

Alpha-less 421

Chapter 421 Wait, You Went to Dinner Without Me?

"No need; Evan's been with us since the very beginning. I think he's pretty solid?"

"Mateo really is great-he was willing to leave SkyEcho Entertainment just to follow us!" She hadn't even launched her company yet; no one knew if it would actually succeed. But Mateo walking away from SkyEcho Entertainment said enough-he clearly had feelings for the Avery band.

"I've already drafted the contract. I'll send it to your email tonight-have a look when you get a chance.

Since they were all friends, any concerns or requests needed to be put on the table.

"Okay."

"Well, if there's nothing else, it's about time for dinner anyway. Let's all grab a bite."

"Alright, everyone pack up-we're heading out for dinner," Avery called out to the other members still practicing, including Ysabel.

The seven of them went to a nearby restaurant for a meal. After dinner, Avery personally drove Tessa and Ysabel back to the Wisteria Apartment.

To make it easier for vocal practice-and to cement her place as a key asset in Tessa Entertainment-Ysabel had moved out of the Thorne Residence once the semester started. She'd been living with Tessa for the past few days.

When they reached the underground garage at Wisteria Apartment, Ysabel and Tessa got out of the car.

"Alright, go on up and get some rest. Things are going to get hectic for a while, so brace yourselves."

Tessa didn't want to become some kind of corporate overlord.

But the entertainment industry worked that way-if you didn't move fast, you got left behind. The turnover was brutal.

"Got it," Avery and the others nodded without hesitation.

They weren't afraid of the grind; they'd been hustling for years for a shot at making it big.

After they left, Tessa took Ysabel upstairs and returned to the apartment.

And right as they walked in, there was Landon-sitting on the couch with takeout spread across the coffee table...

Ysabel froze for a second.

"Uncle Landon, what are you doing here?" And eating takeout, too? That was kind of pitiful.

Landon glanced at them.

"What? I can't be here? If you can be here, why can't I?"

Ysabel didn't dare say another word; the man was practically radiating resentment.

Looked like he was seriously upset that Tessa had gone out to dinner without him.

Tessie, my stomach kinda hurts I think I overate. I'm gonna run upstairs to the Bathroom Viabel bluned and bolted, determined not to play third wheel.

Before disappearing, she shot Tessa a look that made it clear-she was on her

own.

But Tessa wasn't fazed in the slightest. After changing into her slippers, she walked over and sat down near to Landon, eyeing the takeout he'd ordered.

"Why didn't you have the housekeeper cook for you? What's with the takeout?" There had always been a housekeeper for the apartment, and she was a great cook. It was only when Landon started cooking himself that they told her to take a few days off.

"She had some personal stuff come up, so I let her go home. And it's just me anyway-felt like too much trouble to cook a whole meal. Figured I'd keep it simple."

"I see."

Tessa picked up the container next to her and fed him a bite.

"Taste good?"

It was just a normal gesture, her feeding him a bite. But the way he looked at her- it made something flutter.

"Delicious."

It didn't even taste that great, honestly. But because it was from her, it might as well have been a gourmet feast.

"Is everything set for the new album?" Recording a new album involved a million little things, and she was still the CEO of Sinclair Corp-her schedule would be packed.

"Yeah, everything's in place." All that was left was recording and promotional planning.

So the coming weeks were definitely going to be busy.

"Oh, by the way-Early Decision deadlines are coming up. Have you decided which schools you're applying to?"

With grades like hers, she could get into any top university in Navoris. The only question was whether she wanted to apply at all.

He hadn't forgotten what Samuel said.

The Werewolf International Medical Organization was still waiting for her. And Michael definitely hadn't been bluffing-he really did want her to be his successor.

Tessa had never lacked options.

In fact, she had too many.

Chapter 422 Did Landon Just Growl at Her Gland?

"Let's talk about it after the SAT, there's no rush," Tessa said calmly.

Tessa wasn't in a hurry, but Landon was.

"Do you want to join the Werewolf International Medical Organization ?" It was a question he'd been

meaning to ask for a while but had only now managed to say out loud.

Tessa felt like her head was going to explode.

"Why are you sounding like Samuel now? Haven't I already said it? I still don't have a clear idea of what I want to do in the future. I don't know what choices I'll end up making"

So really, anything they asked her now, she wouldn't know how to answer.

"Alright, I get it. Don't worry, I was just asking. No matter what you decide, I'll support you."

"Landon, do you not have faith in yourself? Are you worried that if I really go to Yalvaría, we'll end up in a long-distance relationship?"

