

## Broken 141

Chapter 141 He Wasn't Wrong AMY Drowning myself in work felt preferable because numbers didn't talk back, and spreadsheets didn't ask why you were upset. By the time Daniel arrived, I'd already gone through two meetings and had my coffee refilled twice. He pecked into my office once, offering a small smile. I returned it out of courtesy, but my eyes dropped back to my computer before he could say anything. I didn't trust myself to talk yet. – Hours went by and I stayed buried in work by answering calls, checking proposals, reviewing budgets. Every time Daniel walked past, I found something to do: reread a message to type, anything that would keep me from looking at him. In the afternoon, a message popped up on the internal system: >“Emergency Meeting – Conference Room A. All Senior Staff.” Perfect. Another distraction. When I entered the room, Daniel was already seated at the head of the table, flanked by Elias and two department heads. Selene was there too, pretending to look engaged. I sat across from her, pretending not to notice. She had no business being here but I wasn't surprised either way. The meeting was about logistics and upcoming pack investments. I took notes and asked questions when necessary, all business, no emotion. Daniel's voice was steady as he led the discussion, but every now and then, I caught his eyes flicking toward me. I kept my expression neutral. When the meeting ended, everyone began filing out. I packed my notes quickly, hoping to leave before he got to me. But Daniel was faster. “Amy, wait,” he said, catching up with me near the doorway. “I have another call to join,” I said, not looking at him. He frowned slightly. “You've been avoiding me all day.” “I've been working,” I retorted, adjusting the files in my hand. He stepped closer. “You're upset.”

I sighed. “Daniel, I really don't want to do this here. I'm busy.” 58 For a moment, he looked like he wanted to argue, but he nodded instead. “Fine. I'll see you at home.” I nodded and walked away, ignoring the ache in my chest. When the day finally ended, I couldn't bring myself to drive home. The idea of sitting across from him at dinner, pretending everything was fine, made me feel suffocated. So instead, I turned the car toward the pack library. The library was quiet, almost empty. The scent of old paper and polished wood filled the air. I went straight to the archives – the section that held books about pack history, lineage, and old customs. I didn't know what exactly I was looking for, only that I needed to – my mind occupied. After scanning through several titles, I found a few books about tracing family members who'd gone off-grid. Wolves who had rejected their packs, vanished, or gone rogue. I sat in a corner and flipped through pages for hours, highlighting passages about spiritual links, blood bonds, and ritual trackers.

It wasn't that I had anyone specific in mind – at least, that's what I told myself. Maybe part of me was thinking about my mother, or maybe it was just easier to focus on someone else's mystery instead of my own confusion. By the time I , it was dark outside. I gathered my things and headed toward the exit. As I pushed the door open, I froze. “Leaving so soon?” a familiar voice said. I turned and saw Cole standing by the car park, leaning casually against a black SUV. “Cole?” I blinked. “When did you get back?” “Just a few hours ago,” he said with a grin. “Daniel called me.” *wWw.nO(v)elwOrM.com* That caught me off guard. “He did?” “Yeah,” Cole said, walking over. “He told me to find you and make sure you're safe. Said you've been... distracted lately.” I shook my head, half amused and half exasperated. “He's unbelievable.” “He also said I'm back on duty,” Cole continued. “Full-time. I'll be driving you again, starting tonight.”

I couldn't help but chuckle. “Of course he did.” : Cole smiled, folding his arms. “You don't sound surprised.” “I'm not,” I said. “That's Daniel for you. Can't stand not knowing where I am for two

