

Alpha-less 431

Chapter 431 Madness in the Frost

Nathan's eyes burned with a wild, bloody red.

Someone dared to get that close to his woman? He couldn't stand it.

It didn't matter who it was-anyone who tried to take what was his would pay the price.

Grant stared in disbelief. "K-Kill Landon? Alpha, please calm down..."

Landon wasn't just anyone-he was the Alpha King of Montedra. Killing him would immediately ignite a full-scale war with the Montedra werewolves.

A war that would be utterly catastrophic.

But Nathan lashed out with claws coated in frost, slashing Grant across the chest and leaving a bloody, freezing wound.

"What did you just say? Are you telling me I can't kill him? Who the hell does he think he is? Some kind of god?" Nathan roared, manic and unhinged.

"Alpha, that's not what I meant! I just think we should consider-"

"Shut your mouth! That's final!" Nathan cut him off furiously.

He didn't care about consequences. The only thing he wanted was Landon's head.

"Deploy the plan. If there's a single mistake, I swear I'll rip your spine out and carve it into an ice torture rack!"

A phantom wolf form shimmered behind him, and the air around them thickened with a wolf-shaped fog of frost-Frost Pack's signature fear domain: the Wrath of the Ice Wolf.

Grant was speechless and helpless. As Nathan's beta, he was seriously starting to consider resignation.

Kill Landon. Kill the Alpha King of Montedra.

Forget the fallout-just attempting that was like trying to climb to the moon.

"And one more thing-don't lay a finger on Tessa! If you so much as scratch her, I'll make you wish you were never born."

Grant was truly at a loss for words now.

Tessa's power was on par with, if not greater than, Nathan's. The last time in

Murica, hadn't she handed Nathan a major defeat?

And now she was here, too. If they made a move on Landon, was she just going to sit back and watch

In a clash between both sides, how was he supposed to guarantee she'd come out unharmed?

This was an impossible mission./

"Alpha, I..."

"You can go now." Nathan didn't let him finish-he was done listening to any objections

Grant sighed and turned to leave, resigned to figuring something out.

He'd been with Nathan long enough to be used to these deranged orders.

And unfortunately, he had another order to obey.

The old alpha-the former Frost Pack leader-had already learned that Tessa was in Yalvaria.

And now he wanted Grant to secretly eliminate her.

One wanted her dead.

The other wanted her untouched.

Trapped between father and son, Grant could already feel his funeral being planned-no matter who he disappointed.

Later that evening, after dinner, Landon took Tessa to the Astrovia branch office.

The moment they got in the car, he reached for her hand.

It was a little cold.

"Are you cold?" With the rain that day, the temperature had dropped noticeably. "I'm fine."

He pulled her hand under his coat and placed it against his chest.

Feeling the rhythm of his heartbeat, Tessa looked up at him.

"Isn't this uncomfortable for you?" Her hand really was cold.

"Not at all. I like it."

"...Okay then."

Since he said that, she couldn't really argue. Turning him down now would just feel ungrateful.

Still... the car did have heating, didn't it?

This man, honestly.

In the front seat, Nathaniel's eye twitched.

Alpha was now officially in PDA mode 24/7.

Constantly showing off. Constantly torturing single people.

Yeah... he was definitely addicted.

Fine. Whatever. He'd just have to get used to it.

Once Ysabel finally came around, he'd show them what a real power couple looked like

Chapter 432 No Mercy at the Top

Half an hour later, the car arrived at the Astrovia branch office. By now, it was well past closing time.

Yet the Thorne Corp Astrovia branch building was still brightly lit from top to bottom.

Not a single employee had dared to leave.

Word had spread that a major financial scandal had erupted within the branch,

and everyone was terrified they might get caught in the fallout.

As soon as Landon's car pulled up, the branch's general manager rushed out with a team of executives to greet him.

"Landon, welcome!" the GM greeted him with nervous reverence.

Landon glanced coldly at the group, a flicker of golden wolf eyes passing through his gaze. The sheer pressure of his alpha presence made the GM take a step back involuntarily.

Landon despised showy displays that tried to mask failures. If this man had focused more on the company's operations instead of putting on a facade, this mess might never have happened.