Tessa chuckled softly and took his hand, the scent of lily of the valley lingering in the air. In a gentle voice, she said, "Landon, are you worried that if I go to Yalvaria, we'll be apart for too long, and our bond will start to fade?"

Landon let out a low hum, the scent of pine thick in the air as he pulled her into a tighter embrace. "I'm just afraid that distance will make my girl feel alone. Soulmates don't fall out of love so easily."

Tessa's heart melted, and the soulmate mark on her gland began to warm faintly.

She wrapped her arms around him, pressing her cheek to his chest. "I like you, Landon. Fate brought us together, and no matter how far the future takes us, my heart is always with you."

A soft glow lit up in Landon's eyes, his voice filled with emotion as he asked, "Say it again!"

She smiled and repeated, "I like you. I love you! That will never change."

In her White Wolf eyes, his pupils reflected back the dark-gold beast markings flickering in his own gaze—a sign that his ancient wolf soul had recognized its destined mate. It was a mark etched deeper than any blood pact, seared into the very soul.

Landon couldn't hold back anymore.

In one swift motion, he flipped her onto the couch and leaned over her, kissing her lips with a tenderness that made her feel like the most precious thing in the world.

He didn't dare use too much strength—

As if with one wrong move, she'd vanish like an illusion.

Tessa wrapped her arms around his waist, matching his kiss with equal passion.

Their lips tangled in a heated frenzy, tongues entwined with a hunger long suppressed.

Tessa's fingers clenched at his shirt, the lily-of-the-valley scent surging wildly, blending with the thick scent of pine into a heady, intoxicating haze.

Landon's hand slid under her sweater, his palm grazing her waist and setting her skin blaze.

She kissed him breathlessly, yanking off his tic. Buttons popped off, revealing his toned chest.

His kisses deepened, trailing from her jaw to her neck. His teeth grazed her gland, sending a tremor through her very soul.

Tessa arched her back and pulled off her sweater; her skin flushed beneath his gaze.

Landon's fingers brushed along the edge of her bra, his breathing ragged. "Tessie, you drive me insane, he growled, his voice thick with want.

Tessa smirked playfully, unbuckling his belt. She was just about to go further when suddenly-

Ysabel swore she was only there to grab her purse. It wasn't until she got to the room that she realized her phone was still inside-and her purse was in the living

room.

She never expected to walk in on that kind of scene.

At that moment, only one thought filled her head. So Landon's this wild, huh?

In her mind, Landon had always been the composed, elegant type-like some nobleman.

And Tessa... she was always calm and aloof. This was the first time Ysabel had seen her so... passionate. Was this the power of being fated mates?

There was no way Ysabel was still going to grab that phone. She turned on her heel and slipped away quietly before they even noticed she was there.

Of course, as awakened carriers of ancient wolf souls, Landon and Tessa knew Ysabel had come and gone. Once she was gone, Landon scooped Tessa up and carried her to the bedroom to continue where they'd left off.

At the exact moment Tessa cried out in climax, the ring on her fourth finger

glowed with a strange, eerie light once more.

Her brows knitted slightly. Nathan... what the heck are you up to now?

Chapter 423 You Really Thought I'd Let You Go Alone

Yalvaria, Frost Manor, Nathan's long, slender fingers played with a northern ice viper. The serpent's body shimmered with a ghostly blue crystalline sheen, and the venom clinging to its fangs could paralyze the glands of a Gamma-level werewolf instantly.

He stood silently in front of the floor-to-ceiling window. Outside, a blizzard howled, reducing the distant lookout towers of the icefield pack to blurry black silhouettes.

"Mr. Nathan, Landon will be arriving in Yalvaria in ten days to attend the International Werewolf Economic Summit," Grant reported respectfully-though he clearly hesitated when mentioning that name. Ever since Nathan learned about Landon's relationship with Tessa, the photo of Landon on his desk had acquired seventeen knife marks.

At last, the usually indifferent Nathan reacted.

"Grant, if Landon were no longer around, Tes.

andon is coming to Yalvaria?

wouldn't resist me so much anymore, would she?"

The viper in his hand flicked its tongue menacingly.

Nathan, however, gripped it right at the base of its head.

"I wanted to make a move back in Murica-but unfortunately, I got delayed."

Hearing that, Grant felt a chill of fear.

Navoris was Landon's turf. If Landon had acted there, no one could predict what would've happened.

"Go make arrangements. Now that he's stepping into my territory, I won't ask for much I just want one of his hands."

He dared to steal his woman; there had to be a price to pay.

"Understood, Mr. Nathan."