seconds.” “Well, to be fair,” Cole said, “you do have a tendency to disappear when you’re upset.” He wasn’t wrong. I sighed, adjusting the strap of my bag. “Alright then, Mr. Bodyguard. Back to work, huh?” “Looks like it,” he said. “So, where to now? Home?” I glanced at the night sky, quiet for a moment. “Yeah. Home.” Cole opened the car door for me, and I got in. As we drove, the city lights flickered past, and my thoughts drifted back to Daniel. I knew he meant well. Calling Cole wasn’t about control, it was about concern. He was trying, in his own way, to reach me. But I wasn’t ready yet. I needed to cool down first, to figure out how to talk to him without anger or pride getting in the way. Cole noticed my silence but didn’t say anything. That was one thing I liked about him, he knew when not to talk. When we finally pulled up to the estate, the house lights were on. Daniel was probably waiting. “Thanks, Cole,” I said, opening the door. He nodded. “See you in the morning, Amy.” He gave me a small smile and walked toward the house. My chest felt heavy, but calmer somehow. Maybe tomorrow I’d let Daniel talk. Maybe I’d even listen. For now, though, all I wanted was a quiet night and a bit of peace. I walked into the house and snuck upstairs like a thief. It was a relief that no one was in the living room. I held my breath as I went into the room. This was one of the moments I wished I had a room to myself. Instead of wasting time wishing, I took off my clothes and snuck into bed. Daniel stirred a little and I held my breath just so he would not wake up.

90 W 3/3 Cedella is a passionate storyteller known for her bold romantic and spicy novels that keep readers hooked from the very first chapter. With a flair for crafting emotionally intense plots and unforgettable characters, she blends love, desire, and drama into every story she writes. Cedella’s storytelling style is immersive and addictive—perfect for fans of heated romances and heart-pounding twists.

Chapter 142 Watchful Eyes DANIEL When I woke up the next morning, Amy was gone again. The bed beside me was cold, her pillow untouched. It wasn’t the first time she had slipped out early, but this time, it got to me. I sat up, running a hand through my hair, staring at the spot where she’d been. I reached for my phone and called Cole. He picked up after the second ring. “Morning, Alpha,” he greeted. “Where are you?” I asked. “At the company. Amy asked me to bring her in early today.” I rubbed the back of my neck. “So she didn’t say anything before leaving?” “No,” he replied. “She was quiet on the way here. Looked focused. Didn’t seem upset or anything, just... distant.” “Did you notice anything unusual? Anything off about her behavior?” Cole paused for a second. “No, sir. She’s just her usual calm self. Went straight into her office when we got here. I figured you two were fine.” I sighed. “We are. Or at least, we were supposed to be.” He didn’t say anything, and I could almost hear his confusion through the line. “Keep an eye on her,” I said firmly. “Don’t hover, but make sure she’s safe. I don’t want her left alone for too long.” “Understood,” he said. I ended the call and sat there for a while, staring at the floor. Amy had been pulling away, little by little. I couldn’t blame her – Selene’s presence had thrown everything off balance. I’d tried to handle it calmly, to show her that she had nothing to worry about, but maybe I hadn’t done enough. After a quick shower and a barely touched breakfast, I left for the office. The drive felt longer than usual, every red light stretching out like punishment. When I finally arrived, I spotted Cole by the parking lot. He gave me a small nod of acknowledgment, then returned to his usual alert stance. Inside the company, the staff moved about their usual morning routines. I passed a few greetings and kept walking until I reached Amy’s office. Through the tinted glass, I could see her sitting at her desk, typing something. Her posture was stiff, focused, and detached. I knocked gently on the door. “Come in,” she said without looking up. I stepped in, closing the door behind me. “Morning.” “Morning,” she replied, her tone polite but distant. “How long have you been here?” I asked. “Since seven,” she said, still typing. I nodded and sat down across from her. “You’ve been keeping yourself busy.” “It helps,” she said. I wanted to reach across the desk and pull her into my arms,

but I knew that wouldn't solve anything. She needed to say what was on her mind, and I needed to listen even if it hurt. Finally, she stopped typing and looked at me. "Daniel, we need to talk." I leaned back slightly. "Alright." She folded her arms, her voice steady but edged with frustration. "Until you find a way to put Selene in her place, she's going to keep being a problem. For us. For me." I took a deep breath. "Amy—" "No, listen to me," she cut in, "I've been trying to stay calm, to trust you, but every time I see her around, she acts like she has some claim over you. And I know you've done nothing wrong, but I can't keep pretending it doesn't get to me." I nodded slowly. "I understand."

www.veiworm.com She frowned. "Do you? Because it feels like you're trying too hard to be polite to her. Like you're walking on eggshells because of what you two used to have."

