

## Alpha-less 371

### Chapter 371 Trust or Trap

Maybe... she could try trusting him.

After six months of training together, Tessa smiled at Nathan for the very first time.

When she smiled, joy flashed in Nathan's eyes.

Back then, she thought it was because he felt accepted. She didn't realize it was something else entirely- the thrill of a predator watching his prey finally drop its guard.

During their time at the training camp, Tessa had truly considered Nathan a friend. They shared stolen chocolate on rest days, fought back-to-back during simulated battles, and she even patched up his wounds while cursing him out.

But little by little, that friendship twisted into something else. His protectiveness started to feel more like control. His loyalty? Possession.

One day, all she did was pick up a dropped magazine for a guy on the team next door.

The next day, that guy collapsed in the dining hall. His tray hit the floor, shattering, as he let out a muffled choke-his tongue had been cut out. The wound was coated with the blood-clotting powder used by Yalvaria shamans.

Nathan pulled out a chair for her like nothing had happened and set down a tray with her favorite-perfectly roasted potatoes. He smiled, like the nightmare she'd just witnessed hadn't even been real.

Another time, she complimented their captain's tactics in her training log.

That night, she woke up to the sharp stench of blood. Nathan was crouched on her windowsill, blood dripping from his fingertips. In his hand was the captain's strategy notebook, soaked in fresh blood. "He didn't deserve your praise," he whispered.

Outside, the captain's body hung from the training ground scaffolding, the word unworthy carved into his wrists in crooked, messy lines.

That was when she began to see it-what lay beneath Nathan's gentle surface. Madness.

She tried to talk to him. Tried to keep her distance. But all that did was make things worse.

Her training gear would suddenly vanish-only the outfits he had gifted her remained. Every guy's name in her contacts turned into random, unreadable symbols. And if she looked a male instructor in the eye for more than a few seconds? The next day, she'd find a bloodied wolf claw stuffed into her pocket.

Then came the day she found the photo album under his pillow.

Aged photographs filled the pages all centered on a silver-haired woman wearing the Frost Pack Luna's crown. Nathan stood behind her in most shots, his arm wrapped around her waist, his smile soft and loving.

And that woman... looked just like her.

"She was Joanna Gray, Luna of the Frost Pack." Nathan's voice came from behind, low and calm. His hands gripped her shoulders, and his thumb pressed hard against her collarbone, firm enough to hurt. "Three

years ago, she shielded me from a wolfsbane mist. Died in my arms. But before she did, she made me promise not to mourn. Said she'd come back to me... in a better form." He leaned in, inhaling her scent like it belonged to him. "The moment you walked in, I knew. She sent you.

And just like that, everything made sense.

None of those run-ins with Nathan at the camp had been accidents-they were all part of his plan.

Every smile, every kind gesture-it had all been bait, designed to earn her trust and lead her straight into his trap.

"From now on, you'll speak the way she did." He shoved a silver ring onto her finger. Joanna's name was etched on the inside. The barbed edges cut into her skin, and the blood that surfaced was quickly absorbed by the metal.

A Bloodbound Sorcery. One that could track her wherever she went.

He ran a hand down her cheek, his voice soft but unhinged. "Start with 'Nathan, hold me. Your voice is too cold... it needs to sound like hers-gentle, loving, like you actually mean it."

Back then, Tessa wasn't strong enough. His Alpha pressure crashed over her like a tidal wave, leaving her hands trembling and her body frozen.

She saw herself in his eyes-just a stand-in. Not Tessa. Not a person. He didn't love her. He loved the idea of someone else. Piece by piece, he was trying to turn her into that woman. Her voice, her clothes, even the way she looked at him-it all had to match.

In Nathan's world, she had never been Tessa. She was someone to shape, to change, until she became Joanna-whether she wanted to or not.

Chapter 372 No More Running

She had to become stronger. Only after awakening the White Wolf inside her could she crush the Starbond Stone scaled in the ring, fake her death, and escape while Nathan was off conquering other packs...

"What's this? You worried about me now?"

Nathan's voice dragged Tessa out of the shadows of the past.

She blinked, then saw it-that smug smile tugging at his lips.

"You are worried," he said, suddenly thrilled. "I knew it."

"It's not worry," she said coldly. "I just don't want you messing with my life anymore. Nathan, I'm warning you-stay away from the people around me."

Nathan shrugged like it didn't matter. "You know this place is dangerous for me. But for you, I'd risk everything. Even my life."

Tessa scowled. "That's your problem. No one asked you to come."