Landon was strong, sure-but Nathan was no weakling either.

Especially not in Yalvaria, where he had the entire icefield pack at his back. Who would win or lose was still up in the air. Nathan was looking forward to it. He also wondered if Tessa would come with Landon in ten days.

Nathan licked his lips with a sinister gleam.

No matter what, it had been far too long since he'd last seen her-he did miss her a little.

"You think Tessa will come too? If she does, make sure your men are careful- don't hurt her, understood?" Grant was speechless. Women really do bring disaster... Wouldn't it be better if Mr. Nathan just focused on his business empire?

But no-he had to chase after Tessa, trying to turn her into the Luna from his memories.

Yet Luna had long been dead. No matter how much Tessa resembled her, she would never be her...

"Mr. Nathan, if your dad finds out Tessa is coming to Yalvaria, I'm afraid things might get complicated," Grant said, genuinely concerned that the father and son would end up turning on each other.

What's so complicated about it? Even he can't hurt Tessa!"

Tessa was the only thing Nathan was truly obsessed with.

And that, more than anything, worried Grant. No wonder Mr. Nathan's dad had always disliked Tessa. As long as she was around, Mr. Nathan lost all reason...

Meanwhile, at Murica, Navoris.

"What? You're going to Yalvaria?" Tessa found out a week later about Landon's upcoming trip and immediately had a bad feeling.

Yalvaria-that was Nathan's territory.

Last time, Nathan had taken a hit in Murica. This time, he'd definitely go after Landon.

"Yeah, I need to take care of some business at the branch over there and attend the summit while I'm at it. Don't worry-I'll only be gone two days. While I'm away, you better behave, alright?" Landon gently pinched her cheek with that usual doting smile.

"I'm always well-behaved." Tessa held his hand, though worry quietly tugged at her heart. Would Landon really be safe going to Yalvaria alone?

She knew Landon had awakened the ancient Obsidian Crystal Wolf-he was powerful. But so was Nathan. And that was his home turf. He had an entire icefield pack backing him...

"Who are you going with?"

"Nathaniel and the others. Why, can't bear to see me go?" Seeing her expression, Landon thought she simply didn't want to part with him, and he looked pleased about it.

"Yeah, I don't want you to go." Tessa looked him in the eye as she said it. Even if there was only a 0.1% chance of danger, she didn't want to take the risk.

Landon pulled her into his arms.

"Can't believe Tessa's being like this-but I love it! Makes me want to just pack you up and take you with me."

He really wasn't comfortable leaving her behind alone.

"Fine-then I'll go with you," Tessa said seriously.

"Really? You're sure?" The exam was only a week away. Honestly, he didn't want to disrupt her study time. "Do I look like I'm joking?" She wasn't comfortable letting him go alone anyway. If that is the case, I might well go too. Better than staying here and worrying nonstop, right?

"Alright, then let's go together!" Landon agreed cheerfully. She'd been so busy lately-maybe a couple of days away would be good for her.

But what Landon didn't know was that Nathan had already laid a deadly trap, just waiting for him.

Chapter 424 A Sense of Dread

Nathaniel could only sigh when he found out that Alpha was taking Tessa along on the business trip. Before Landon arrived at Thorne Corp, he vented to Hudson and Cameron.

"Seriously. I'm just not used to this side of Alpha! It's just a two-day business trip, and he still can't relax he's even bringing Tessa along. They're already fated mates! What, is he worried she'll run off with someone else?"

"No one needs a single guy like you to get used to it," Cameron shot back with a sharp tongue. "You're not getting any younger, still no girlfriend, not even a woman around you-of course you wouldn't understand the joys of love."

Nathaniel glared at Cameron. "How is that my fault? Ysabel still hasn't come to her senses."

That's when Hudson, who had been silent all this time, finally spoke up with a serious expression. "You guys need to be extra careful on this trip to Yalvaria." Something just felt off.

He'd heard it was Tessa who had suggested going on this trip with Landon. She'd never been the clingy type-especially when it was just a two-day trip. Logically speaking, with exams coming up, she should've stayed behind to study. Nathaniel didn't think much of it. "Hudson, don't worry. Alpha awakened the ancient bloodline of the Obsidian Crystal Wolf. In wolf form, even silver bullets can't pierce his scales. Who in this world could possibly hurt him?"

"Just be careful anyway."

Hudson had always been especially perceptive, and even now he couldn't quite pinpoint what was wrong.

But something just didn't sit right.

Seeing how serious he looked, even Cameron sobered up. "Did you sense something?"

