

Out Of The Shadows: Tilda's Brilliant Second Life

Chapter 09

Chapter 9 The Dancing Star of Nightingale Bar

Clive Rowse, Wade's childhood friend, sprawled across the leather couch with his arms stretched along the backrest, watching Wade down one beer after another without saying a word. Clive's mouth twisted into a smirk.

When Wade still stayed quiet, Clive leaned over and smacked his arm. "Alright, that's enough. If you're wasted. I'm not hauling you home. I'm not letting your dad chew me out for it."

"It's just beer. I'm fine," Wade muttered, but he finally set the bottle down and leaned back.

A cool breeze drifted in from the river as Wade tilted his head, eyes tracing the night sky.

Clive loosened his pink tie and shot a playful wink at a woman walking past. With his sharp suit, polished style, and easy confidence, he looked every bit the charmer. The purple diamond in his ear caught the low glow of the bar lights, flashing just enough to draw the

eye.

Still, the women weren't looking at Clive. They were looking at Wade—and who could blame them? The Jensions were a good-looking bunch. All seven sons had inherited Russell and Blair's flawless features, each with his own kind of appeal.

Wade had chiseled cheekbones, a sharp nose, and lips that looked like they belonged on a magazine cover. Add his slightly messy hair, and he could've walked straight off a fashion shoot.

"Every time we go out, I might as well be invisible. No one even notices me," Clive grumbled, shooting Wade a sulky look.

Wade closed his eyes, ignoring him.

Since Wade wasn't biting, Clive dropped the teasing. "I saw the news. Is that what's eating at you? You worried about Kyla?"

"That's part of it." Wade let out a slow breath. "The other thing is, we all accused Tilda yesterday—wrongly. It cut her deep. She said she's done with us, packed up, and moved out."

Clive clicked his tongue. "Wait—you guys thought she leaked the story?"

Wade didn't answer, which was answer enough.

Clive coughed a little. "Man, talk about jumping the gun. Still, isn't this kind of a messed-up win for you? Your family thought your real sister died years ago. Now she's back, but Kyla's in the way. And you've always liked Kyla better, right?"

Wade didn't hide it. "Yeah. Kyla's been with us since she was one. We grew up together. She's always been sweet and thoughtful. I never felt anything for Tilda. Honestly, I used to think it'd be better if she never came back. It would only hurt Kyla."

"Then there you go!" Clive lifted his glass. "Tilda's gone, no strings attached. Time to celebrate. Cheers!"

Celebrate?

Yeah, maybe I should be happy.

1/5

09.32

Thu, Aug 28

86%

Finished

Chapter 9 The Dancing Star of Nightingale Bar

So why did watching Tilda walk away feel so heavy? And why did Mom's failed attempt to stop her hit me like a punch in the gut?

Maybe it's guilt.

Or maybe it's that unshakable blood tie—no matter how hard I tried to deny it. Tilda is still my sister.

If she'd been the one behind the scandal, Wade might've applauded when she walked out.

But when she left, it felt like they owed her something they could never repay.

Earlier that day, over at Orica University, Wade had done something he'd never done before—he asked around about Tilda.

No one had seen her. No one knew where she went.

Russell brushed it off, saying she'd come home once she was done sulking. He told everyone to just let her

1. be.

Everyone, except Blair. She was the only one who would miss her.

To the Jensions, Kyla was enough. She always had been.

And the seven brothers felt the same way.

Then, out of nowhere, Wade spotted a familiar figure.

He froze.

"Tilda? Over here!"

It was Una waving at someone.

Tilda walked toward them with an easy smile.

She wore a crisp white blouse tucked into fitted jeans, finished with sneakers. No makeup—yet her natural beauty lit her up from the inside. Her starlit eyes and graceful features caught the sunlight with every step.

People turned to look as she passed.

Even Wade was taken aback.

Is Tilda always this beautiful? I couldn't remember noticing on campus before.

The first time she'd caught his attention was when he learned she was the sister they'd lost for 19 years.

Her first visit to the family home had been a disaster—nervous, awkward, and constantly searching for approval. That weak, needy look had grated on him, and she'd made a terrible first impression.

To Wade, a Jenson carried themselves with pride and presence. Compared to Kyla, Tilda had fallen flat.

And he wasn't the only one who thought so.

Afraid she'd threaten Kyla's place, none of them had treated Tilda kindly.

28

6

R

O

2/5

U932 Thu, Aug 28

Chapter 9 The Dancing Star of Nightingale Bar

86%

Finished

But this Tilda—confident, glowing, and completely transformed—was almost unrecognizable. She carried herself like she owned the place, every step steady and sure. Her presence pulled people in; it was like the spotlight followed her.

“Wow! Total knockout,” Clive said with a grin. “Wade, even you can’t look away. That’s saying something.”

