- she'll do whatever it takes to ket what she wants!" She held up her still-injured right hand. "Look at this! She was so jealous of how talented I am that she hurt my hand just so I'd never be able to draw again. Now she's even kicked Dad out just to take over the Tang Corporation! If we let her keep running wild, she'll tear the whole Sinclair family apart!"

With Christmas approaching, Frostmoon Pack's lower-tier training camp had closed for the holiday, so Winona was back home.

She'd had enough of spending her days being lectured alongside those pathetic omegas.

Now that her brother Cedric was home, she just needed to cling tightly to him. Life wouldn't be so hard

after that.

After all, he was the alpha of Frostmoon Pack-blessed and recognized by the the Moon Deity herself at the succession ceremony. No one held more sway in the pack than him.

"Alright, your college entrance exams are right around the corner. Go study. I'll take care of things here," Cedric said, already worn out from dealing with Tessa.

He'd been running all over for the sake of the pack. Now that he was finally home, this was what he had to deal with...

"Don't overwork yourself, either," Winona said sweetly. "You've been so busy trying to secure resources for the pack-you should rest while you can."

"Yeah."

Seeing her like this filled Cedric with warmth. Winona really was the sweet, obedient one.

At lunch, Grandpa came upstairs personally to call Tessa down, and Cedric went with him.

While they were at it, he brought up the idea of letting Yardley come back.

He truly believed Grandpa wouldn't want Dad to spend Christmas all alone.

But what he didn't expect was for Grandpa's eyes to go completely cold the moment he brought it up.

"You already talked to Tessa about this?"

"I did." Cedric nodded. "Grandpa, Tessa's still young. Her judgment might not be

all that sound. I just can't believe Dad would kidnap you."

Walter's expression darkened even further.

"So what you're saying is, Tessa lied to me and slandered your father for no reason?"

Hearing the sharp edge in Grandpa's voice, Cedric quickly shook his head. "No, Grandpa, that's not what I

meant!"

Walter let out a frosty scoff.

"Tessa may be young, but she sees through everything. Back when I handed over

the Frostmoon Pack to you, I thought you could handle the responsibility. But now? You've really let me down."

Chapter 364 Unspoken Truths

Cedric sighed helplessly, "Grandpa, I just don't think things have to be like this between family."

"You really think Tessa would smear your father's name just for Sinclair Corp? Cedric, let me tell you if it weren't for me, Tessa would've already joined the International Werewolf Medical Organization! Do you know who Smith is, the founder of that organization? He personally came to perform surgery on me just to convince Tessa to be his successor!"

Compared to the International Werewolf Medical Organization, Sinclair Corp was nothing. Even ten Frostmoon Packs couldn't compare to a fraction of that group's strength.

Cedric looked stunned. "But... but didn't Tessa not even awaken as a wolf? Why would Smith want her as his heir?"

Seeing the disbelief on his face, Walter only felt more disappointed.

"Cedric, haven't you noticed anything different about Tessa since you came back? She's already awakened -and her wolf rank is higher than yours or mine!"

"What?!" Cedric's pupils shrank. "Then why didn't she tell any of us?"

"She's always been low-key. If certain people hadn't forced her hand, she never would've shown her true strength."

Walter stopped walking and his voice turned cold. "Don't bring up your father again. He kidnapped me and tried to threaten Tessa-what right does he have to come back for Christmas? There's no reason to let one man ruin the peace of this whole family."

"Go back downstairs. I'll get Tessa myself."

Tessa was such a sharp and perceptive girl-she must've figured out what Cedric meant the moment he brought it up.

That child never cared for people who didn't treat her sincerely, even if that person was her own brother.

"Okay."

Cedric didn't say another word. He turned and walked back downstairs, dazed, struggling to process everything he'd just learned...

But just when Cedric had dropped the topic, Lila brought it up again at lunch.

"Dad, maybe we should let Yardley come home for Christmas. We're still a family. This can't go on forever."

Walter slammed his utensils down on the table with a loud snap.

"What's wrong with all of you? Don't you and Cedric know exactly what Yardley did? He's a traitor-why should he be allowed back?"

"Grandpa, don't get so worked up. It's not good for your health," Tessa said gently, trying to soothe him.