Hudson's maternal grandmother had been a hybrid of werewolf and witch, so he had some witch blood in him too.

Sometimes, he'd get visions that only witches could see.

Hudson shook his head. "No vision-just a bad feeling."

Hearing that, both Nathaniel and Cameron let out a breath of relief.

"Don't worry. I'll be right by Alpha's side the whole time. With the two of us together, there's no one who can hurt us."

Nathaniel had full confidence in his own combat skills.

Cameron chimed in to reassure him. "Come on, Hudson, don't be so tense. It's not like this is our first time going to Yalvaria. Besides, the Nightshade Pack has a strong presence there. No one's dumb enough to make a move against us."

But Nathan isn't someone to be underestimated, Hudson reminded them,

Whenever Yalvaria came up, everyone's mind went straight to the Frost Pack's alpha-Nathan,

"He's definitely strong, and the Frost Pack is the most powerful one, in Yalvaria. But over the past few year they've kept out of each other's way with the Nightshade Pack. Unless he wants a repeat of the war three years ago, I doubt he'd lay a hand on Landon."

Three years ago, no one knew what got into Nathan, but he suddenly crossed the border and captured a hundred Montedra werewolves for a forbidden blood ritual. The moment Landon-Alpha King of Montedra-heard about it, he flew into a rage and declared war against the Frost Pack in the name of the moon deity. It only ended after Frost Pack suffered several times the casualties of Montedra.

That war had cost both sides dearly.

Even though Landon's fury toward Nathan never truly cooled, he had to call a truce for the sake of the Nightshade Pack and the survival of their kind..

The Frost Pack never dared to retaliate either.

Both sides knew the other was strong. Another war would only waste more werewolf lives and give rival packs the chance to swoop in.

So for the past three years, the Frost Pack and the Nightshade Pack had stayed in their lanes.

So you by

But they were all still curious-what on earth had happened back then to make Nathan risk everything and perform a forbidden ritual?

After all, those spells always inflicted irreversible damage on the caster.

Too bad the whole event had been classified as SSS-level confidential by

Yalvaria's council. On top of that, it was a taboo topic for the Frost Pack. So even with all their resources, they hadn't been able to find a single clue...

Chapter 425 A Feeling That Won't Go Away

Nathaniel patted his chest confidently. "Don't worry. I won't let anything happen to Alpha.

Just be careful yourself too. We don't want to see anyone getting hurt."

The four of them had grown up together. None of them could stand seeing each other in danger.

The Montedra council is reviewing the class-action lawsuit against Moonlight Pharmaceuticals for tampering with werewolf gene chains. As the lead defense attorney, I have to stay on top of the whole trial. Otherwise, I'd be going with you guys in a heartbeat."

Hudson still felt deeply uneasy, like something was bound to happen-just like the last time Landon went to Falindale. Back then, he'd been hit with a toxin strong enough to knock Flex out cold, and even took a silver bullet. If Tessa hadn't passed by and saved him, the consequences would've been unthinkable.

This time, Hudson didn't even want to imagine the worst-case scenario.

All he could do was keep repeating, "Make sure you're fully prepared. Be ready for anything."

"Yeah, yeah, I got it. I'll have the Yalvaria contacts on high alert ahead of time, and I'll bring the right defensive gear too. Just relax already," Nathaniel reassured him.

He played it casual, not wanting to make Hudson worry, but inside, he was already taking it seriously.

He trusted Hudson's instincts. Last time in Falindale, Hudson had warned him too, and still he fell into the enemy's trap, got separated from Alpha, and nearly got him killed.

This time, he wouldn't leave Alpha's side for a single second.

Meanwhile, when Ysabel found out Tessa was heading to Yalvaria with her uncle, she immediately said she wanted to go too.

"Tessa, I want to go with you guys. I don't want to stay here alone. I'll be so bored. I'll be so lonely."

Back when she didn't know Tessa, she had always felt alone.

And honestly, she was terrified of that kind of loneliness.

Tessa was packing her things.

Since they were only going to Yalvaria for two days, she didn't bring much-just a single black backpack.

Inside was one set of clothes to change into.

"You're not coming. They're going for work. What would you even do there?" She had a bad feeling about this trip.

And if it wasn't safe, there was no way she was bringing Ysabel-who hadn't even awakened her wolf-along.

Ysabel sat on the couch hugging a plush bear.

"Tessa, are you sure I can't go? It's the weekend anyway, and there's only one week left before exams. All I do every day is practice test questions."