Navoris was Landon's territory-Alpha Landon. Ruthless, territorial, and fiercely protective of his pack. And Nathan? He ruled the Yalvaria Frost Pack. The two had been enemies for years.

She'd heard the rumors back in the Black Market. Three years ago, the Nightshade Pack launched a surprise attack on the Frost Pack. Landon had led the charge himself, bringing his top warriors and tearing through their defenses like they were nothing. The battle was so brutal taht the Frost Pack paid a heavy price.

She never found out why Landon struck first, but one thing was clear-he and Nathan had a long, bitter history.

Now Nathan had the audacity to set foot in Navoris. If Landon caught wind of it, this wouldn't just be about old grudges. It would be all-out war.

"Tessa, you don't have to be so cold," Nathan said, his tone light and teasing. "After everything we went through together at training camp? I show up in your city, and you ean't even take me out for dinner? That hurts."

The truth was, before he came here, Nathan had planned out a dozen ways to take Tessa away.

But after seeing her again? He realized he didn't need any of them.

Because now, he had a better way to make her obey... Something far more effective.

"Doesn't really matter, though." He added with a smirk. "I know where you live now. If you won't take me out to eat, I'm fine eating at your place."

Now that he knew where she lived, the Bloodbond Ring didn't matter anymore. Tessa's eyes went ice-cold. "Are you threatening me?"

"Threatening you?" Nathan grinned. "I could never. I adore you. Always have." Then, with a flash of irritation, he added, "But your sister, Winona? She's been running her mouth. I don't like it."

Winona had the nerve to talk trash about Tessa. She clearly needed to be put in her place.

Tessa was done playing games. "Nathan, are you done yet? Let's settle this the old way. You and me. We fight. And if I win-you leave Yalvaria, and you stay the hell out of my life."

Five years ago, she couldn't fight him. She couldn't stop him. She had no choice but to fake her own death just to get away.

But now? Now it was a different story.

Deep inside her, Emma-her wolf-snarled with fury. The same man who once crushed her under his Alpha power was finally about to face the consequences.

Nathan just laughed. "Tessa, I didn't come all this way just to fight you."

"Then leave."

"If you really want me gone," he said lazily, "maybe I'll cancel my hotel and just crash at your place. It has been a while since I had a proper Christmas... I kind of miss it."

He hadn't even talking when Tessa moved.

She vanished from her spot, her fist slicing through the air with pure werewolf strength-aimed straight at Nathan's throat.

Her patience had run out. If words wouldn't get through to him, then force would.

The weak girl he once controlled was gone. In her place stood someone strong enough to bring him down.

Chapter 373 Cornered

Tessa struck with everything she had, but Nathan didn't hit back. He kept dodging-again and again.

He wasn't here to fight.

"Alright, I'll head back to the hotel for now," he said calmly. "I'll give you some space. We can talk later

He figured she wasn't ready to see him again-especially not like this.

That was fine. He could give her time.

Eventually, she'd accept it. In his mind, it was only a matter of time.

They were meant to be mates. He didn't want their reunion to be a fight.

But when he finally left, Tessa didn't feel relief-just a deeper pit in her gut.

He had actually come to Navoris.

She'd been so sure Nathan would never risk entering Landon's territory. Yet here he was-reckless, arrogant, walking straight into his enemy's domain... all for her.

He'd done it before. And he did it without hesitation, just to get to her.

Back when he was trying to turn her into his perfect Luna-Joanna-he laced her coffee with moonshade, drugging her into quiet obedience. He'd even used memory-reversal magic to warp her thoughts, making her believe she was the Frost Pack's Luna.

So what was his plan this time? How far would he go

this time?

With Nathan... there wasn't much left that would surprise her.

Back in her room, Tessa pulled out her phone and called Samuel.

He was half-asleep when he answered. "What's up?" he mumbled.

"Nathan's in Navoris."

"What?" That woke him up fast. "Wait-you've seen him already? Tessa, are you okay?"

He knew what kind of man Nathan was-manipulative, ruthless, and dangerous. And he didn't take no for an answer. Tessa could hold her own, sure, but Nathan didn't play fair.

"I'm fine," she said.

"Damn... Nathan's seriously obsessed." Samuel was still stunned. Even he hadn't believed Nathan would cross into enemy territory just to find her. "He's a damn lunatic," Samuel muttered. "You know what? I've got a few days off. I'll head to Navoris. At least if something happens, you won't be dealing with it alone."

"No need. It's not that big a deal Besides, if this turned into a real fight, Samuel couldn't take Not as an Alpha.