Without a word, Landon headed straight inside with Tessa and Nathaniel.

Despite the cold, sweat drenched the GM's back. The werewolf gland mark at the base of his neck flushed red with fear.

In wolf society, alphas who shirked responsibility were scorned. And everyone knew Landon, the Alpha King of Montedra, was anything but merciful.

Landon brought Tessa directly into the conference room.

Tessa stopped at the doorway.

"I'll wait outside while you handle business. This kind of high-level meeting must be confidential."

"It's fine. Just sit next to me. You don't have to listen-play games or whatever." He didn't want her bored out in the hallway, and more importantly, he didn't want her out of sight.

"...Alright." Since he insisted, Tessa followed him in and sat beside him.

Soon, the room filled up with the branch's senior staff.

"This mess-do you have anything to say for yourself?" Nathaniel opened with a

sharp glare at the general manager. This was one of the worst scandals in Thorne Corp's history.

The GM's voice trembled.

"Landon, ever since I joined the company, I've always worked hard... this situation... I-I never meant for this to happen..."

He looked like he was about to cry.

If Alpha Landon held him personally responsible, it was all over for him.

"Landon, I may not have done much, but at least I've tried. I'm begging you- please let me off this once... He hadn't tried to run because he knew there was no escaping it.

"No achievements, but plenty of effort?" Landon finally spoke, his voice low and resonant with a distinctive werewolf tremor that made the conference room's glass hum with vibration.

Silence fell instantly.

No one dared to breathe loudly. A few low-ranking werewolves had their beast ears pop up in fear before quickly retracting into their hair.

"You caused this massive disaster, and you dare say that to me? I pay you tens of millions a year so you can avoid responsibility?"

"Landon, I'm sorry! I swear I know I ed up!"

"That's enough. Go turn yourself in." That was the most mercy he was willing to give.

The GM collapsed to his knees.

"Landon, please—I'll be done for if I do that! I have a family, kids..."

"I'm telling you, Greg, do it yourself. If we handle it, you won't survive the consequences," Nathaniel warned him.

You make the company bleed like this, you pay for it.

"S-Sir, I..."

"Security. Take him away." Nathaniel didn't waste another second.

No point wasting time on someone like him.

Several guards entered the room and escorted the general manager out.

The rest of the executives were drenched in cold sweat, too stunned to speak.

No one dared make a sound.

Chapter 433 Earn Your Place or Leave

"Now then, let's talk about how we're handling this situation," Landon said. "The branch no longer has a general manager. If anyone here thinks they're capable, you're welcome to step up."

The senior executives exchanged looks.

No one moved.

A heavy wave of alpha dominance surged from Landon. His pine-scented pheromones took on a tangible shape—an enormous wolf's head formed in the air, casting a shadow full of bared fangs across the ceiling.

It was the Nightshade Pack's signature response to cowardice—a primal rejection from an alpha.

"You're the top-level executives of this branch, and not one of you has the guts to step forward?" Landon had assumed this issue would take two days to handle, but it was looking far worse than expected.

Nathaniel shared his frustration.

These people were hopeless.

"If you don't have what it takes, then you're just dead weight. Thorne Corp doesn't pay salaries to cowards. You can leave."

"I'd like to give it a try!" a young woman at the far end of the table stood up and spoke.

Tessa finally looked up, catching sight of her.

Now that took guts.

While the room full of corporate foxes kept their mouths shut, this girl had the nerve to step up. Interesting.

Landon reined in his alpha pressure slightly. She looked young, but at least she had the courage to speak.

"How would you handle the situation right now?" he asked calmly.

The other executives shot each other smirks of disdain. What could this girl possibly offer? Clearly just trying to score points with Alpha Landon.

"My name's Peter. May I use the projector?" she asked.

Since learning about the scandal, Peter had been preparing non-stop.

Now, she finally had her chance.

"Go ahead."

Tessa put down her phone-no longer interested in gaming. This girl had caught her attention.

Peter walked to the front, opened her laptop, and plugged in a USB drive.

In front of the entire board, she presented a clear, comprehensive analysis of

the current crisis, followed by

the solutions she had drafted.