Seriously, is there anyone in this family who's thinking straight?

"Dad, I know you're angry, but werewolves value family and their pack above all else. If you keep refusing to let Yardley come home, the Sinclairs will be a laughingstock-not just in Frostmoon Pack, but in all of Navoris

"I'm done eating." Walter got up like he hadn't even heard her and went upstairs.

Tessa followed, trying to calm him down.

Watching her, Walter's heart ached.

"Tessa, I'm sorry." If it weren't for him insisting she return, she wouldn't have to shoulder all of this.

Tessa gently held his hand.

"Grandpa, I don't mind." Whatever other people had to say-she truly didn't care.

"You... How can a girl be so strong it breaks my heart?" He really did hurt for her.

He hurt for his Tessa.

"Grandpa, as long as you stay well, leave everything else to me, okay?" "Okay."

She was still just a teenager, yet somehow she was strong enough to be the rock he leaned on, even when he was nearing the end of his life.

"Take a nap, okay? I have to run by Beauty Lux this afternoon. Once I'm back, I'll take you out for something good to eat. We're not staying in tonight, alright?"

"Alright. Just remember to invite Landon. I haven't had a meal with him in a long time."

Only Landon, alpha of Nightshade Pack, could give Tessa the kind of protection she truly needed.

"Don't worry, I'll invite him. And from now on, don't call him Alpha Landon. Just stick with Landon, like you always have." Her grandfather had earned that right.

Walter raised an eyebrow.

"So what, you've got a bit of a thing for Landon now?" His Tessa might still be young, but having someone to rely on wasn't a bad thing.

Besides, she'd be coming of age soon. Now that her wolf had awakened, she'd be

able to recognize her fated mate on the day she reached adulthood.

And if that mate happened to be Landon... all the better.

Chapter 365 The Alpha King

Tessa hadn't expected her grandfather to be this nosy. She paused in thought, then turned her head slightly, a little embarrassed. "I do like him... but what happens next depends on how he behaves."

Even though Landon already meant more and more to her, Tessa's pride wouldn't let her admit it outright.

"Oh, fair enough. Landon might be impressive, but our Tessa's not exactly easy to deal with either."

His granddaughter was the most remarkable person in the world-she deserved the very best.

"Alright, Grandpa, I'm heading to Beauty Lux now."

"Go ahead! Be careful."

Tessa left Walter's room and went straight to Beauty Lux.

The Beauty Lux of today was nothing like the nearly-bankrupt company it used to be. The moment you stepped into headquarters, you could see the confident, composed smiles on everyone's faces..

These days, they were truly proud to be part of Beauty Lux

Seeing all of it made Tessa emotional. Everything was just... right.

She was more than satisfied with how things had turned out.

Today marked the last working day before the holiday break. Beauty Lux would officially close after today.

Tessa had personally prepared generous gifts for all her employees. She also took time to offer each of them praise and encouragement, leaving everyone touched.

If she hadn't insisted on it, most of them would've happily worked straight through the holiday.

Before heading over, Tessa had messaged Landon to invite him to dinner. By the time she stepped out of Beauty Lux, he was already waiting outside.

Landon opened the passenger door for her himself. "All done?"

"Yeah. What about you?" Tessa looked at him. "It's not even dinnertime yet. You didn't need to come this early."

"Relax. I took care of everything before I left."

He wasn't some low-rank wolf ruled by mating urges—he knew the weight of his responsibilities.

"Just knowing I'd get to see you made me more efficient," Landon said gently.

Tessa couldn't help but blush. "We've only been apart for a few hours, Mr. Landon. Aren't you a little too clingy?"

"If I had it my way, I'd spend all twenty-four hours of the day with you."

"Okay, that's enough. Just drive."

She still wasn't used to how easily he dropped those smooth lines. Her heart was racing out of control

Landon drove them to the Sinclair house. As they walked in, Cedric and Winona were on the couch watching TV.

Even as the alpha of Frostmoon Pack, this was. Cedric's first time meeting Landon. The moment the man stepped inside, Cedric felt a powerful presence- like that of a ruler.

Tessa didn't bother introducing him. She led Landon straight upstairs to see Grandpa.