When Tilda stepped onto the second-floor rooftop bar, Clive’s gaze locked on her.

“That’s Tilda,” Wade said grumpily.

“What? No way! That’s-” Clive squinted. “Wait... that’s Tilda? She looks nothing like her photos!”

At first, he thought Wade was just drunk, mistaking some random woman for his long-lost sister. But as he studied her, his breath caught.

It really was Tilda.

Same face. Completely different vibe. The change in her was so striking, it felt like seeing a different person entirely.

Tilda didn’t notice them. She walked straight to Una.

“I’m late. Sorry for keeping you waiting,” she said, flashing a warm smile.

“You’re not late at all—wait, Tilda... You look different.”

Una, in a white dress and with soft, flowing hair, gave off a sweet, harmless air. She'd been worried that cutting ties with the Jensions would break Tilda. But now ...

Tilda seemed better than ever. Brighter. Alive.

"I am different," Tilda replied simply, her smile unwavering.

She had finally seen the truth about family bonds. And she was done pretending. This was the real her.

"I was worried," Una admitted. "But you actually seem happier."

"Cheers, Una. Let's celebrate my rebirth. No—let's call it escaping a miserable life."

Tilda picked up Una's Bloody Mary and clinked glasses with her. She took a long sip, the icy, spiced drink jolting her senses awake.

The wind brushed her face. City lights danced on the water. Her best friend was beside her. She was alive. She was free.

Life was wonderful.

Why waste energy chasing something that was never hers?

Her voice was soft—but Wade, watching from across the bar, caught every word.

A storm of emotions churned in Wade's chest, a tangled mess of feelings he couldn't name.

"Escaping a miserable life? Yikes," Clive muttered. "Sounds like your family didn't treat her right."

3/5

Chapter 9 The Dancing Star of Nightingale Bar

He clicked his tongue and looked away. He hadn't meant to pry—it wasn't his business.

86%

Finished

But Tilda had walked away from an identity most girls could only dream of—and she'd done it willingly. And knowing the way Wade had always spoken about her. If life in the Jensions hadn't been truly miserable, who would give up the family they'd fought so hard to find—and an identity that precious?

Wade didn't answer. He tipped back his bottle and drained the rest.

Escaping a miserable life.

Was that what leaving home meant for Tilda?

Is she really okay—or just pretending, acting like she didn't care when she actually did?

"Tilda, you don't have to be strong all the time," Una said softly. "I told you—I'm your best friend. If it ever gets too heavy, you can lean on me. My shoulder's right here."

Una's chest tightened. She knew better than anyone how much Tilda had longed for a family—how desperately she'd wanted that warmth.

When the Jensons came with a DNA test and took her home, Una had never seen her so happy. Tilda had cried—more than once. And when she was drunk, she'd clung to Una and sobbed, "I finally have a family. A mom. A dad. Brothers. They'll protect me. I'm no longer an orphan."

"Then, let me borrow your shoulder," Tilda whispered, leaning in and wrapping her arms around her.

Eyes shut. Tilda spoke from the bottom of her heart

"I'm so lucky to have you, Una."

Una's throat tightened, her eyes burning. She truly felt sorry for Tilda.

"Hey, don't be sad. I'll always be here with you," she murmured, holding back her tears and comforting her.

"Mhm."

Tilda blinked away the sting—not because of the Jensons, but because she finally realized how foolish she'd

been.

In her last life, Tilda had given up everything for people who never truly valued her.

This time, she had a second chance.

The music kicked in, thumping through the dance floor.

"Una, I want to dance."

This time around, Tilda just wanted to be happy. No more worrying about what anyone thought. She wanted to let go. To live.

"I'll be right here, cheering you on," Una said with a smile.

Tilda gave her a playful pat on the head before standing and unbuttoning her blouse. Underneath, a sleek black vest hugged her frame, showing off her toned abs.

09:32 Thu, Aug 28 & AE

Chapter 9 The Dancing Star of Nightingale Bar

She stepped into the center of the dance floor.

The beat dropped—Tilda came alive."

A total knockout, she caught every man's eye the moment she started moving.

Finished

Whistles and shouts rang out, but she didn't care. Eyes closed, she gave herself to the music, moving with fierce, unrestrained energy. She was electric—more than graceful, she was powerful. Every turn, every sway, radiated a wild, magnetic pull that drew the whole room in.

Wade stood frozen, staring like he'd never seen her before. He had no idea Tilda could dance—much less command an entire room. That raw energy flooded the bar, lifting the atmosphere to a fever pitch.

"Encore! Encore!" the crowd roared.

They wanted Tilda to dance for another song.

Even Clive was on his feet, clapping like an overexcited fan.

Meanwhile, on the fourth floor of Nightingale Bar, in a private booth, a pair of sharp, hawk-like eyes tracked her every move—silent, focused, locked on the girl setting the dance floor on fire.