

Out Of The Shadows: Tilda's Brilliant Second Life

Chapter 02

Chapter 2 You Better Apologize, Tilda!

Tilda stared at her reflection in the mirror.

The face looking back at her seemed younger—like it was from five years ago.

Softer, but still showing hints of the beauty she would grow into.

“I—I came back to life?” She whispered, barely able to hear her own voice.

The date on her phone read: October 23, 2030.

Five years before the fire that had taken her life.

And just two weeks after the Jensons had brought her home.

86%

Finished

She let out a self-mocking smile. “Is this the universe’s way of making fun of me? Giving me a second chance just to remind me how stupid I used to be?”

Whatever the reason, she wasn’t going to waste it.

She wasn’t here to win anyone’s approval this time. She wasn’t going to twist herself into someone else’s idea to fit in.

Given a second chance at life, this time, she was going to live for herself—and no one else.

Her eyes scanned the bedroom. Familiar, but strangely distant.

She changed out of her pajamas into a plain white T-shirt and faded jeans.

Her short hair framed her face with a sharper, more confident look.

She looked into the mirror again.

When she first arrived here, she’d brought nothing but a small suitcase and a fragile hope—hope that she’d finally found her real family.

Hope that she wouldn't be alone anymore.

And so, she moved into this house.

A place called home, but it never felt like one.

From the outside, it was grand and polished, the kind of place that looked perfect in a magazine. But inside, it had chewed her up and spit her out.

Just as Tilda was lost in her grief-

Bang! Bang!

A loud pounding echoed from the door.

She pushed the sorrow aside, her eyes turning cold.

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Without a word, she opened it, her face blank.

"Tilda! Mom and Dad want you downstairs."

Wade Jenson stood there—tall, athletic, dressed in designer clothes, and glaring at her, hatefully.

Her biological brother.

Seventh in the Jensons lineup.

They both went to Orica University, a prestigious school.

Wade was a junior, Tilda a sophomore.

Kyla, the youngest, had just started her freshman year after finishing her SAT.

"I heard you," Tilda said flatly.

Wade blinked, thrown off.

This wasn't the Tilda he remembered. Back then, she'd been stiff, nervous, and desperate to please

everyone.

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Finished

She'd had no pride—always quick to help, always the last to speak, wanting to be close but too afraid to truly connect. Wade was annoyed with that timid, pitiful version of her.

Even after finding out she was their long-lost sister, he still couldn't make himself care.

He already had a sister—Kyla. Sweet, gentle Kyla, the one he'd grown up with and protected his whole life.

Wade didn't need a biological sister showing up out of nowhere. As far as he was concerned, gentle, kind-hearted Kyla was all he needed.

With a short snort, he said, "You know what you did. Get downstairs and get ready for your lecture." Then he walked away.

"What did I do?"

Tilda muttered with a cold laugh.

Memories rushed back.

She knew exactly what today was.

Perfect.

Hands in her pockets, she strolled downstairs.

The first thing she heard was soft crying coming from the living room.

She saw Kyla sitting curled between Russell and Blair Jenson, their hands on her back, murmuring comfort.

From the outside, you'd think Kyla was the birth daughter and Tilda was the adopted one.

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Chapter 2 You Better Apologize, Tilda!

Their places had completely reversed.

The pain that stabbed Tilda's heart was sharp but far from new.

86%

Finished

She had wanted this kind of closeness her whole life—wanted it so badly that she'd hidden her real strength, buried her true self, and lived as if she were nothing.

She'd given up everything just to scrape together the smallest pinch of family love.

Even with this second chance, letting go of those feelings from the start wasn't easy.

But she'd already decided—she would never let herself fall into that trap again.

She stood in silence, watching her parents with cool detachment, like they were actors on a stage.

Tilda wasn't part of this scene anymore—just a spectator.

If it had been a good performance, maybe she would have even clapped.

But she no longer felt anything for the people still caught in the play.

That was it. Nothing more.

Wade came downstairs, and the moment he saw Tilda's expression, his temper flared instantly.

"Aren't you going to ask why Kyla's crying?!" He barked.

"It's not my fault she's crying. Why should I ask?" Tilda's voice was ice.

"You brat!"

Tilda didn't look the slightest bit sorry. She acted like the whole thing had nothing to do with her.

That only made Wade angrier. He was seconds away from hitting her.

He couldn't stand it. He refused to believe this cold, vile girl was his sister.

Kyla was the one who belonged in their family.

Tilda? She didn't even deserve to exist. If she had just died, Kyla wouldn't be upset right now.

His glare was full of hatred, like he wanted her gone—not just from the room, but from the world entirely.

Tilda felt it. She knew exactly what that look meant.

He probably wished she were dead. Then Kyla could take her place, and there'd be no more reason for all this drama.

The old Tilda would have been crushed. Her heart would've broken, the pain tearing her apart from the inside.

She would have asked herself over and over what she'd done wrong to deserve that look from her brother.

She'd grown up for nineteen years without love, without warmth, surviving on nothing but grit and

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Chapter 2 You Better Apologize, Tilda!

stubbornness.

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And when the Jensons finally found her? Even with Kyla already there, she had never been jealous. She'd treated Kyla like a real sister—putting her first, caring about her feelings, and never competing with her for anything.

Whenever people compared them, Tilda always stepped back. Again and again.

She gave up everything for one thing: family.

Tilda never asked to be loved the way Kyla was. All she wanted was for her family to notice her, even once.

She had lowered herself until she felt like nothing.

Tilda had gave away her life just for a chance to belong. Wasn't that enough?

Apparently not. Never enough.

To the Jensions, Kyla was the only one who mattered.

Tilda was just a shadow, someone they barely noticed.

Maybe they really did wish she'd never been found.

Maybe her death would have been easier than letting her mess up the perfect picture they had.

The only reason they brought her home was because not bringing her home would've made them feel guilty.

They didn't want guilt hanging over them. So, to ease their conscience and get rid of any regret, they reluctantly took her in.

Now, none of it mattered to Tilda anymore.

The growing tension between her and Wade finally caught Russell's attention.

"Blair, stay with Kyla," he told his wife quietly.

Then he stood and walked toward Tilda, his face dark with anger.

"Tilda, you'd better apologize—now!"

His voice hit the room like a cold, heavy bell.

Wade crossed his arms and smirked, ready to watch the show.

She made Kyla cry? Then she was about to pay for it.

The old Tilda would have panicked. She would have obeyed, trembling and scared.

But this time, she met Russell's fury with a calm, steady gaze.

“And why exactly should I apologize?”

Tilda looked at Russell with steady eyes.

Compared to his explosive anger, her calm was like still water—and it carried a strange kind of power.

In that moment, their presence alone made it clear who stood taller.