

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

## **Chapter 26**

Chapter 26 Monster

But Tilda wasn't as unshakable as she acted.

A wound was still a wound.

Even if she covered it up, the scar stayed—and sometimes it throbbed, dragging her back to that ugly, shameful past.

Still, she'd promised herself never to show weakness in front of anyone again.

Only the people who deserved it would get mocked. Only the few who truly cared would ever get to see her hurt.

"Yeah, maybe sometimes I wish I were dead. But I'm still here, breathing and fighting.

"That's just how it is. From now on, my life has nothing to do with the Jensons. It's only going up from here.

"I'm not going anywhere. I'm only getting stronger. Bet that really gets under your skin, Mrs. Jenson!"

Tilda swallowed the ache in her chest and forced the words out.

This time, I won't forgive.

I'll never forgive that so-called "family" for what they did to me.

The cuts, the humiliation, the countless nights I cried because of their coldness, the way it burned—I'll never forget. Not even if I die.

Blair froze when she saw the pure hatred burning in Tilda's eyes.

Her face went pale.

Gosh, why did I say those things?

I was blinded by anger.

It wasn't really what I meant at all.

Or more accurately... I've never said anything so cruel before.

Not ever. Yet I said it to my daughter.

The weight of being Mrs. Jenson suddenly felt crushing, filling her with a sharp, heavy regret.

“Blair, you’re right. What good is a daughter like that? She’s not even worth a fraction of Kyla!”

Daphne smiled, satisfied. She’d been waiting for the day Blair would cut Tilda off for good.

She’d worried Blair might resist, but today, things had blown up exactly the way she wanted.

“No... Daphne, I-”

Blair tried to explain.

It isn’t really how I feel.

I just said all that out of anger!

“Wow. I didn’t think the top two families in Slosa could be this nasty.”

Alfie clapped slowly, his sharp gaze dripping with disgust.

Even he—carefree and usually obsessed with gossip—looked sickened.

That alone said how bad Blair and Daphne had acted.

Finished

“What did you just say?! You’re just a restaurant manager—who do you think you are, talking to me and Blair like that?”

“Get your boss right now! I’m filing a complaint! I want you fired!”

Daphne’s temper snapped. What’s going on tonight? First, that lowborn, Tilda, dared to talk back, now even the restaurant manager? Everyone has lost their minds!

“How scary. Jude, your aunt wants to fire me. I’m shaking.”

Alfie’s eyes shifted toward a corner of the restaurant, a sly smile on his lips.

J—Jude?

Daphne froze.

She turned—and saw him.

Jude stood up slowly.

Hands in his pockets, he walked over.

Una's reaction was instant—like a mouse spotting a cat.

She held her breath and slipped behind Tilda,

To someone like Una, Jude's presence was dangerous—blinding, even.

You didn't get close to a man like that. You didn't even look at him for too long.

He could drag you straight into the abyss.

Tilda didn't move, watching him come closer.

Jude's eyes met hers for a brief second before sliding away.

Under the glow of the crystal chandeliers, his face looked like something carved by the gods.

Two buttons on his shirt were undone, showing a pale, strong chest.

His lips were pressed tight. His eyes were bottomless, sharp, and cold—too intense to stage into.

Everything about him was untouchable, like a ruler from another world.

He had a kind of presence you couldn't look away from.

You could feel the massive gap between yourself and this man.

“Jude, w—why are you here?”

Daphne's voice cracked.

Even though her and Jude's core family didn't get along, Jude's quick, ruthless methods were legendary.

He had taken more lives than she could dare imagine.

No one with sense would ever cross him.

That's Jude.

Blair's heart pounded wildly.

She'd seen him before—but only from a safe distance, at glittering elite gatherings.

He carried an aura that warned people to stay away.

He didn't seem like a man in his 20s.

He felt more like a monster.