By the time she finished, the room was silent,

Tessa's eyes gleamed with approval. This girl was good-really good. 291%

"Alright. As of now, you're the new general manager of this branch. Nathaniel will be staying here for a few days. If you run into any issues, you can go to him directly," Landon announced.

Her strategies still had a few rough edges, but the potential was obvious. He could trust her with the branch long-term.

"Alpha, you're asking me to stay?" Nathaniel turned toward him.

"I need you to hold the fort for now." Peter was still young-there would be things she couldn't handle on her own.

"Thank you, Landon." Peter's eyes sparkled with excitement.

Okay, so no one was going to ask how he felt about this?

Fine, fine. He was Landon's beta. This was part of the job.

After the meeting ended, most of the other executives were clearly upset-a young girl was about to become their superior.

But with Alpha Landon still in the room, no one dared to object.

"I'll say this right now-if anyone has a problem, feel free to leave now. Don't go behind the general manager's back causing trouble."

Frankly, most of these people needed to be replaced anyway.

No ability, no position. Thorne Corp didn't keep deadweight around.

The dozen or so execs could only bow their heads in silence, too afraid to say a word.

Chapter 434 Fangs in the Shadows.

After the meeting ended and the executives filed out, Peter walked up to Landon. A faint flicker of a wolf tai shimmered behind her-typical body language of a young werewolf brimming with excitement.

"Landon, thank you for giving me this opportunity. I won't let you down."

"I didn't give you anything. You earned this yourself." If she didn't have the ability, no one's favor would've helped her.

"From now on, stick with Nathaniel. If you run into any issues, go directly to him." Landon was essentially assigning Peter a mentor.

"Understood." Peter's smile was polite and sweet, but for someone so seemingly innocent, she'd handled a complex crisis with surprising clarity-no small feat.

"Let's go," Landon said, looking to Tessa. When she stood, he pulled out her chair for her with quiet attentiveness.

Peter's gaze lingered curiously on the girl beside Alpha Landon. The expressionless face seemed unreadable, but there was something striking about her presence.

The faint scent of lily of the valley on her skin blended almost perfectly with Landon's pinewood pheromones-like a pair of born mates, destined from the start...

Just as Peter was watching her, Tessa glanced back.

Only once. Then she turned and walked away.

She was long used to the gaze of awe in other people's eyes.

"Work hard. You're technically my apprentice now. Don't embarrass me, got it?" Nathaniel added with a grin.

Peter nodded quickly. "Don't worry! I'll do my best. I won't let any of you down!" Finally. After all this time, all her hard work was paying off.

"Nine o'clock tomorrow. Be on time. I can't stand people who aren't punctual." The subtle growl in his voice, a trait unique to alphas, made Peter instinctively straighten her back.

"Yes, sir!"

With that, Nathaniel followed Landon and Tessa out.

Peter watched their retreating backs, her heart pounding. Her gland burned with adrenaline.

One day, she would have everything she dreamed of. She'd stand at the top of the pack—like a true alpha.

On the drive back, Tessa remained quiet. Landon held her hand gently.

"Tired?" he asked, concerned.

Tessa turned to look at him.

"I'm fine."

"You've had a long day, following me around like this."

"I've handled worse. Even in Navoris, I wasn't sleeping this early. Don't worry about me."

Suddenly, Emma's voice echoed in her mind. Something foul is coming.

Tessa's head whipped toward the window. Her werewolf night vision allowed her to clearly see several motorcycles shooting out from a side alley, rapidly closing in on their car.

The riders were cloaked in pitch-black hoods soaked in toxic compounds. The pale-blue skin visible beneath their hoods shimmered with an unnatural hue. Pulsing, dark-purple veins throbbed around their necks-the mark of someone who'd taken the berserker serum.

"They're not ordinary wolves." Landon's tone dropped, dark and focused. Obsidian Crystal Wolf markings lit up from his collarbone, rising up his neck. "They're using a forbidden wolf ritual-the Embrace of the Dead. They maintain combat strength by feeding on the corpses of their own kin."

Nathaniel pulled a silver wolf whistle from his belt-a Nightshade Pack relic used to summon hunters. The whistle emitted a chilling alpha subharmonic.