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"Who's the guy with Tessa?" Cedric asked.

Since his own alpha succession ceremony, this was the first time he'd ever felt such pressure from another person. It was like standing in the presence of a king.

Just hearing Landon's name made Winona sour.

"Landon."

She didn't want to say much. This was Tessa's triumph-and her own failure.

Naturally, she didn't want to talk about it.

"Who did you say?" Cedric's voice rose with disbelief. "Alpha Landon of Nightshade Pack?"

"That's right. Him. Honestly, I think Tessa must've drugged him or something. Why else would someone like him go for her?"

Cedric didn't even register Winona's bitterness.

All he could think was-Tessa was with the alpha king of Montedra?

The alpha king he hadn't even had the chance to meet, and Tessa had already brought him home?

In that case, maybe he could use this to get close to Alpha Landon too.

If Landon was willing to step in, then that disputed mineral vein at the border of

three packs-Frostmoon Pack might not just get a bigger share.

It might even be handed over to them entirely.

Chapter 366 Uninvited Shadows

At dinner, everyone except Tessa and Grandpa sat stiffly, clearly affected by the oppressive alpha king aura Landon gave off. Even the clinking of cutlery against porcelain came with an edge of nervous caution:

More than once, Cedric tried to signal Tessa using the subtle eye tremors unique to the Frostmoon Pack hoping she'd help him get a word in with Landon,

But Tessa either focused on cutting her steak or refilled Grandpa's glass, never once acknowledging him. Eventually, Cedric seized a lull in the conversation.

"Alpha Landon, I was wondering if you had any interest in the newly discovered Stellar Mines vein-"

"Not interested." Landon's pinewood pheromones suddenly turned sharp. "And Frostmoon Pack's alpha can't even manage basic negotiation?"

Tessa set down her knife and fork. "An alpha of Frostmoon Pack should know how to fight for profit with fangs and wit, not grovel for scraps."

The words hit like frostwolf fangs straight into Cedric's chest.

His grip on his wine glass tightened, knuckles pale from the strain. Where was she when I was running around for our pack? And now she thinks she has the right to lecture me?

Whatever warmth he'd once felt for Tessa faded even further.

After dinner, Landon personally drove Tessa and Grandpa home. Cedric and the others left in another car.

"Thank you for coming all this way just to have dinner with an old man like me," Walter said.
"Forget the unpleasantness-some people still think clinging to power is more dignified than fighting for it."

He was ashamed of Cedric's attempt to take the easy way out.

"Don't worry, Grandpa. I know you and I are not the same as them."

Walter smiled and nodded. "Merry Christmas in advance."

"Thank you, Grandpa."

After Grandpa got out of the car, he left Tessa and Landon alone.

Landon handed her two beautifully wrapped gift boxes. "Christmas presents. One for you and one for Grandpa. I figured he wouldn't accept it directly, so I'll count on you to pass it along."

"I haven't gotten you anything yet..."/She'd been busy non-stop since returning to Navoris.

I really can't keep up with Landon on this stuff.

As alpha of Nightshade Pack and/CEO of the Lu Corporation, he had to be even busier than her. Yet he always managed to surprise her

"That's okay. You're already the best gift I could ask for." Landon leaned down and

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Tessa accepted the gifts. "Thank you."

her gently.

She didn't say much, but silently resolved to find time to prepare something special for him something he'd truly like.

She got out of the car with the gifts and waved goodbye. Landon didn't drive off until she was inside and out of sight.

Tessa handed Grandpa his gift, then returned to her room.

She was in a great mood, excited to open her present-until the ring on her finger

began to glow with a strange, ceric light.

Her good mood vanished instantly.

Nathan. Why can't he just let go already?

She'd made it clear-she wasn't his Luna, and she didn't belong to him. Why couldn't he get that through his thick skull?

Meanwhile, in Yalvaria on the Montedra werewolf continent.

Beta Grant was reporting to Nathan. "Alpha, Tessa's in Navoris. But Navoris is under Nightshade Pack alpha Landon's rule. If we rush in without planning..."

"Afraid?" Nathan lounged on a sofa, smirking. "My own beta, telling me he's afraid?"