Doing the same thing every day was boring, and she didn't feel like it was working very well anywa

"Be good. If you get bored, go hang out with Avery and the others. After exams, I'm planning to helps debut-you still have a lot to learn." Tessa had already mapped out the path Ysabel would take

"Okay, fine. Then have fun while you're there."

Realizing she truly wasn't going, Ysabel pouted.

"Bring me back a present when you come home."

Tessa was speechless.

She was the Thorne family's heiress-what gift could she possibly need?

Anything she wanted was just a word away.

But Tessa still asked, "What do you want?"

"Obviously, whatever you buy is what I want! Don't worry, as long as it's from you,

I'll love it," Ysabel said with a bright smile.

"Alright."

Seeing her so carefree and simple, Tessa genuinely adored her.

Honestly, she liked people like that-pure, no hidden motives. Being around

someone like that was effortless, relaxing, and comforting.

Ysabel always said she was lucky to have met Tessa.

But for Tessa, meeting Ysabel felt just as lucky. That constant cloud over her heart had lifted a little more ever since...

Chapter 426 Flight of Teasing and Tension

Landon was headed to Yalvaria this time for an emergency matter at one of the companies there, so they were flying on his private jet,

"Landon, you really are loaded, huh?" Tessa said with a laugh as she looked at the luxury-modified jet in front of her.

"Do you want one? If you do, I'll get you one."

Tessa immediately shook her head.

"Are you kidding? What would I even do with a jet?"

"Tessa, trust me," Nathaniel teased from the side, "if you so much as nod, Alpha would have one delivered to you in a heartbeat."

Forget private jets-if she asked for a star to hang above her bed, Alpha would probably find a way to make it happen.

"Seriously, I don't need a jet. Don't you dare give me one!" It would be totally useless to her.

Not like she even knew how to fly one!

Landon pulled her into his arms with a warm grin. "Come on. Let's board."

"Okay!"

Watching Landon walk Tessa up the steps, Nathaniel felt like he'd been emotionally stabbed a thousand times.

Why was it always him getting hurt? He wanted sweet, lovey-dovey romance too.

Once onboard, Nathaniel wanted to sit with them. Sitting alone was just too boring.

But before he could reach them, Landon shot him a cold look.

Nathaniel sulked and turned right back around.

He couldn't even sit with them?

What could they possibly do on a plane anyway?

Whatever.

Maybe a loner like him was just meant to sit alone.

Nathaniel plopped into a seat by himself with a gloomy look.

"Nathaniel looks so lonely sitting over there," Tessa murmured with sympathy.

"What's there to pity?" Landon didn't even bother glancing in Nathaniel's direction. Instead, he picked up a

bowl of washed grapes from the table and brought one to her lips.

Have some fruit.

Tessa opened her mouth obediently and bit into the grape.

"Well? Sweet?"

As she chewed, juice from the purple grape slipped from the corner of her mouth, trailing down her jaw and onto her collarbone, where it gathered in a glistening bead.

She hurried to grab a tissue.

But before she could wipe it, Landon had already cleaned it off for her.

Tessa gave him a small, embarrassed glare. How could she be so clumsy? She must've looked ridiculous just

now.

"It's fine. You looked beautiful."

Tessa was speechless. What was beautiful about that? It was a mess, not charming!

Landon picked up another grape and held it to her lips. Tessa's cheeks reddened and she shook her head.

"I can feed myself."

If it had just been the two of them, she could've accepted the gesture without a second thought. But with Nathaniel there, it felt a little too much.

"Just one last one."

Tessa reluctantly opened her mouth and bit down-but in the process, she gave his finger a little nip.

This man was being way too obvious.

She had meant it as a little punishment, but to Landon, it was anything but.

"Tessa, don't tease me. I can't handle it." Around her, he had zero self-control.

Even just a small bite on his finger had thrown him completely off.

Fine.

She'd be more careful. It wasn't like she wanted to torture him.

Feeling a little guilty seeing the look on his face, Tessa picked up a grape and held it out to him.

"Here, have one too."

"Mhm." Landon beamed as he opened his mouth and took it-along with her fingers.

Tessa drew a sharp breath.

Then her face turned red in an instant.

So that's what it felt like when someone bit your fingers... His mouth was warm

and wet, making her mind spin with images she couldn't quite shake.

Chapter 427 The Bite That Lingers

"Let go," Tessa whispered, glancing at Nathaniel as he got up and started walking over. Her face was flushed

Instead of letting go, Landon wrapped his tongue around her fingertip and gave a firm suck, then tugged her into his arms.

The scent of grape juice mixed with cedar lingered between them.