"Their scent... their glands reek like shredded carrion. I can't even tell what pack they're from," he muttered.

Landon's eyes narrowed, dangerously sharp.

Who had the guts-To send these monsters after them?

Chapter 435 The Dead Do Not Lie Still

Landon pulled Tessa tightly into his arms, his pinewood pheromones forming an invisible barrier inside the car, blocking the overwhelming stench of rotting flesh.

"Don't worry. As long as I'm here, I won't let anyone hurt you." He pressed a gentle kiss to her forehead. Silent wolf claws shimmered into view across his palm, vanishing again-ready to strike at a moment's notice.

Tessa nodded, her gaze icy and fixed on the incoming riders. Her back straightened, muscles coiling-every part of her body shifting into battle mode.

Suddenly, the lead rider flung out a hooked claw bound by silver chain. Runes glowed faintly along its links. The chain sliced clean through the car's bulletproof glass, aiming directly for Landon.

He shifted just in time, dodging the attack. His pheromones manifested a spectral wolf's head, which snapped the chain apart with its jaws.

But beneath the attacker's torn cloak, his exposed chest showed grotesque stitch marks-his body crudely sewn together from the limbs of other werewolves.

"They're fleshbinds," Tessa said coldly. "Living puppets stitched together using the forbidden werewolf ritual 'Blood and Bone Reclamation.'"

Nathaniel's face darkened. He pulled out a vial of purifying spray-a silvery liquid distilled from moon tide ore, designed specifically to counter dark werewolf magic.

"These freaks have three core points. You have to destroy all three to kill them for good. What the hell is this attack even about?"

Before he could finish, the riders all let out fractured howls-warped, broken cries laced with the sobs of human agony.

The souls trapped inside their puppet bodies were screaming.

Landon's eyes sharpened. An orb of energy swirled into his palm, engraved with the Nightshade Pack's punishment sigils. He launched it at the lead rider, blasting the motorcycle to pieces.

"They're trying to force us into the Old City's burial grounds. The ley lines there suppress our wolf powers."

He growled low, the Obsidian Crystal Wolf markings flaring from his neck down his arms. His pinewood -scent exploded outward in a storm, shaking the enemy motorcycles violently.

Nathaniel blew into his silver wolf whistle. A subsonic alpha frequency pierced the air, striking the riders' eardrums and stunning their movements.

He immediately sprayed the lead rider with the purifying mist. The silvery fog enveloped the target, and the stitched core on its chest began to sizzle and smoke. The creature shrieked in agony.

Landon sprang from the car, his claws tearing through the air. He slashed clean through the second rider's neck core. Dark purple drugged blood sprayed everywhere as the bike exploded behind him.

Nathaniel followed close, driving his silver blade straight into the third rider's gut. Purifier spread along the edge, dissolving the puppet into ash.

The remaining riders turned and tried to flee toward the burial zone.

Landon scoffed coldly. Activating Flex's space-rift ability, he cracked open the ground ahead in a two-meter-wide chasm.

The final two motorcycles were swallowed whole by the void, combusting before they could even scream.

Tessa stared at the scorched wreckage and tightened her fists.

That bastard Nathan.

He really sent them.

She could feel it-this attack had his name written all over it. That brazen, deliberate message... Who else could it have been?

The battle ended. The three returned to the car and drove in silence.

No more enemies appeared.

still.

By the time they arrived back at the villa, everything was still.

"Go ahead. Get some rest. Don't worry," Landon said, walking her to her room and handing her a cup warm milk.

Someone had dared to provoke them this openly-he would find out who. And they would pay.

He would never allow anyone to behave so recklessly in front of him.

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"Okay... but don't stay up too late," Tessa murmured, looping her arms around his

neck and brushing a kiss against the corner of his lips.

They hadn't suffered a scratch, but she was far from calm.

Nathan.

That damn Nathan.

After Landon left, Tessa immediately rose from bed. She stared at the glowing

silver ring on her finger, its eerie shimmer flaring once again.

Her fury boiled over.

She grabbed her phone and dialed Nathan directly...

Chapter 436 His Voice Again

From the moment it happened, Nathan had been waiting for Tessa to call.