So that's where she was.

I knew it--there's no way someone could just vanish without a trace in this world.

"Alpha, it's not fear of Landon or death," Grant said helplessly. "But while we're strong in Yalvaria, Navoris is Landon's absolute territory. If we barge in, we'll be at a huge disadvantage."

"Grant, no need to say more. I'll go to Navoris alone. And Landon? He won't even sense I'm there."

He had a specially crafted potion that could completely mask his scent-even Landon wouldn't be able to detect him.

"Alpha-" Grant hesitated, then swallowed his words. He didn't dare tell Nathan that Landon clearly had feelings for Tessa, and the two of them already seemed to be in a relationship.

With Nathan's obsessive possessiveness, if he found out, it would spark a bloodbath.

"Enough. Leave me. I'll handle the trip to Navoris myself."

Christmas was coming.

What better time to show up and surprise her?

My Tessa... she'll be thrilled to see me, I'm sure.

Chapter 367 The Christmas Before the Storm

While Lucas was preparing to head to Navoris, Avery Band returned to the country.

Tessa brought Ysabel along to meet him at the airport and invited him out to dinner. She even wrote powerful, evocative lyrics for his new song.

Of course, she hadn't forgotten Landon's Christmas gift.

After dinner with Avery Band, Tessa handed Landon a beautifully wrapped gift box.

When he lifted the lid, inside was a handcrafted celestial scroll of the Wolf Clans- drawn in moonstone powder outlining the starry skies over Nightshade Pack territory. Every star was marked with coordinates of battlefields where he had once fought, and the edges of the scroll were embroidered with the totem of the Shadow Wolves.

"Merry Christmas in advance," she said softly, her ears turning red.

It was her first time making a gift by hand.

Landon's pupils quivered slightly as his fingers traced the embroidery still warm from her touch. This was the Moon Deity constellation map, meticulously drawn after she'd stayed up late poring through ancient werewolf texts. Every thread carried a trace of her scent.

His throat tightened. Suddenly, he pulled her into his arms, surrounding her with his pinewood pheromones like a tidal wave.

"Idiot," he murmured, voice hoarse, kissing her lips again and again. "I already told you-you're the most precious gift."

He held her tighter, heart full of warmth and aching tenderness. "Don't overwork yourself like this next time."

"You've been so good to me. I wanted to give something back."

"Silly girl... I'm not good to you because I expect something in return."

"I know. But I still want to show you how I feel..."

Before she could finish, his lips were already on hers, turning all her words into a slow, lingering kiss...

If Tessa didn't have to head back to the Sinclair home, Landon wouldn't have let her go at all.

Still catching his breath, he looked at the girl melting in his arms. "Your birthday's right after New Year's.. Let me host your coming-of-age ceremony." "Okay." Tessa nodded.

On her eighteenth birthday, her wolf would be able to recognize her fated mate.

And she wanted Landon to be the first face she saw that day just to see if he truly was the one.

With their promise made, Landon finally drove her home, fully content.

But the moment she walked into the Sinclair house, Samuel's call came through.

"Tessa, you need to prepare yourself,"

"What? You can't just start a sentence like that. I have no idea what you mean

"Nathan. Nathan's gone missing-did you know that?"

"No." Tessa was playing with Landon's gift-a scarf woven from his shed wolf fur, with strands of her own hair threaded into the yarn. The twin-bond totem shimmered faintly at each end.

"I told you already. That man has nothing to do with me."

Samuel was practically losing it. "Tessa, do you really think it has nothing to do with you? According to intel from the werewolf black market, he came back to find you. Which means he's most likely in Navoris right now! I don't care what you say-just stay home for Christmas. Don't go wandering off!"

If Nathan really caught her, her peaceful days would be over.

Samuel couldn't help cursing. "Fuck. That guy is insane. After all this time, and he still won't let you go?"

Nathan's a psycho-and he was just realizing that now?

"Forget it. It's none of your business."

So what if he shows up? This is Navoris, Landon's territory-not Yalvaria. What can he really do to me?

Tessa lovingly wrapped herself in Landon's scarf again, the scent of pinewood wrapping around her like an invisible embrace.