"Now you know, don't you? What it feels like to have your lover bite your fingers-" he murmured low in her ear, his voice laced with restrained breath, "-it's even sweeter than the grape."

Nathaniel had come over to speak to Landon about something, only to catch the two of them tangled in flirtation again.

He sighed heavily, once more regretting tagging along on this business trip with Alpha and Tessa.

As the eternal third wheel, he was just asking to be emotionally battered. Poor guy.

But what could he do?

Hudson and Cameron were both busy, and he was the only one free. Plus, as Landon's beta, it was his duty to accompany and assist Alpha.

When she noticed Nathaniel approaching, Tessa quickly sat up from Landon's embrace and turned to look out the window.

Her cheeks were burning, but she kept a straight face, pretending nothing had happened.

As for Nathaniel-clearly the third wheel-Landon was getting seriously fed up with him.

"What is it?" Still, they were here for work. He couldn't just brush him off.

"Alpha, there's something I need to confirm with you. Let's talk over there." If he had to watch these two keep flirting, he was going to cough up blood.

He was still young. He didn't want to die from romantic third-wheel syndrome. Landon glanced at Tessa.

She cleared her throat and said seriously, "Go ahead and talk. I'm going to nap for a bit-feeling a little tired."

"Alright. Get some rest. I'll wake you when we arrive."

The flight to Yalvaria would take several hours anyway.

Tessa nodded, and only then did Landon walk off with Nathaniel to the far end of the cabin.

As soon as they left, Emma connected to Tessa through their mental link.

"I hate going to Yalvaria. That place belongs to him. I don't like it."

Emma paced anxiously in Tessa's mindspace.

Of course Tessa knew exactly who Emma meant-Nathan. She hated him too.

Her fingers drifted to the silver ring on her fourth finger, and her eyes narrowed dangerously Emma, what if we kill him this time in Yalvaria? Could that break the blood pact?

"Don't do anything reckless!" Emma's voice boomed with alarm. "The blood pact is a forbidden ritual combining werewolf spiritual bonds and dark witchcraft. A century ago, when the two races were still allies they tried to create an unbreakable loyalty contract

of witch spells. If the caster dies, the contract reverses tribal oaths and the corrosive properties

the host."

"Your gland is the anchor for the pact. It'll be the first thing to rot and collapse, and then the curse will drain you dry-just like the werewolves Nathan sacrificed. They're nothing but scattered bone fragments in his ritual array now!"

"So no, you cannot kill Nathan," Emma warned sternly.

"Tch. So annoying." Tessa grew irritated too. "Aside from that purification ritual in the sanctuary last time, when I briefly felt the bond loosen, nothing I've tried since has had any effect at all."

Emma thought for a moment. "There might be records of those old cooperative spells in the werewolves ancient texts. But you know how the wolves are-they don't tolerate betrayal. After the witches teamed up with the vampires to attack them, any texts related to witches were probably destroyed. That kind of forbidden record might not even exist anymore."

"Werewolf ancient texts, huh..."

Tessa recalled how her grandfather loved to spend hours in his study, poring over werewolf books with a magnifying glass. Maybe his collection had something that could help break the blood pact.

Looked like once this trip was over, she'd have to pay a visit to the Sinclair family and ask Grandpa for those -books...

Chapter 428 Territory Lines

Alpha, our first stop in Yalvaria will be Astrovia. That's where the biggest issues are happening right now Nathaniel reported.

"Alright. Once we've handled things there, if there's time, we can check on the other branches in Yalvaria as well.

As Nathaniel and Landon discussed business, a cabin steward brought over red wine and poured glasses for both of them. Just as she was about to step away, Landon called out to her.

"Alpha, is there something else?" she asked politely.

"Bring a blanket for my girlfriend, would you? She might get cold while she's sleeping."

Even in the middle of a work discussion, Landon didn't forget about Tessa, who was resting just a few seats

away.

"Of course, Alpha."

The cabin steward went to fetch a blanket for Tessa.

"Ms. Tessa, Alpha asked me to bring this for you. If you need anything else, please don't hesitate to let me know," the steward said with professional grace.

"No need, thank you."

That man, honestly-he could move her heart at any moment.

With him around, she didn't need to worry about anything. He always thought of everything for her.

Tessa couldn't help but glance in his direction.

And as if sensing it, Landon looked back at her too.

Their eyes met across the distance, and even with space between them, the air sizzled with intensity.

Nathaniel had been talking for quite a while before he realized Alpha wasn't listening.

Following his gaze-

There it was again. Another dose of PDA.

Are you kidding me?