Sure enough, here it was-her name lit up on his screen.

A sinister smile flickered across Nathan's shadowed face as he answered the call instantly. "Tessa, long time

no see!"

"Nathan. Was last time's lesson not enough for you? Do I have to kill you for you to finally disappear from my life?" Tessa was practically gritting her teeth.

If it weren't for the blood contract, she'd have gone over and finished him off herself.

Nathan chuckled.

"Tessa, why are you so angry? I didn't do anything! I just missed you, that's all. Thought I'd pay you a visit! Come on, we're still good friends, aren't we? No need to get so worked up."

Tessa gave a cold laugh. "Didn't do anything? You sent puppets to attack our car. If it weren't for Landon's strength, we'd be dead."

"Ah-yes, that part was my bad," Nathan replied with a tone of lazy apology. "My men were too stupid. They didn't realize you were in the car. My poor Tessa must've been so scared."

He gave a low laugh. In the background, there was a faint clinking of ice in a glass. "But you should have faith in Landon. He's the Alpha King of Montedra. If a few mindless 'stitched-together toys' could hurt him, wouldn't that be humiliating?"

He paused, then added in a tone only lovers would use, soft and intimate, "This was just a warning. Next time, I won't let him off so easy."

"You..." Tessa was on the verge of exploding. "Just say it. What do you want?"

"I told you-I missed you. How about tomorrow morning at ten? I'll wait for you at the café across from Landon's villa."

"Don't be mad. You're too pretty to be fuming like that, my sweet Tessa." Nathan sounded downright smug.

It had been so long since he'd felt this way.

Ever since Tessa dragged him back from Navoris, he'd been like a powder keg- dark, irritable, volatile. But today, finally, he felt something close to amusement again.

"Hah. Fine. You just wait," Tessa growled. She really wanted to tear him limb from limb.

"Oh, I'll wait. No matter how late it gets, I'll be there. And tonight, I'll dream of you."

He didn't care how furious she sounded.

He just wanted to hear her voice. Nothing else mattered.

After the call ended, Tessa was still seething.

Just then, her phone rang again-this time, it was Samuel.

Tessa, are you okay?"

"I'm fine."

"What about Nathan? That bastard didn't do anything, did he? He's waited so long for you-now that you're back, he must be going all out trying to trap you."

Samuel was genuinely worried. That's why he called at this hour.

It was just bad timing-Tessa had come to Yalvaria, and Samuel had been sent off

to Zarovia for work. He could only worry from afar.

"He definitely wants to trap me. But that depends on whether he has the ability to." She wasn't the same girl Nathan once controlled like a puppet.

"Tessa, if you need help, contact Michael. In Yalvaria, even Nathan has to show him some respect."

Nathan was truly deranged.

If she slipped up and got caught, it'd be over.

"Oh-and don't meet with him alone, okay? Last time, he was by himself in Navoris, so he ended up paying the price. But this time? He's got the whole Frost Pack behind him."

"Alright, alright, stop worrying about me. It's the same wherever I go." She knew he was just trying to look out for her, but right now, she didn't have the patience to soothe him.

"By the way, does Landon know about this? If you won't give in and go back to Nathan, he might target Landon next-to force your hand."

Chapter 437 A Secret to Bear Alone

At the mention of Landon, a shadow passed through Tessa's eyes.

Yes-barely half an hour ago, Nathan had already sent the first wave of attackers after him.

It happened so fast, her contacts in Yalvaria hadn't even had time to fully prepare their defenses...

"He doesn't know yet," she said quietly.

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"Then you should tell him," Samuel urged. "If he's your fated mate, he's supposed to face everything with you."

"I can handle this on my own. There's no need for him to know." Some things she simply wasn't ready to let Landon find out.

"You're always like this-so stubborn. When there's someone willing to share the burden with you, why won't you let them?"

"Alright, get some rest." Tessa didn't want to keep talking. Everyone had their own principles. Being with Landon wasn't about seeking protection.

She wanted her love to be simple and pure.

"You never listen anyway. There's no getting through to you. Fine-do what you want."

After hanging up, Tessa took a deep breath.

She really didn't want to trouble Landon-much less let him find out about the blood contract Nathan had placed on her.