She didn't give Nathan another thought.

But what she didn't expect was to see him so soon-

At that very moment, Nathan stood at the gates of the Sinclair estate, a twisted grin on his face as he took in the villa steeped in Tessa's scent.

So this was her home, huh?

Even from this distance, he could feel the resonance of their blood bond as if it were calling to him.

She was inside.

Nathan's eyes glowed crimson.

This time-no matter the cost-he was taking her back.

Chapter 368 Cold-Blooded Claim

Nathan knocked on the front door of the Sinclair estate and made his intentions clear,

Walter eyed the young man standing at the threshold-confident, commanding,

and cold. The power rolling off him was impossible to ignore.

It was the first time anyone had ever come looking for Tessa like this.

Landon visited often, sure, but he usually showed up with Tessa in tow. He never came alone.

Walter didn't like this one. Sure, the kid wore a polite smile, but it didn't fool him. Beneath that clean-cut charm was a scent Walter knew too well-bitter snow and rotting leaves. A killing scent. Frost Pack pheromones. Wolves built for war. Wolves that killed without blinking.

"You said you're what to Tessa?" Walter asked again, his voice low and steady.

"Mr. Walter, I'm Tessa's boyfriend. And soon enough, we'll be mates." Nathan dialed down his usual intensity. For now, he played the gentleman. "I know it sounds hard to believe, but I'm telling the truth."

Louis's eyes widened. Ms. Sinclair's boyfriend? But Tessa's boyfriend is Alpha Mr. Thorne... right? Who the hell is this guy?

Walter's face darkened. "Listen, kid. I don't know what you're after, but you need to back off. Tessa already has a boyfriend."

"What?" "What?" The mask dropped in an instant. Nathan's smile vanished, his eyes slitting like a wolf's, and a savage red glint burned in their depths.

Tessa has a boyfriend? Since when? Who? Who the hell would dare take her from me?

"I said, she's already taken. And I'm more than happy with the man she chose. Whatever this is, it ends here. Leave."

Walter had no complaints about Landon.

It wasn't about his title-Alpha of the Nightshade Pack, ruler of Montedra. What mattered was how he treated Tessa. The man had been nothing but devoted.

Hearing Tessa was already with someone else, Nathan couldn't keep the fury down any longer. Hearing Tessa was already with someone else, Nathan couldn't keep the fury down any longer. The silver chandelier above them rattled and shook violently.

But then he remembered why he came. He shut his eyes, curled his fists tight, and forced the rage back down. When he opened them again, his voice was calm-too calm-but the edge was there, sharp

and deadly. "Mr. Thorne, you must be mistaken. I'm Tessa's boyfriend. Her future mate. I'm the one she's meant to be with."

Walter frowned deeper, instincts on high alert.

Across the room, Winona watched the chaos unfold, smug as ever. "Look at that, Grandpa. This is the girl you dote on so much. Your perfect Tessa, caught in a full-blown scandal. If this gets out, we'll be the laughingstock of all Navoris."

She sneered. Tessa sure knew how to play her cards. She had Alpha Thorne wrapped around her finger.

She was all tangled up with Nico from Navoris High. And now here came another man, claiming to be her boyfriend.

This one? He had a dark aura, seductive good looks, and worst of all-he was a high-ranking werewolf. Where does Tessa even find these powerful men?

But the second Winona opened her mouth to insult Tessa again, Nathan's gaze snapped to her.

No words. Just one look, and it cut deeper than any threat ever could. His eyes burned with the same savage fury as a Frost Pack wolf tearing through polar bear flesh. Winona's wolf spirit recoiled in instinctive terror. She couldn't say another word. She just stood there, furious and humiliated, heart pounding in fear.

What the hell is wrong with everyone? Why do they all keep backing that little bitch?

"That's enough. You can leave now." Walter's tone was final. His pheromones erupted behind him, shaping into the icy silhouette of a frost wolf with bared fangs.

Nathan may have dressed like royalty, and sure, he carried the authority of a noble alpha, but Walter still didn't like him. The kid's energy was off-too dark, like water poisoned by Soulrot Herb. Rotting. Wrong.

No one had ever dared speak to Nathan like this before.

