

# **Out Of The Shadows: Tilda's Brilliant Second Life**

## **Chapter 11**

Chapter 11 How Could You Compare to Kyla?

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Tilda didn't even say goodbye—she just walked off, and that alone was enough to set Wade's temper off.

"Wade, your sister's leaving without a word," Clive said, nudging him as they both watched her disappear into the night. "At least say hi to us—we did step in to help her back there."

Although, if Clive was being honest, with the way Tilda had handled herself, he doubted she'd needed saving at all. One solid kick from her and those guys would've been out cold.

And this was Nightingale Bar, after all—Maurice's place.

The security here wasn't just for show.

Their rescue was pointless.

"Forget her," Wade muttered through clenched teeth.

He was still furious. Tilda—breaking ties with the family? Fine. Let her.

"Oh, sure," Clive said, barely hiding his smirk. "You say you can't stand her, that you're afraid she'll take Kyla's spot at home—but the moment she's in trouble, you're the first one to step in. Classic Wade."

Tough words, soft heart. That was him all over.

After all, Tilda was the little sister who'd been missing for 19 years before finally coming home.

Still, every family had its drama, and the Jensions were neck-deep in theirs. Even as close as Clive was to Wade, he wouldn't touch that mess. He had more than enough chaos to deal with in his own family.

"I'm going to the restroom," Wade said abruptly, then stormed off toward the first floor.

“Pfft!”

Clive burst out laughing the moment Wade was gone.

“Hey, Wade—aren’t there bathrooms on the second floor?”

Wade either didn’t hear him or chose to ignore it.

Meanwhile, in the fourth-floor VIP lounge, Jude rose from his seat.

Maurice arched a brow. “Heading out already, Jude? Why not stick around a little longer?”

“I’ve got something to take care of.”

The words were simple, but the icy edge in his voice was sharp enough to chill the air.

Maurice let out a low whistle. Preston had no idea what kind of storm he’d just called down on himself.

It was bad enough to toss Jude’s name around like it was some kind of VIP pass—Jude despised that. And when Jude hated something, he didn’t just let it go. Preston was about to wish he’d never been born.

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But Maurice could tell there was more to it than that. Jude’s anger had been simmering long before

Preston’s little stunt.

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No, that spark had been lit the second that woman stepped onto the dance floor—moving through the crowd like a queen. Untouchable. Unforgettable.

“Oh, and one more thing,” Maurice called after him with a sly grin. “I gave both ladies an Elite Diamond Card. Maybe drop by more often—you just might run into them again.”

“Busybody,” Jude said coolly without glancing back, striding out of the room.

Maurice leaned back on the sofa, hands behind his head, a slow, knowing smile playing on his lips.

This is going to be interesting.

Outside the bar, Wade stepped out just in time to see Tilda helping Una into a cab.

Tilda noticed him, too. Her gaze flicked his way for a heartbeat before she turned back to Una, as if she hadn’t seen him at all.

“Tilda, I think that’s your brother,” Una murmured, squinting into the shadows.

It was hard to tell in the dim light. Honestly, what would Wade be doing here? Coming to find Tilda? That didn’t seem likely.

Wade was practically a legend at Orica University. Not just because of the Jensons name—though that certainly helped—but because he was brilliant. Top SAT scorer, recruited by Orica before the semester even started. He could have gone to any Ivy League school, but he chose to stay close. Why? So he wouldn’t be too far from home. Or more accurately, too far from Kyla.

He was ridiculously handsome, the perfect picture of the Jensons’ looks and presence. The kind of guy who could stop a hallway conversation just by walking past—a campus heartthrob through and through.

“That’s him,” Tilda said flatly. “But it doesn’t matter anymore.”

“Tilda...” Una’s voice wavered.

Her throat tightened, and her eyes stung. She hurt for Tilda.

What had happened in just two weeks? When Tilda first returned to the Jensons, she had been glowing—talking about them with so much hope, like she’d finally found where she belonged. Now? Something had shattered that dream badly enough for her to walk away without looking back.

Her voice was soft, but Wade heard every word. And it didn’t sit well with him.

He walked toward her.

“Tilda!”

His voice was sharp and cold—cutting through the night like a blade of ice.

Tilda turned slowly, her lips curling into a faint, biting smile.

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Yes. That tone—distant, detached, as if she were nothing to him—was exactly what she expected. So different from the warmth in his voice whenever he said Kyla's name.

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And even though her chest ached, she felt a strange sense of peace. Because the colder he became, the more certain she was that she'd made the right choice.

She met his eyes without flinching. "Can I help you, Senior?"

The word hit Wade like a slap.

And just like that, a memory crashed over him—the Tilda who had just come home. Back then, she'd called him brother in a timid, almost trembling voice, testing the waters, desperate for his acknowledgment but terrified of rejection.

And all he'd thought about was Kyla—how she might feel.

So he'd ignored Tilda. Looked down on her. Treated her like she didn't belong. He'd even snapped at her, telling her not to call him brother.

Because she didn't deserve it. That title was reserved for Kyla. Only Kyla.

He remembered the way her eyes dimmed, the way the light in them went out completely. The way her heart shattered in front of him.

He'd be lying if he said he felt nothing. The truth was, it had left a small, bitter pit of guilt in his chest. But pride had kept him from apologizing.

And now? He did what he'd always done—pretended it never happened and turned away.

Damn it! Why was that memory clawing its way back now? Why did I suddenly feel like garbage?

He didn't have an answer, so he pushed that thought aside.

So instead, he lashed out. “Tilda, what are you doing in a place like this?”

She scoffed, finding him utterly ridiculous. “Why shouldn’t I be here? You’re here too, aren’t you?”

He hissed, “Dressed like that, you’re bound to attract trouble! It just happened—if I hadn’t stepped in—”

“Oh, please!” she cut him off. “I handled it just fine without you. I’m not delicate like Kyla. And this is Nightingale Bar—security’s not just for show. Those creeps? Already dealt with.”

Her words cut straight through him, the cool edge in her tone making his blood boil.

“Tilda,” he growled, “what makes you think you can compare to Kyla?”

The moment the words left his mouth, the air went still.

Even his anger froze in place.

Then came the regret—fast and cutting.

He shouldn’t have said that.

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Shouldn’t have brought Kyla into it. Shouldn’t have compared them yet again.

He looked at Tilda, bracing himself for the hurt he was sure he’d see in her eyes.

But there was nothing. Her face was unreadable, her voice calm.

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“Right. I could never compare to her,” she said evenly. “I’m just a nobody—an orphan with no power, no name, no standing.

“So, you and I have nothing to do with each other anymore. Even if I drop dead right here, it has nothing to do with you.

“If something happens to me, just keep walking. Pretend you were never there.”