Part of her feared what he'd do if he knew. Landon might go all out to destroy Nathan.

Both were powerful Alphas, evenly matched. If the Frost Pack and Nightshade Pack went to war, blood would spill. Countless werewolves would die for/nothing. She couldn't bear to start such a catastrophe over herself.

Another part of her, the one that had fallen in love with Landon and accepted he was her fated mate, was now afraid to lose him.

When the lily-of-the-valley scent surged from her glands, she wanted to face him as the truest version of herself-untainted. She didn't want him to know about the filth of that contract, that cursed bond to Nathan that made her skin crawl.

She made a silent promise: once the blood contract was broken, she would tell Landon everything and stand beside him clean and free.

Emma's voice flicked through her mind, tail swishing furiously: Once that damn contract is gone, I'm kicking his kneecaps in and making him beg for forgiveness!

Absolutely. Everything we've suffered-we'll make sure he pays it back in full. Tessa's eyes narrowed, cold and dangerous.

Just then, Landon stepped into the room after wrapping up a meeting with Nathaniel. He'd thought Tessa was already asleep, but instead, she stood at the window, lost in thought.

Her back looked so lonely and small-it tugged at his heart.

He walked up behind her and wrapped his arms gently around her waist.

"What's wrong? Still awake? Did something scare you just now?"

The moment Landon entered, his familiar pine scent reached Tessa. She quickly composed herself and leaned into his broad, warm embrace. "No, I wasn't scared. I knew you'd protect me. And besides, you know I'm a white wolf

awakener. I can defend myself if I have to, right?"

Landon gave a soft laugh. "Yeah, my Tessa is definitely strong. But it's late-why aren't you asleep yet? Something bothering you?"

"No."

"Really?"

"What's with the tone? You don't believe me?"

"Of course I do. Whatever you say, I'll believe it. Always."

Tessa turned around and wrapped her arms around his waist, resting her head on his chest to listen to his steady heartbeat. "If one day, you got hurt because of me, I'd never forgive myself." She never wanted to see him suffer-not because of her.

Landon rested his chin on her head. "What are you talking about? There's no way I'd be hurt because of you. Just having you in my life brings me joy. No matter what happens, I have only one request: stay by my side. Never leave. And never think that keeping something from me is for my sake."

He didn't know what she was really referring to.

But that was what he meant with all his heart.

Even if it cost him his life, he'd protect her without hesitation.

She was his fated mate, the one gifted by the Moon Goddess. And even if fate hadn't written her name beside his, his love for her would still be unwavering.

He would walk with her. Always.

Chapter 438 The Edge of Patience

"Landon..." Tessa murmured his name, moved.

How could he make her heart feel so soft?

Because of him, she was no longer the reckless version of herself. She wanted to stay alive-not just for survival, but to remain by his side for as long as she could.

That's why, when problems arose, she faced them with clarity, no longer driven by impulsive emotion.

"It's late. Let's get some rest."

Landon scooped her into his arms and laid her gently on the bed, tucking the blanket around her before lying down beside her. "Don't worry. No matter what happens, I'll always be by your side."

That was his promise-and he meant to keep it.

"Mm." Tessa nestled against his arm, finding the most comfortable spot and closing her eyes.

The scent of pine on his skin calmed her, slowly washing away the unease that lingered.

Even Emma curled up peacefully in her mind, letting out a quiet yawn.

As he watched her fall into a steady sleep, Landon closed his eyes too, drifting off beside her.

There was no need for passionate words or touch. The mingling of lily-of-the-valley and pine, the resonance of bonded souls, was enough to keep their hearts tightly bound together.

The next morning, Tessa woke to find it was already 9 a.m.

The bed beside her was empty-Landon had clearly gotten up early to handle his business.

After washing up, she was about to head out when the villa's butler stopped her, "Ms. Tessa, are you going out? Shall I have the driver take you?"

"No need. I'm just going to meet a friend. It's at the café right across the street."

"Then please allow two bodyguards to accompany you. After what happened last night, Mr. Landon would never feel at ease letting you go out alone," the butler insisted.