His face hardened. "Mr. Thorne, I came here out of respect. I've been calm. I've been polite. I've stood here and explained myself. But if this is the way you want to handle things, then we're done talking."

His eyes lit up with glacial fury, blue veins glowing beneath the skin. The Frost Pack's brutal aura burst from him like a tidal wave. The chandelier above cracked with spiderweb fractures, and the air turned razor-sharp, filled with floating shards of ice- frozen blades hanging midair, ready to strike.

Chapter 369 Ice and Silver

"So what? What are you going to do?" Walter let out a cold laugh. Silver-white pheromones from the Frostmoon Pack surged across the floor. He was a seasoned alpha, and the weight of his presence slammed through the room-so heavy it started to melt the ice daggers suspended around Nathan.

The collision was brutal-Nathan's icy mist, laced with the scent of snow and decay, slammed into Walter's silver aura, twisting into a violent storm. Overhead, the chandelier shattered, spraying shards across the floor, while a silver candelabrum launched across the room and smashed into the wall, leaving a deep, snarling wolf-shaped dent.

Winona had already retreated to a far corner, unable to withstand the force of their collision. She wanted no part of it-just one misstep and she'd be crushed between two alphas.

Upstairs, Tessa felt the shift in her grandfather's pheromones and rushed down immediately.

When she saw Nathan striking out at Walter in her own living room, rage ignited in her chest. Her White Wolf aura burst forth, slamming into Nathan like a tidal wave.

This bastard again?He came all the way here and tried to lay a hand on Grandpa? He must have a death wish. He's not walking away from this.

Tessa's arrival lifted the weight pressing down on Walter's shoulders in an instant.

He turned to her, voice rough but calm. "Tessie. Go upstairs. I'll handle this."

Their initial exchange had told Walter all he needed to know-he couldn't win against this man.

But it didn't matter. He'd fight to his last breath if it meant protecting her. Even if it cost him his life, he wouldn't let her get hurt.

"I'm okay, Grandpa." Tessa placed a steady hand on his shoulder. A soft, white glow radiated from her palm, pouring healing energy into him.

He was barely recovering from surgery, and now he was up against the Frost Pack's alpha. Just a brief clash had left him drained.

She knew him too well. If she hadn't come down when she did, he would've fought Nathan to the death without flinching.

If she'd been even a second later, he would've stood his ground till the end-until his wolf spirit faded into nothing.

"Tessa, I finally found you." The moment Nathan saw her, the darkness wrapped around him unraveled. He retracted his pressure immediately, terrified he might accidentally harm her.

Even he didn't realize just how much joy burst through his chest at the sight of her.

Tessa's voice was ice. "Whatever you want, we'll talk outside."

She couldn't pretend not to see him now that he'd shown up.

But this was the Sinclair family home. If things got violent here, others could get caught in the crossfire.

Nathan didn't budge. "Tessa, come on. I traveled all the way from Yalvaria to Navoris just to see you. Let

me stay here... just for a few days." His smile twisted at the edges, unhinged and obsessive. Glacial blue streaks lit up his pupils, bleeding into red.

This was her home. Her sanctuary. He wanted to sleep in her bed. Breathe her in. Fill every inch of this

space

with his scent. Mark it as his.

And he could see how much she cared about her grandfather. If he controlled Walter... then he could control her.

"Tessie, who is this guy?" Walter's voice was tight with unease. He didn't like Nathan-not one bit.

"Nobody important, Grandpa. Don't worry about it."

Tessa grabbed Nathan by the arm and dragged him toward the door.

"Tessa, grabbing me the second we see each other? Guess you missed me more than I thought." Nathan's mood had completely flipped. Even being dragged felt like affection to him-like they were flirting.

Tessa shot him a death glare. Nathan shut his mouth immediately, but the smile never left his face. It bloomed wider, as if nothing could ruin this moment for him.

"Tessie-" Walter still looked uneasy. "He's dangerous..."

"I've got this, Grandpa." Tessa gave him a steady look. "Trust me."

This was Navoris. Landon's territory. Even if Nathan was the alpha of the Frost Pack, he wouldn't dare go too far here.