Nathan on.

"Then why'd you even call me?" Samuel snapped. "Just to freak me out? You know I can't do anything from

here."

"I just wanted to let you know." The truth was, she wasn't sure she could handle Nathan either

Nathan wasn't just dangerous-he was smart, calculating, and powerful. Anyone strong enough to lead the Frost Pack-Yalvaria's most dominant pack-wasn't someone you messed with.

"Then tell Landon. If he steps in, Nathan won't dare come near you again."

"No"

"Why not? I thought you liked that guy."

"There are things I'm not ready to tell him yet."

"Tessa, do you really think keeping this from him is a good idea? Maybe he wants

to protect you. Samuel paused. Was she actually falling for Landon? Is that why she was being so careful?

"It's not about hiding anything," she said quietly. "This is between me and Nathan. No matter how bad it gets, I won't drag Landon into it."

Samuel went silent. How could anyone be like this? What's the point of having a boyfriend if you're not going to lean on him?

"Whatever. I'm done talking."

"Wow, seriously?" She woke me up in the middle of the night... And now she was just hanging up?

Tessa didn't answer-she just hung up.

Later that night, Landon came to pick Tessa up.

They had dinner plans with a group of friends.

Ten minutes into the drive, the ring on her finger-Nathan's Bloodbond Ring- flashed faintly.



She caught a glimpse in the rearview mirror-Nathan was following her, his scent hidden by some kind of masking potion.

Chapter 374

Crosses the Line Again

Nathan followed at a distance, quiet as a shadow. He kept his scent buried deep, doing everything he could to stay beneath Landon's Alpha fadar.

The moment he knew she'd seen him, he sent a text. "So.... your boyfriend is Landon?"

Tessa stared at the message on her phone, her fingers curling into a fist.

"What's wrong?" Landon's voice cut in, calm but alert. He'd picked up on her mood instantly.

"Nothing." Tessa fired back a message to Nathan. "This has nothing to do with you. Stop following me."

Nathan's response came seconds later. Just a smiley face-blood red and marked with a crescent moon.

"What is it?" Landon watched her, eyes sharp. He could tell something was off.

"It's nothing."

He didn't press. If she didn't want to talk, he'd respect that-for now.

By the time they arrived at Silvermoon Estate, another text came in.

"You wouldn't eat with me, but you'll have dinner with someone else? That hurts, Tessa. You know I don't like being ignored."

"Son of a-" Tessa hissed, barely holding it together.

"What's going on?" Landon glanced at her, startled. He'd never seen her lose her cool like this.

Tessa took a deep breath, pushing the fury down. "It's nothing."

The estate was packed-it was dinnertime, and the place was full. And if he and Landon crossed paths tonight, things would get ugly-fast.

"Are you sure?" Landon asked gently, reading the tension in her face. She was clearly upset-there was no way things were fine.

"I said I'm fine."

He didn't believe her-but he let it go. Landon led her to their private dining room. Nathaniel, Ysabel, and a few others were already seated.

"Tessie! Over here!" Ysabel waved her over, bright and warm as always.

Tessa gave a small nod and took a step toward them.

Her phone buzzed again. "Tessa, I don't want to eat alone. I'm in the private room next door. Come join me."

Tessa went still.

She stared at the message. You've got to be joking. I swear, I might actually kill him tonight.

She stopped in her tracks. "Sorry-I need to use the restroom real quick."

Want me to come with? Ysabel stood up, concerned.

No, it's fine. Stay here and chat-I'll be right back.

And just like that, she was gone.

Back in the dining room, Nathaniel frowned. "What's up with Tessa tonight?"

"No idea," Ysabel replied, her smile fading.

Tessa stepped into the private room next door.

Nathan was sitting alone-but the table was filled with dishes. Every dish was something Joanna, his Luna,

used to love.

He sat at the head of the table like he owned the place. And when he saw her, he smiled. "There you are. I came all the way to Navoris, Tessa. Did you really think I'd eat alone?"

Tessa crossed her arms, eyes narrowed. "Did you miss the part where I told you to back off?" They could've stayed out of each other's way. But this-this was a line crossed.

Nathan calmly poured himself a glass of red wine. "Tessa, you're the one being unreasonable. I didn't ask for much. Just one meal. Is that really too much for you?"

Tessa didn't answer. She just stared at him, cold and silent. The mood shifted- cold and sharp.

"I hate it when you get like this. Come on-smile for me. You always looked the most like her when you smiled." He gestured toward her with a casual grin.