They were halfway across the continent and still managed to flirt like this?

"Alpha, I really shouldn't have come," Nathaniel groaned. "I'm just a third wheel here. You two should've come alone."

"What are you complaining about? Relax, I heard everything you said."

"...Fine."

Of course. Alpha was just that powerful-capable of multitasking even in love and business.

"Anything else?"

Nathaniel shook his head. "That's it."

Then get some rest. We've got a little over three hours before we reach Yalvaria." With that, Landon stood and headed back toward Tessa.

He was always efficient. One explanation was enough for him to understand the situation completely.

Seeing how eager he was, Nathaniel chuckled.

"Guess it's true-love turns everyone into the same kind of fool." Nathaniel finally let it go.

Fine. He'd survive-for now.

Once he finally won over Ysabel, he was definitely going to flaunt it in their faces.

But seriously-he'd only been gone for a few hours and he already missed her. What was she doing right now?

Lately, she'd been spending a lot of time with the members of Avery's band. That worried him.

Honestly, Avery was a dangerously strong rival.

Good-looking, insanely talented, could sing like a dream-and on top of that, he was Ysabel's idol.

Yeah... Nathaniel was seriously worried she might fall for the guy.

No way. He had to wrap up this Yalvaria trip quickly and rush back to keep an eye on his girl.

Tessa wasn't in a deep sleep, and stirred the moment Landon returned.

He sat beside her and gently let her rest against his shoulder.

"There's still time. Go back to sleep."

The position was comfortable, and knowing he was beside her, Tessa closed her eyes and drifted off again.

Meanwhile, in Yalvaria-

Grant respectfully handed over the latest report to Nathan. "Alpha, Landon's already en route to Astrovia. Tessa is with him... she's accompanying him on this trip."

Nathan was smoking a cigar. Hearing Grant's words, he pressed the lit cigar hard into the ornate onyx ashtray with pale, tense fingers.

Embers jumped up and burned a red mark on the back of his hand-but he didn't flinch.

A low, raspy chuckle escaped his throat. "Get ready. We'll wait for them in

Astrovia."

After all this time, Tessa had finally stepped into his territory.

What a perfect opportunity.

He hadn't done well enough back in Navoris, but this time, she was on his home ground.

Did she really think she could leave?

No. Not this time.

He wouldn't let her go back.

She would stay here-With him. Forever.

Chapter 429 Beneath the Frost

Freezing rain fell over Frost Harbor in Astrovia, each drop crystallizing the instant it hit the tarmac. Web-like frost patterns clung to the glass walls of the distant skyscrapers-clear signs of the Frost Pack's barrier.

The moment they stepped off the plane, Landon took off his coat and wrapped it around Tessa.

Just then, the cabin steward arrived with umbrellas. Landon took only one, opened it, and held it up over both of them as he pulled Tessa close and walked her out.

Nathaniel accepted another umbrella silently.

Alpha had to be doing this on purpose.

There were obviously enough umbrellas to go around, so why share one? Did he want to get rained on?

What was going through his mind?

Were people in love always like this?

Always glued to each other, no matter where or when?

Whatever. Not his business. Nathaniel opened his umbrella and followed behind them-at a distance.

He was absolutely done being third-wheeled.

Outside the airport, their car was already waiting. Landon escorted Tessa to it, a staff member opened the door, and once she was inside, he finally closed the umbrella and got in as well.

Nathaniel climbed in after them.

"Alpha, are we heading to the hotel first?"

"No. Since Tessa came along this time, I had the Astrovia villa cleaned and prepped. We'll stay there."

No matter how luxurious a hotel was, it couldn't beat the comfort of your own place.

"Alright then."

In the past, even if they stayed for a whole week, they would just stay at a hotel.

This time it was just a two-day trip, and Alpha had already ordered the villa to be prepared in advance.

Yeah... the difference really was night and day.

People really weren't equal.

"Landon, you didn't need to go through all this just for me—"

"Don't worry. It's not all because of you. I just don't like staying in hotels." Landon didn't want her feeling pressured.

"Okay, fair enough."

Since it was already done, saying anything now wouldn't change much. Better to just let it be.

The cars headed straight to Landon's villa in Astrovia,

When they arrived, a line of servants stood on either side of the entrance, flanked by dozens of werewolf guards.

The silver wolf emblem on the guards' shoulder patches gleamed faintly-the symbol of the Nightshade Pack's elite warriors.

Even so, Tessa didn't feel at ease.

She knew Nathan wouldn't just sit back and watch Landon show up on his turf.

