

Out Of The Shadows: Tilda's Brilliant Second Life

Chapter 01

The fire roared, spitting heat and smoke into the night.

Tilda Jenson lay crumpled on the dusty floor, her body too weak to move. Smoke scraped down her throat, dragging cough after cough out of her lungs. Tears streamed uncontrollably, stinging her eyes.

Her hair was a tangled mess, her face streaked with soot, yet nothing could hide her natural beauty.

She couldn't move. Someone had drugged her—completely paralyzed her.

When had it happened?

A sweet voice slipped through the chaos. "Well, you look awful, Tilda."

Kyla Jenson walked toward her, wearing a white dress and a gas mask. Her voice, light and innocent, was the voice of a little girl who could never hurt anyone.

At least, that's what Tilda had once believed.

"It was you?" She rasped, disbelief widening her eyes. "You drugged me?"

Kyla was her younger sister in name.

"This is a little test," Kyla said, smiling behind the mask. "When Mom, Dad, and all our brothers walk in and see us like this ... Tell me, who do you think they'll believe? You, or me?"

She pulled off her mask, fitted it gently onto Tilda's face, then smudged ash across her own cheeks.

Pulling on a pair of gloves, she slipped a cutter from her pocket and drew the blade across her own forearm.

Blood poured down her wrist.

She tossed the cutter beside Tilda, peeled off the gloves, and slid them onto Tilda's limp hands. Clutching her bleeding arm, she twisted her face into an expression of terror and screamed loudly.

"Help! Daddy! Mommy! Someone help me! Tilda's gone crazy!"

The warehouse door slammed open.

“Kyla!”

Tilda watched as her parents and all seven brothers rushed right past her—straight to Kyla.

“Dad, Mom, it hurts! It really hurts! Tilda went crazy! She tried to set me on fire and said I don’t deserve to be a Jenson! She even cut me!”

Their eyes swept over Kyla’s bleeding arm, her tear-streaked face, and her trembling like a wounded rabbit. Then their gaze shifted to Tilda—slumped on the floor, a gas mask covering her face, the bloody cutter at her side, gloves on her hands.

“Russell Jenson’s face twisted with fury. He charged at Tilda and drove his foot into her stomach.

“How did I end up with a daughter like you? You disgust me!”

The kick tore through her insides.

Her body ached, but her heart hurt even worse.

She felt like her body was shattered into pieces.

This was the same stomach that had once taken a bullet for him.

She remembered—years ago, Russell had taken both girls to a business event when a man burst in with a gun.

Without thinking, Tilda had stepped in front of him and taken the bullet, leaving a hole in her stomach.

But Russell had fled with Kyla, leaving her bleeding on the floor.

It was the police—not her father—who got her to the hospital.

She’d gone straight into the ICU, clinging to life by a thread.

Days later, the Jenson family finally remembered her.

They only left Kyla’s side for a single hour to visit Tilda in the hospital.

Russell had looked guilty.

But the only thing he said in his defense was, “Kyla is your little sister, and she’s adopted. Now that we’ve found you, she’s afraid of losing her place in the family. As the older sister, you should be more understanding.”

And just like that, something came up with Kyla. The whole family rushed off in a hurry to take care of her.

From the way they treated her, anyone looking in would have thought Kyla was the real daughter.

And Tilda? She was nothing more than a stand-in. A placeholder.

Still, she believed him.

She actually—pathetically—believed him.

Because he was her father.

Because she had waited so long to find her family.

Because blood was supposed to mean something. She told herself the Jensons would never truly abandon their birth daughter.

So, she gave in to Kyla—again and again.

Whatever Kyla wanted, she handed over.

Every gift, every opportunity—Kyla chose first, and Tilda took whatever scraps were left.

She convinced herself that if she kept giving and kept sacrificing, they would eventually accept her. That someday, they would love her as their own.

Looking back now, what a joke.

What a pathetic, cruel joke.

She stared, hollow-eyed, as Kyla was carried out of the burning warehouse, surrounded by frantic concern and urgency.

And they left her behind—like trash no one wanted.

The flames closed in.

Pain ripped through her as fire consumed her skin. The searing heat swallowed every breath, every thought.

She could smell herself burning.

Tilda shut her eyes. A single tear slipped from the corner.

This life ... I've done enough for them.

I've paid the Jensons back in full—with my life. My obsession with family. My desperate hope. All of it—paid in full.

If there's a next life, let's just be strangers.

That night, the news broke across Slosa: an abandoned warehouse on the outskirts had gone up in flames. One charred body was recovered. But before it could reach the hospital for an autopsy, it mysteriously vanished.

The next day, the Jenson Group released an official statement:

We have severed all ties with the girl we once believed to be our biological daughter.

From this day forward, Kyla Jenson is the only daughter we recognize.

Whatever Tilda Jenson did—or whatever became of her—is no longer our concern.

And just like that, the girl who had once set gossip blogs ablaze as the Jensons' long-lost daughter faded from the headlines—replaced by newer, juicier scandals.

Forgotten.