"You're sick, Nathan." Tessa had no intention of playing along. She turned to leave.

But Nathan's voice stopped her cold. "If you walk out now, I'll go to him. Landon. Let's see what happens when we finally face off. Winner takes everything."

His voice dropped, thick with Alpha pressure. The silverware on the table rattled under the weight of his fury.

At the mention of Landon, Tessa froze. He'd said the one thing he shouldn't have. She turned back slowly... and sat down across from him.

Nathan's smile faded. His jaw tightened. Seeing her back down-for another man- only made Nathan angrier.

"So it's true," he said quietly. "You really do have feelings for Landon." He was still smiling, but his voice had turned cold-low and dangerous, the kind of tone that promised trouble without ever needing to rise. It was just like Soulrend herb from the Frost Pack-looked harmless, but killed slowly.

Chapter 375 His or Mine

I do. Tessa said without hesitation. "I like him. Nathan, I don't care what you think

you feel for the because I've already made my choice. So stop getting in

.. way"

In Tessa's world, it was simple. You either loved someone or you didn't. There was no in-between.

Nathan didn't speak. His fists clenched at his sides, knuckles pale from the pressure.

It took everything Nathan had not to let his wolf break free. Because right now, all he wanted was to destroy anything-and anyone-standing between him and Tessa.

"Doesn't matter," he said quietly, his voice dark. "Come back to me, and you'll forget he ever existed."

He meant it. Whether he had to use Memory Scorch or Wolfsoul Severance, he would make damn sure Landon never existed in her thoughts again.

If it came down to it, he'd use forbidden rites to break her wolf spirit and rebuild it from the ground up.

Tessa frowned. This man... His obsession was worse than she remembered. "Nathan, go back to Yalvaria. If Landon finds out you're here, he won't let you walk away."

"He won't let me?" Nathan's voice dropped, his eyes flashing red with barely contained fury. "You think I'd let him walk away?" He sneered. "Sure, he's Montedra's Alpha King. But you know damn well I can match him. And unlike Landon, I don't hold back-I'll use whatever it takes. Even the dark stuff he's too proud to touch." He licked his lips slowly, that cruel smile spreading like he already owned her. "If I wanted, I could drop him to his knees right now-make him watch while I mark you in front of the whole Frost Pack."

"Try it, and see what happens."

Silver light flashed across Tessa's body. Behind her, the White Wolf rose with its fangs bared, power crackling through the room as it prepared to strike.

Landon was her choice. Her mate. And she would not let anyone lay a finger on him.

Seeing her get all worked up over another guy made Nathan feel like his heart was being crushed. Even breathing hurt. "If you had to choose between me and him-who would it be?"

He knew the answer. But he needed to hear her say it.

Because in Nathan's mind, Tessa was his. She was the reincarnation of his Luna. His future. His mate.

And then one day... she vanished. By the time he finally found her again, she wasn't his anymore. But instead of joy, he found betrayal. She didn't belong to him anymore. She'd fallen for someone else.

And Nathan didn't know how to live with that. How was he supposed to accept that?

"What's taking Tessa so long?" Ysabel glanced toward the door, worry creeping into her voice. "She's been gone forever. You don't think something happened, do you?"

"It's Silvermoon Estate," Nathaniel said reassuringly. "She's been here before. She's fine."

"Still... it doesn't take that long to use the restroom. I'm going to go check."

Landon stood before she could. "I've got it. You stay here I'll go see what's up:

He headed toward the door-but before he could open it, it swung inward.

Tessa stepped inside.

Landon froze, caught in the motion.

"You were just about to head out?"

"Heading out to find you," he said simply. "You were gone a while."

"Sorry," Tessa said, offering a faint smile. "Didn't mean to keep you all waiting

The truth was, dealing with Nathan had taken more out of her than she expected.

"Tessa, it doesn't take that long to use the bathroom," Nathaniel said, eyeing her suspiciously.

"Where'd you really go?" He glanced at Landon, then back at her. His voice was casual, but his eyes were sharp.

Since the Alpha wouldn't ask-he figured he would.

Chapter 376 Chains and Silence Beneath the Surface

Tessa glanced at Nathaniel. Why was he talking so much?

Seeing that Tessa didn't want to answer, Ysabel jumped in. "Nathaniel, you talk way too much. Seriously- shut up and eat. I'm starving over here."

Nathaniel opened his mouth to speak, but when he saw Tessa's expression, he backed off.

Forget it. If the alpha wasn't asking questions, why should he stick his nose in?