And this was Yalvaria-Nathan's territory. If he wanted to kill someone, it wouldn't be hard. A few dozen bodyguards wouldn't mean much.

"What's wrong?"

Seeing her dazed, Landon came up and wrapped his arm around her waist.

Hearing his voice, Tessa shook her head.

"Nothing. Just tired, I think. Long flight."

"Alright. Let's go in, get you cleaned up and fed, then you can sleep for a bit." The

moment she mentioned being tired, he felt a wave of guilt.

After introducing her to the villa's head butler, Landon took her upstairs.

He brought her to the master bedroom.

"Go take a shower. I had clothes set out for you already. After you're done, we'll eat. Then you can rest at home for a while. I'll come back in the evening and take you out, alright?"

He hated leaving her alone, even for work.

"I'll just take a quick shower. You guys still have to go to the office, right? I'll come

with you. I want to see how things are done."

She couldn't relax unless she was with him.

Landon gently pinched her cheek.

"What's going on? You've been acting strange this whole trip. If something's wrong, you can tell me."

"Nothing's wrong. Don't overthink it."

"...Okay. Then go shower. I'm going to find Nathaniel-we've got some things to discuss."

After all, this was a work trip. He really did have a lot to handle.

"Alright."

As soon as Landon left, Tessa pulled out her phone and logged into a hidden account.

Then she started reaching out to a few contacts she had in Yalvaria....

Chapter 430 Bloodlines and Loyalties

"Phantom, you finally bothered to show up in Yalvaria?"

"Yeah, seriously! What brings you here this time? Need anything from us?"

Seeing the stream of excited messages pop up in the chat window, Tessa couldn't help but smile.

"I do. There's something I need your help with." She hadn't logged into this account in a long time.

But this time, because she couldn't shake the unease about Landon, she finally did.

"Just tell us what it is!"

"Yeah, anything at all. Hell, if you asked me to assassinate a Yalvaria council member, I'd say yes in a heartbeat."

18 Feath

"It's not that dramatic. I just need you guys to protect someone." She had no reason to go assassinating Yalvarian officials.

"Oh, that's nothing."

"But who is it? Never seen you so worked about anyone."

up

"My fated mate." Just saying Landon's name filled her chest with warmth.

"What? You already found your fated mate? So I guess I never had a chance after all?"

"You? You never had a chance to begin with, okay?" another big name in the group snarked back.

"Alright, I'm sending the info now." Tessa uploaded the file. "I'll treat you guys to a meal sometime."

"What do you mean 'sometime'? You're actually here in Yalvaria-this is the perfect time. Come out and eat with us!"

"Not this time. I've got things to do." She didn't want to leave Landon's side.

"Shadow, seriously? You're choosing a man over your friends?" one of them complained. "And a grown man needs your protection? That's pathetic."

"He doesn't need my protection. I'm the one who can't relax."

When you love someone, even the tiniest scratch on them is too much.

Especially if that harm might come from her own past.

"Alright then. Leave it to us." With the group she had backing her, no one would lay a finger on Landon.

Tessa logged off before she

could see their reactions to the file she'd just sent.

"Holy shit-did you guys see who Phantom's fated mate is?"

"I'm shaking right now."

"Alpha Landon!!! The Alpha King of Montedra!"

They were stunned. This was insane.

That man needed protection?

Who would even dare try to hurt him?

"You must've missed the part where it said who wants to hurt him-Frost Pack's alpha, Nathan!!!"

What the hell kind of people were around Phantom? Every single one of them was ridiculously overpowered.

"Well, whatever. If Shadow's asking for help, we give it. No questions. No excuses."

"Exactly. If it's Shadow's business, I'm in. Always."

Meanwhile, back in Yalvaria-

The moment Nathan learned that Tessa had gone to Landon's private villa, he crushed an ornate solid- silver candlestick with his bare hand. Silver shards embedded in his palm, drawing blood-but he didn't even flinch.

His crimson eyes darkened, snakeskin-like patterns spreading in them-hallmarks

of the dark witchcraft that pulsed through his veins.

The last time those markings had appeared was the night he sacrificed a hundred lives in blood ritual. "Damn it. They all deserve to die!"

He couldn't bear the thought of Tessa with Landon-especially not in Landon's villa.

Facing Alpha's fury, Grant didn't dare say a single word. What could he say at a time like this?

"Alpha... what should we do next?" Grant asked cautiously, barely keeping the fear out of his voice.

Wolfish rage surged around Nathan, a storm of power crackling in the air as he hissed four words like venom through his teeth-

"Kill. Landon. Now."