Tessa frowned slightly. "That's unnecessary. The attack last night was aimed at Landon. I don't have any enemies here. Having two people follow me will only be a burden."

The butler hadn't expected her to be so headstrong.

"Ms. Tessa, I can't make that call. Mr. Landon entrusted your safety to me. If anything happens to you, how could I ever face him?" His expression was pleading, pitiful even.

How could she get mad at someone like that?

"Please, Ms. Tessa, have some mercy on me. This is the only job I have. If I lose

it, how will I live? You see how old I am already..."

Tessa was at a complete loss.

If someone came at her aggressively, she'd have no problem pushing back.

But against this kind of elderly, guilt-tripping plea? She was powerless. She could only give in.

"Fine! You can send two bodyguards with me. But you have to make sure they stay outside the café and don't interfere with me or my friend."

Seeing her relent, the butler knew better than to press his luck. He nodded immediately.

"Understood, Ms. Tessa. Don't worry-I'll make sure they don't disturb you." All that back-and-forth had delayed her quite a bit.

It was already 9:30 by the time she stepped out of the villa and made her way across the street to the café.

She arrived at 9:40, thinking she was a little early.

But to her surprise, Nathan was already there.

"Tessa, I've finally been waiting for you."

Nathan's face lit up with a wide smile when he saw her, as if he'd forgotten all about what had happened three months ago-how she'd drugged him in Navoris, suppressed his wolf power, and forcibly teleported him back to Yalvaria.

Tessa's face turned cold. Her wolf power stirred, and the air inside the café began to shake-tables, chairs, even teacups trembled with her presence.

"Nathan, what the hell do you want? You keep showing up and disturbing my life again and again. I am very. Un. Happy!"

Her patience was not limitless. If he kept pushing her boundaries, she didn't care what the cost was-she would make sure he paid for it.

Chapter 439 A One-Sided Obsession

In the face of Tessa's fury, Nathan only smiled. Channeling his wolf power, he steadied the trembling tables: chairs, and teacups inside the cafe. Then, with practiced case, he slid the cup of coffee in front of him across the table toward her.

"Come on, it's been so long since we've seen each other. Do we really have to start with something so heavy?" Nathan didn't want to ruin this fleeting moment of peace.

"I didn't do anything. I just wanted to meal with you-is that so hard?"

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Tessa scoffed. "Is that really all you want? Just a meal with me?" Like hell it was. Did he really think she didn't know what he was up to?

Nathan nodded without hesitation. "You have my word. That's all I want-to share a meal with you. What else could I possibly do?" he said mildly.

Tessa let out a cold laugh.

What a joke. Did he think she was that naïve? After orchestrating all this drama, did he expect her to believe he just wanted dinner? No-he wanted to capture her, drag her back to his side, and mold her into his long-lost Luna all over again.

"Nathan, let me make this clear one more time. I'm not your toy, and I'm not the reincarnation of your Luna. I'm me. And I don't like you. No matter what you do, I will never go back to you."

The smile on Nathan's face slowly vanished. But then, instead of anger, a soft, indulgent look replaced it.

"Tessa, I know you're you, and Joanna is Joanna. I won't force you to become someone you're not anymore. I was too extreme before. But it's different now. I've thought it all through. As long as you come back to me, you can be my Luna on your own terms. No more training. No more remolding."

Truly, if she would just return, he'd accept her completely.

Tessa's expression darkened.

"Nathan, do you not understand plain language? I told you-I don't like you. Why the hell would I want to be your Luna?"

This time, the mask shattered.

Nathan's wolf power exploded like a glacier cracking apart. Shards of frost spiderwebbed out from under his feet, creeping across the tiled floor. Even the coffee cup between them had frozen solid into a block of ice.

"I've already compromised this much, and you still won't come back to me?!"

He'd warned himself again and again not to lose his temper today.

But hearing those words from her lips-he just couldn't stay calm.

Tessa remained unmoved. "You really think I believe your so-called 'compromise'? When you wanted to 'adjust' my glands, you smiled and said it was just a minor operation to help my wounds heal faster. Your credibility with me is below zero. I don't like you, and no matter how much you bend, I'm not going with you!"

Nathan's eyes began to burn crimson, beast marks swirling in their depths. "What do you want me to do to make you accept me?!"