Landon politely pulled out a chair for Tessa.

She sat down, and Landon took the seat beside her.

As for Nathaniel's question, Landon acted like he hadn't even heard it. Throughout the meal, he kept serving Tessa food and pouring her soup.

From the moment he picked her up today, she'd been acting off.

Of course, Landon knew she was hiding something from him. But if she didn't want to talk, he wasn't going to pry. But he wasn't the kind of man to force answers out of her.

Tessa could just be herself around him. If she wanted to talk, he'd listen. If she didn't, he wouldn't push her.

Seeing him like that, she finally felt at ease-for the first time all day.

Meanwhile, in the private suite next door, Nathan was chained to a bronze chair, the iron links soaked in wolfsbane. A strip of rune-stitched cloth had been stuffed in his mouth, sealing off his ability to speak.

Rage burned in his eyes, barely contained. The proud alpha of the Frost Pack- brought down by the girl he once believed was his Luna reborn.

He had underestimated Tessa's resolve. When she poured that glass of wine earlier, he thought she was backing down.

But when that icy numbness started creeping through his limbs, he knew— She'd laced the wine with Moonveil Dust-an herb that suppressed a wolf's power.

By the time the chains cut into his wrists, he realized he'd let his guard down. How could he have forgotten? The girl he once locked in a lab and injected with wolf- spirit mutagens was no longer a puppet. Every smile, every moment of weakness... had been a trap, poisoned and precise.

Before walking out, she'd even flung a silk handkerchief soaked in Landon's pheromones right in his face. "Try coming near me or anyone I care about again, and next time it won't just be wolfsbane chains."

But she was his! The bond mark they shared on the back of his neck was still burning. How could she do this to him... for another man?

At that moment, Nathan didn't even care if Landon saw the truth. He wanted to summon the Frost Pack's wolf spirit, rip the chains apart, knock Tessa out, and drag her straight back to Yalvaria.

But the Moonveil Dust held him down like a curse. He couldn't move a single finger. All he could do was

stare up at the chandelier as it blurred above him, his vision swallowed by rage... until everything went dark.

Nathan sat there, bound and humiliated, surrounded by untouched dishes. Meanwhile, in the room next door, the clink of cutlery and bursts of laughter floated through the air.

"What do you think is going through Landon's head?" Cameron muttered. He didn't say it aloud, but come on-anyone could tell something was up with Tessa. And none of them were fools.

"Don't even try to guess what Landon's thinking." Hudson was as laid-back as

ever.

Love's complicated. It's not something you can figure out from the outside- outsiders never really get the full story. The rest? Best keep their mouths shut. Otherwise, you just make a mess on both sides.

"Hudson, I seriously wonder-if you ever met a woman you actually liked, would you still be this chill Though honestly, I doubt it. You're way too rational to ever go crazy over a girl," Cameron said, completely



serious.

Hudson gave him a look. "Maybe worry about your own love life. The way you hop from girl to girl, it's only a matter of time before it comes back to bite you."

Cameron was speechless. Did he really have to go that hard?

After dinner, the group headed to a nearby club. By the time they got back to the Sinclair estate, it was nearly midnight.

As soon as they returned, Tessa called Lina.

"Did you take him away?" She'd texted Lina right after tying Nathan up, telling her to come and move him.

The Moonveil Dust she used on Nathan had come from Samuel before he left. It could suppress even a high-ranking wolf's spirit for a full twenty-four hours.

So no, she wasn't worried about Nathan breaking free and hurting Lina-or anyone else.

#### Chapter 377 Late Night Texts and Lingering Tension

When Tessa called, Lina was lounging in her room with a face mask on. The faint scent of herbal essential oils lingered in the air-plants that had a calming effect on werewolves. She put Tessa on speaker, still adjusting the mask over her face.

"You seriously don't trust me to handle it?" She tapped the speaker and kept smoothing the mask over her face.

"I trust you," Tessa replied without hesitation. When it came to Lina, she didn't have a shred of doubt.

"But Tessa, we're talking about Nathan here. He's the alpha of the Yalvaria Frost Pack. You tied him up- what's the plan? If he decides to come after us, we're screwed."

"Don't worry. I've got this." Nathan might be a pain in the ass, but he wasn't beyond handling.

Besides, she'd traded a few blows with Nathan before slipping him the drug.

They hadn't used their wolf powers during the brief scuffle, but Tessa knew enough..

A wolf's spirit was deeply linked to the strength of their human form-the stronger the spirit, the more powerful the body.