Chapter 370 Shadows of Yalvaria

As soon as they stepped outside the Sinclair estate, Tessa yanked her hand away from Nathan like she'd just- touched something filthy.

She crossed her arms and glared at him, cold and unflinching.

Nathan didn't flinch under her glare. If anything, he leaned into it-his lips curved in a twisted smile as he licked his lips slowly, like he was barely restraining the urge to pin her down and mark her on the spot.

"Tessa," he said, voice thick with satisfaction, "you've been hiding for years. And I finally found you."

She didn't answer. Hiding? As if I ever had a reason to run from you.

"Nathan, I don't care why you're here. I'm not going back with you. So do yourself

a favor-go back to wherever the hell you came from."

Her tone was final. Dismissive. Like she couldn't care less if he stayed or vanished into thin air.

Nathan's smile faded into something colder. "I Heard you've got a boyfriend now.

"That's none of your business." Her voice was flat and detached.

Nathan's expression darkened in an instant. His face turned cold, and a low, dangerous red burned behind his eyes-possessive and unrelenting. Looked like Mr. Walter hadn't been lying after all.

"Tessa, you're mine," Nathan growled. "Have you forgotten that?"

He still clung to the delusion that Tessa was his Luna reborn-his destined mate. And in his mind, that meant no one else had the right to touch her.

Tessa let out a cold, bitter laugh. "Yours? Since when? Nathan, have I not made myself clear? I belong to no one. Never have."

Nathan chuckled, but it was the kind of laugh that didn't reach his eyes. "No. You belong to me. Only me."

She'd stopped trying to explain. There was no getting through to him-not when he was locked in fantasy of his own making.

"Come on," he said suddenly, softening his voice. "We haven't seen each other in years. Let's grab a bite and catch up." He said it like they were long-lost lovers. His voice was gentle, but the command beneath it was unmistakable.

In Nathan's mind, they were already fated mates. Everything that happened back

in Yalvaria had sealed it -she was his, whether she accepted it or not.

Tessa frowned and took a step back. "I'm not hungry. Go eat alone." Her voice turned razor-sharp. "And as someone who used to call you a friend"-she stressed the words "I'll remind you, this is Navoris, not Yalvaria. You don't get to throw your weight around here."

Looking at Nathan now, her thoughts drifted back five years.

Back then, she hadn't awakened her wolf yet. She was left in Falindale with nothing- defenseless, bullied to the edge of death.

ne girl,

She'd nearly been killed by bullies one night. Would've been, if not for Samuel. 64%首

He didn't ask questions-just looked at her and said, "You want to get stronger? Come with me to Yalvaria. There's a training camp out there. It's hell. But you'll come out of it different. Even if your wolf never wakes, you'll know how to survive."

She said yes without blinking.

And that's where she met Nathan.

She was a feral cat in a world of wolves-silent, cornered, and all sharp edges.

In the fight pits, she was all blood and rage-screaming like a beast with a blade clenched tight in her fist. In the mess hall, she'd curl into corners, using her body to shield her food. And Nathan? Nathan was the one who kept pushing. Relentless. Unshaken. He was a slow-burning obsession-steady, constant, slipping past her guard no matter how hard she tried to keep him out.

She'd passed out during a subzero wilderness drill. He stripped off his own gear and wrapped her up, then carried her over six miles through a blizzard. Her fingers clawed into his shoulders, drawing blood-but he never let go.

She'd refused to drink with a training officer and got locked in solitary. Nathan sat outside her cell all night, stomping out every venomous spider that dared crawl near her window.

On her birthday, she hid in the storage shed, gnawing on stale bread just to keep her stomach from growling. Somehow, Nathan showed up with a piece of chocolate-God knows where he got it. He carved into the foil wrapper with his boot knife writing, "Even crybabies deserve a little joy."

That's when she realized-every time she'd cried in secret, he'd been watching. Watching through the cracks in the door, never saying a word.

His care had been clumsy... But it got through to her. Little by little, it slipped past her defenses and settled where no one else had reached.

She started getting used to him. To the hot coffee, he handed her every morning without a word. To the way he always walked half a step behind her, just off her left shoulder. And sometimes-without meaning to-she'd find herself looking for him in the crowd during training.