In his whole life, he'd only ever had one Luna-Joanna. Since her death, there

had never been another woman. Not even a bedmate.

As Alpha of the Frost Pack, he had no shortage of women throwing themselves at him-hoping to warm his bed or become his new Luna. But he'd felt nothing. Until Tessa.

She looked so much like his Luna Joanna.

He admitted it. He'd once used every extreme method he could to mold Tessa into the image of his late mate-altering her glands, binding her with a blood contract nearly as strong as a mate bond.

But ever since she faked her death and disappeared, he'd had time-years-to reflect.

Even if she wasn't Joanna reborn, even if she rejected every part of that past, if she could just stay by his side, he and his wolf would finally know peace.

And yet, this simple wish-why was it the one thing she refused to give?

Chapter 440 This Isn't Love

"I don't want anything from you. And you'd better not try anything either. I've already found the one I love. I will never accept you!"

The coffee cup in Nathan's hand shattered in his grip.

Even with his fury clearly about

erunt. Tessa remained utterly i

It didn't matter what he did.

She didn't love him. That was all there was to it.

Her heart belonged to Landon-and Landon alone.

"Do you really want to push me to this point? Are you only satisfied if I end up hurting you?"
Nathan's voice trembled. He hadn't wanted to threaten her.

But he was out of options.

Faced with this girl and her unwavering resistance, he was completely helpless.

"If by 'hurt' you mean hurting Landon-go ahead and try. If you so much as lay a finger on him, I swear I'll make you wish you were dead."

He had to understand-this wasn't a bluff.

She meant every word.

"Is that so?" Nathan's voice darkened. "Then I guess I'll have to kill him. Because only if he's gone will you come back to me."

If that was the only way...

Then he wouldn't hesitate.

He was confident he could do it. After all, this was his turf. Here, he had every advantage.

Tessa's expression turned to stone.

"So that's it, then. We're enemies now."

If this was how it had to be-so be it.

She stood up. There was nothing left to say.

But before she could even make it to the café doors, Grant appeared, flanked by warriors from the Frost Pack. They blocked every possible exit.

Tessa turned and looked at Nathan.

"Tessa, did you think this was Navoris?" Nathan said, slowly rising to his feet. "Last time, I got caught off guard. But now that you're in Yalvaria, you're not going anywhere. Why fight it? Wouldn't it be better to just stay with me?"

Why did she insist on tearing things apart like this?

He truly hadn't wanted it to come to this-but she gave him no choice. Tessa sneered.

He created this mess, and now he dared to blame her?

Did he think the world revolved around what he wanted?

"Nathan. Are you really going to force this?"

Nathan stepped toward her with a gentle smile, his pale fingertips glowing with icy blue light, like he was about to touch something precious he'd finally recovered. "Don't make this harder than it has to be. Come back with me to Frost Pack..."

But before he could even graze her, Tessa's claws slashed through the air without hesitation, striking straight at him.

The moment she walked into the café, she'd sensed the energy field cloaking the space-a containment barrier. No matter how loud the commotion inside, no sound would escape.

Since Nathan refused to listen and now dared to use force against her, she had no reason to hold back.

Nathan's pupils shrank. Instinctively, he summoned a wall of ice to block her strike.

Their powers clashed midair, releasing a spray of shattered frost. Through the glittering shards, Tessa saw the same red beast marks swirling in his eyes-the same look he had five years ago when he pinned her down in that lab and injected her with the gland-restructuring serum.

She spun away from a jagged ice spike, her claws slicing past his throat, leaving a gash on his pale skin streaked with frostbitten blood.

"This is what you're familiar with, isn't it?" she said coldly, stepping back across the ice-strewn floor. The silver ring on her finger suddenly flared with a sharp, blinding light.

Five years ago, she'd destroyed the starlight resonance stone inside the ring-the core sigil of their blood

contract.

Yet somehow, Nathan had pieced together the fragments. Though not fully restored, it was enough to keep the contract intact.

At this distance, the silver band burned against her skin like molten iron.

It was Nathan's warning.

"Pain to mark your prey. Fear to create/dependence... Nathan, you'll never understand what love is."