And just from that quick fight, she could already tell-Nathan had gotten weaker over the years. She, on the other hand, had fully bonded with the White Wolf. She had nothing to fear.

"Alright, then what now? He's still tied up in my place," Lina said, clearly uneasy. She hadn't touched him after dragging him back-just left him restrained exactly as he was.

"Leave him like that. We'll deal with it tomorrow."

Nathan's father was obsessive-practically worshipped the alpha bloodline. If anything happened to Nathan in Navoris, he'd come charging in with Frost Pack warriors at his back.

That's the only reason Tessa hadn't gone for the kill.

But this time... she really had been tempted. Nathan had crossed a line- threatening her grandfather and Landon.

And Landon... the way he acted when he dropped her off earlier-something was bothering him.

She knew exactly what he was thinking. But she couldn't tell him about Nathan. She didn't want to drag him into it."

Nathan may have lost his edge, but he was still an alpha. If things got out of hand and he pulled out forbidden magic, even Landon might not make it out in one piece.

And if Nathan got hurt by Landon, his father wouldn't stop at revenge-

He'd start a war between their packs. Maybe even spark a full-blown conflict between Solara and Montedra. A war between wolves.

Tessa couldn't let that happen.

But thinking about how Landon had reacted... only made her more unsettled. I didn't realize how much he means to me until now.

He didn't even say much. Just stayed quiet. But that was enough to send her into a spiral. That wasn't like her. She was usually calm. Rational.

When a werewolf's emotions got out of control, instincts took over. She knew she had to get herself under control.

After showering and getting into bed, she grabbed her phone and typed out a quick text to Landon. "You seemed off earlier. Is something bothering you?"

Back at the Thorne family estate, Landon had just finished his shower and was in his study going over pack reports.

By the time he returned to the bedroom and saw her message, it was already past one in the morning.

She probably thinks I'm ignoring her. It wasn't on purpose-but he couldn't help wondering. Did she overthink it? Was she waiting for a reply?

It was past two now. She was probably asleep. He hesitated for a moment, then finally texted back.

"No, you're overthinking it." But after he hit send, there was nothing. No reply from her.

This time, it was Landon who couldn't sleep.

"Just got out of the shower. Didn't see your message," he added quickly, trying to explain.

Still... another thirty minutes passed. No response.

Thinking back on how ridiculous he was acting, Landon let out a dry laugh. What the hell am I doing?

One text from her, and now he was the one wide awake, staring at his screen like an idiot. I've completely lost

Chapter 378

A Future Together

After Tessa sent her message and saw that Landon didn't reply, she went to bed and slept straight through until seven the next morning. When she woke up, she saw a bunch of messages from him.

Thinking about the way he must have texted her, Tessa couldn't help but smile.

"Sorry, I was exhausted last night. I passed out right after I sent the message"

As soon as she hit send, Landon called her on video.

"You're awake?"

Tessa nodded.

"I really didn't mean to ignore your texts," Landon explained again.

"I don't think I ever said you did it on purpose, did I? Anyway, my grandpa just

sent someone to call me for breakfast. I'm heading down."

Just as she was about to end the video call, Landon said, "Tessa, remember this- whatever happens, I want to face it with you."

"I know."

They'd been together long enough for her to understand what he meant.

Tessa, let me put it this way-whether we're fated mates or not, I want my future mate to be you." His amber-colored eyes shimmered in the morning light. "You're part of my future plans. And I hope that one day, I'll be the one you trust and keep closest to you."

Tessa didn't say anything.

Faced with such a straightforward, wolf-style proposal, the tips of her ears flushed slightly-her wolf soul instinctively responding to the fire in his voice!

Seeing her reaction, Landon didn't press further.

"Alright, go have breakfast."

It was Christmas Eve. Tonight, he had to attend the full moon clan feast at the Thorne family estate-an ancient tradition of the wolf clans. The alpha was required to lead the pack in offering sacrifices to the Moon Goddess and praying for the tribe's continuation.

"Oh, tell your grandpa I can't join him for drinks tonight. But I'll definitely visit him tomorrow!"

"Got it. You take care of your stuff."

Tessa ended the call.

In Montedra, it was tradition to have dinner with family on Christmas Eve-for werewolves, this wasn't just a holiday custom, but a bonding ritual that maintained the strength of the pack.

Wasn't that why her grandfather wanted her to come home in the first place?

After breakfast, just as Tessa stepped out of the living room, she saw Cedric waiting outside-his fingers subconsciously rubbing the snowflake totem ring of the Frostmoon pack, a symbol of the alpha heir. Yet from the morning light, it looked a bit dull.

