

## Broken 130

Chapter 130 Just A Long Day AMY Finished The following morning started quietly. Daniel had already left for a meeting by the time I arrived at the archive building. The air inside smelled faintly of paper and polish. Lewis was waiting by his desk, his glasses hung low on his nose and a file open in front of him. "I think I found something you should see," he said, his tone careful, like he already knew what it might mean. He handed me a photocopy of a document an old report stamped Missing Person, Elara M. My eyes scanned the lines until they stopped on the signature at the bottom. Filed by: Marcus Hale. I blinked, reading it again to be sure. Marcus Hale is Selene's father. My throat tightened. "Her father?" I asked, though I already knew the answer. Lewis nodded. "He was a local officer back then. He's the one who filed the disappearance notice. There's also a note indicating that the report was closed six months later, marked 'case settled. No details.'" A chill ran down my spine. I didn't want to jump to conclusions, but everything in me whispered that it wasn't a coincidence. The same family that had just reappeared in our lives was somehow connected to my mother's vanishing seventeen years ago. I thanked Lewis, pretending to stay calm, but as I walked out of the archives, the world around me felt distorted – people walking past, cars moving, sounds fading in and out. My mind replayed every word Selene had said since she came back. Later that afternoon, I ran into her at the company lobby. She was leaning against Daniel's assistant's desk, laughing softly about something that didn't sound funny. She turned when she saw me, her smile almost too bright. "Amy," she said, voice dripping with friendliness. "You look exhausted. Is everything okay?" "I'm fine," I replied. "Just a long day." "Of course," she said, tilting her head like she was studying me. "Daniel mentioned you've been busy lately. He worries about you." My stomach twisted. "He tells you that?" She shrugged, unbothered. "We talk sometimes. It's nice catching up with old friends." I gave a tight smile, forcing myself to stay calm. "Friends," I repeated. She nodded, still smiling, but there was something behind her eyes. It was amusement, maybe even pity. Every word she said felt staged, rehearsed like she was testing how much I'd reveal. When she finally walked away, I caught a glimpse of Elias standing by the corridor corner. He was watching us, his expression unreadable. For a second, I thought he might walk over, but he turned and disappeared into his office. By the time I got back to my desk, my hands were trembling. Not from fear but from anger. I hated how she got under my skin so easily. In the middle of sorting documents, the intercom buzzed. "Mrs. Carter, there's someone here asking to see you." It was Mark. He walked in slowly, looking thinner than before, his clothes slightly wrinkled. His voice was low when he spoke. "Amy, I just came to ask for forgiveness. Clara's health is failing, and she keeps asking to see you." I didn't say anything right away. I just looked at him. "Then you both live with the choices you made," I said finally. My tone was flat, controlled. He looked like he wanted to argue, maybe to beg, but I turned away before he could. I didn't want his apologies.

When I got back upstairs, I found out the guards had let him into the building without any written clearance. I had warned them before – no exceptions. I called them into my office. "You're both dismissed," I said evenly. "Collect your things." They tried to explain, but I didn't want excuses. I couldn't afford leniency when everything around me already felt unstable. By the time evening came, my mind was buzzing with too many thoughts. The search for my mother, Selene, Elias, Daniel, Mark. The threads were starting to tangle, and I needed air. I walked out toward the garden behind the estate, the one lit by soft lamps and trimmed hedges. The night air was cool, and for a few moments, I let myself just breathe. That's when I heard voices. I froze near the hedges, the sound coming from the other side. I

recognized Elias's voice first. It was low, steady, but tense. "You know what happens if she finds out," he said.

My chest tightened. Then Selene's voice followed, sharp but quieter. "I'm trying." My pulse quickened. I inched closer, careful not to make noise. Their silhouettes moved faintly in the dim light. Elias's hand brushed her arm, and she flinched slightly. "This isn't part of the deal," she said. "I didn't sign up for this." Elias didn't answer immediately. Then, softly: "You did when you came back." They stood there a moment longer, the silence between them heavier than the words. Then they walked off together toward the path leading back to the main building. I stayed hidden until I couldn't hear their footsteps anymore. My hands were cold, my heart beating fast enough that I could feel it in my throat. When I finally returned to my room, Daniel was still out. The lamp on the nightstand cast a faint glow over the bed. I sat down, took out my notebook, and wrote down everything I'd heard every word, every inflection, every pause. "You know what happens if she finds out." "She looks suspicious already." The connection was too clear to ignore now. Selene's father had filed my mother's disappearance report. Selene had returned just after Elias did. And Elias was definitely hiding something. I didn't know what their plan was or how deep it went, but I knew one thing for sure: Selene's return wasn't just a twist of fate. As I closed my notebook, I caught my reflection in the mirror. My face looked calm. Something was unraveling and this time, I wasn't going to let it slip through my fingers again.