"Tessa, I hardly ever get to come back. I really want Dad to spend Christmas Eve with us. Grandpa agreed to it too."

"Cedric, so you do know how rare it is for you to come back, huh?" Tessa stared at his averted gaze. "Let's be honest-I was kicked out. And you? Don't use tribal business as an excuse. Even the alpha of the Shadow Pack can make time for his family and..." She paused. "The people who matter. What right do you have to say you're too busy?"

Tessa couldn't bring herself to say loved ones out loud.

"You know exactly why you don't want to come home. And now that the Sinclair family's in this state, what gives you the right to be disappointed?"

Cedric's face flushed.

Back then, when their father cast Tessa out, he could've stopped it-but he stayed silent.

That's right. His greatest skill had always been weighing pros and cons.

Yes, he worked hard for the tribe. But the other reason he stayed away was because he couldn't face his father's favoritism, his grandfather's disappointment,

or the hurt in his sister's eyes-the sister he'd personally cast aside.

He thought avoiding them would keep the peace. But he forgot-wolves' claws

can tear through enemies, but not through the guilt of blood ties.

Still, hearing her say it so plainly made it hard to keep a straight face.

Tessa wasn't in the mood to argue: "Since Grandpa wants him back, then let him come. But I'm warning you-if he ever does anything to hurt Grandpa again, I'll throw him straight into the werewolf prison, and he'll never get out."

"He won't. He promised me. He said he wouldn't do anything like that again." "Yeah, sure."

If Yardley's promises meant anything, none of this would've happened in the first place.

Tessa ignored him and hailed a cab to the place where Lina was keeping Nathan

#### Chapter 379 The Last Warning

The moment the door cracked open, the stench of rust mixed with the sharp tang of wolfsbane hit her in the face.

Nathan was chained to an ornate bronze chair soaked in wolfsbane-none other than the one from the Silvermoon Estate's dining room.

"How the hell did you even manage to haul the guy out with the chair still attached?" Tessa frowned at the deep claw marks on the legs-scars left by Nathan's attempts to break free.

Lina let out a light laugh, tucking a strand of hair behind her ear. "I just gave the estate's butler a wink and told him the young master from Frostmoon Pack was into 'role-play.'" She blinked playfully. "No one ever suspects a pretty face."

Gagged with rune-stitched burlap, Nathan let out a guttural snarl. His blood-red eyes blazed with fury- he, the proud alpha of the Frost Pack, had been toyed with by two little girls like some back-alley punk.

What made it worse was that Lina, worried the effects of the Moon-Tide powder would wear off, had even locked a wolf-soul suppression ring around his wrists. It drained his power nonstop, leaving him unable to move so much as a finger.

Tessa dragged over an iron chair and sat down, the legs screeching across the floor.

She crossed her legs, staring at Nathan like he was a beast trapped in a glass cage. "Don't look at me like that. Keep glaring-" She suddenly raised a hand, silver light gathering at her fingertips and forming a whip. "And I'll yank that obsession right out of your brain."

Nathan's pupils shrank.

That was a long-lost technique-an ancient wolf purification spell.

He remembered five years ago in the lab, when she'd screamed in agony after being injected with the wolf- soul mutation serum. Now she wielded high-tier magic like it was second nature.

"Relax. I'm not going to kill you," Tessa said, twirling the silver whip. "If your dear old dad found out his precious son died in New York, he'd probably turn all of Murica into an icebox. But..."

She leaned in closer, her voice laced with warning. "If you show your face near me or Landon again, it won't just be wolfsbane chains next time I'll burn your mind to ash with a memory-scorching spell and dump you back in that madhouse in Yalvaria."

A choking sound rumbled from Nathan's throat. His back teeth bit down so hard blood leaked from his

gums.

"Take the gag out," Tessa said, pulling a soundproof charm from her pocket and slapping it onto the wall. "Let's hear this young master's farewell speech."

The moment the burlap was yanked free, Nathan's voice roared out like a blizzard from the Frostmoon Pack.

"Tessa, you think you can run? Our blood pact still binds us-you're destined to be my mate!" His blood-streaked fangs gleamed. "Once I'm free of these damned chains, I'll drag you to the Frostmoon altar and watch your wolf soul shatter under my mark."

"You done?" Tessa snapped her fingers.



Lina pulled out a weathered scroll, and her fingers lit up with a cool blue wolf aura that sank straight into the parchment.

In an instant, the star-map sigil on the scroll blazed to life, ancient runes swirling in the air-a high-tier teleportation array from the old  
ans.

"This little gem cost me a fortune," Lin,

murmured, licking her lips as her fingers traced the vine-carved edge. "It could transport a full-grown man-or the entire Silvermoon Estate to Yalvaria-with a blink."

Nathan suddenly felt the chair tremble beneath him. Glowing star tracks emerged on the floor-a teleportation array pointed straight at Yalvaria.

"Remember, this is your final warning." Tess,

voice echoed from above the array. "Come near me again, and the next thing your father gets won't be his son in one piece-but a wolf claw burned to ash by silver fire."

As the scroll fully unfurled, a blinding black light exploded before Nathan's eyes.

And just before he lost consciousness, he swore he'd make Tessa pay for this humiliation.

Frostmoon wolves never forget revenge.

And they never show up late.

Chapter 380 Not Just Anyone

By the time they sent Nathan off, it was already past two in the afternoon.

With that huge problem out of the way, Tessa finally had a moment to breathe. She wandered the streets alone for a while, then thought of Avery-he probably hadn't gone home either. So she swung by the villa where he and the band stayed.

The rest of the band had all gone home for Christmas Eve, but Avery's relationship with his family was... complicated. He'd always resisted going back.

Tessa knew the gate code and let herself in.

Sure enough, as soon as she stepped inside, she heard rock music blasting from upstairs. Tessa instantly knew-Avery still hadn't gone home.

She followed the sound to the practice room, opened the door, and found Avery alone, working on music. He was playing the new song she had just written.

Tessa walked in and sat down on the floor, listening to him play. As expected, Avery understood her better than anyone-he captured exactly what she wanted to express with that piece.

Avery didn't look surprised to see her. Once he was playing, he asked, "Well? Did it feel the way you imagined?"

"Yeah, it did. You've always been the one who gets me best."

Avery said nothing. He just opened two bottles of cocktail, handed her one, and sat down across from her with the other.

"What brings you here?" he asked. Honestly, he'd thought no one in the world even remembered he existed tonight.

"What's with the melodrama?" That wasn't like him at all.

"It's nothing," Avery said, making a tiny gesture with his fingers. "Just felt a little lonely. Just a tiny bit."

Tessa took a sip of the cocktail and laughed.

"Alright, Avery. I came just to check on you. If you've got nowhere to go tonight, come to my place."

Though, honestly, the only person in that house she even acknowledged was the old man.

"Sure," Avery said without hesitation. Since she offered, how could he say no?

"Then grab your stuff and let's go. But you know what my house is like-don't go looking for warmth or anything."

Her family didn't do warmth.

Avery chuckled. "I'll just chat with the old man."

As long as she was there, nothing else mattered.

And so, on that Christmas Eve, Avery showed up at the Sinclair family home.

The old man was visibly surprised to see Tessa bring someone home.

He didn't know much about the werewolf entertainment scene, so he didn't recognize Avery.

"Good evening, sir. I'm Tessa's friend. My name's Avery."

"Nice to meet you. Make yourself at home, no need to be formal." The old man was genuinely happy Tessa rarely brought anyone over, let alone a friend.

While the old man didn't know who Avery was, Winona certainly did. She was one of his fans.

She never imagined her idol would turn out to be Tessa's friend-let alone spend Christmas Eve at their house.

"Avery, hi! I'm Winona. I really love your music!" Winona finally couldn't hold it in.

"Thanks." With Winona, Avery slipped right back into his usual cold and distant demeanor-a stark contrast to how he acted with Tessa.

And just like that, Winona was sulking again.

Why did every guy she liked end up liking Tessa?

What was so special about her?

Seeing her expression darken, Cedric pulled her aside.

"Winona, the whole family's together tonight. Don't start anything, alright?" Winona felt wronged.

"Ever since we were kids, I've always been the most well-behaved and outstanding one in the Sinclair family. So why does everyone like Tessa instead?"

Cedric's heart ached a little seeing her like that, He gently patted her head. "Stop comparing yourself to Tessa. It'll only make you feel worse."

Tessa was a genius. Even the International Werewolf Medical Organization wanted her. There was no way she was just some ordinary person. And her boyfriend-was Alpha Landon.\

Would someone like Landon fall for just anyone?

That alone said it all-Tessa wasn't just anyone.

All these years, their prejudice had driven her away. They hadn't just lost a family member-they'd lost one of the most powerful assets the pack had seen in a century.

If only he'd trusted her back then, stood by her side... maybe things would be different now.