too careful not to cause a Her words stung because they weren't wrong. I had been careful scene or give Selene an excuse to twist things around. But maybe, in trying to stay composed, I had made Amy feel like she wasn't my priority. I stood up and walked to her side of the desk. She didn't move, her eyes stayed fixed on the computer screen, but I knew she wasn't reading anything. "Amy," I said softly, "look at me." 58 After a moment, she did. Her eyes were guarded, but behind the calmness, I could see the hurt. "I love you," I said plainly. "And not because I'm obligated to. Not because you were chosen for me. I love you because every fiber in me does. Because when I look at you, I see peace. I see home." Her jaw tightened. "Then show me that Selene doesn't matter." "She doesn't," I said. "She was my past, not my present. When she left, that chapter ended. You're my life now. You're the one I wake up thinking about. The one I want beside me, no matter what happens." She looked down at her lap, "It's just... hard to believe sometimes," she said share history. You didn't even break up properly. She disappeared, and nov. like she still has a chance." "You two › back, acting › "I know," I admitted. "And maybe that's why she came back because she thinks she can use that un past to create doubt. But I won't let her. I'll handle it." "How?" "I'll make it clear that she's not welcome to cross that line," I said. "No more visits, no more personal conversations. If she wants to talk business, she can do it through email or with Elias present. Nothing else." She studied my face carefully, searching for sincerity. I didn't move, didn't try to over-explain. I just let her see that I meant it. After a moment, she nodded. "Alright." Relief washed through me, but I didn't push it. I knew trust wasn't something you repaired in one morning conversation. "I'm not angry at you, Daniel," she said quietly. "I'm just tired. I want peace." "You'll have it," I promised. I reached for her hand, and this time she didn't pull away. Her fingers were cold, but when I held them, she didn't let go. For a few seconds, we just stood there in silence. I squeezed her hand before stepping back. "I'll handle things with Selene today. You focus on work." "Alright," she said I gave a small smile. "And Amy?" "Yeah?" "I meant what I said. I love you. Always." Her eyes softened just a little. "Then prove it." Cedella is a passionate storyteller known for her bold romantic and spicy novels that keep readers hooked from the very first chapter. With a flair for crafting emotionally intense plots and unforgettable characters, she blends love, desire, and drama into every story she writes. Cedella's storytelling style is immersive and addictive—perfect for fans of heated romances and heart-pounding twists.

#### Chapter 143 Layers Of Trouble AMY

A few minutes after Daniel left, I received some files and realized they needed his signature and it was something that the other staff could see. I balanced the stack of files in my arms as I walked down the hall toward Daniel's office. The day had been busy and noisy with phones ringing, papers shuffling, people moving in and out but my mind was elsewhere. I just wanted to drop this file off and get out before Selene appeared again with her fake smiles and syrupy tone. The file I carried was sensitive –

something Daniel had specifically said no one else should see. So I knocked once and went in quietly. He was on a call but gestured for me to come in. His eyes softened when he saw I kept my tone formal. "This is the updated contract from the council meeting," I said, placing it on his desk. He ended his call, leaned back slightly. "Thank you," he said. His voice was gentle, but I didn't let myself linger. "Anything else?" "No," I replied shortly. "You said it was confidential, so I wanted to deliver it myself." "Appreciate that," he said, watching me closely, like he wanted to say more. But I wasn't ready for another emotional talk about Selene or how we'd "work through it." I gave him a small nod and turned to leave. The moment I stepped out of his office, I almost collided with Selene. She was walking in fast, phone in hand, and instead of stepping aside, she brushed past me really hard. Her shoulder slammed against mine and I froze for a second. Then I turned. Her face was painted in that smug, innocent look she always wore chin slightly tilted, lips curved in amusement. "Watch where you're going," she said lightly, as if it were my fault. — I smiled tightly. "You might want to watch your loose behavior, Selene," I warned, "Because you don't seem to know your place." Her smile faltered, just for a moment. I could see the flash of irritation in her eyes before she masked it again. I didn't wait for a response. I walked away, heels clicking against the marble floor, keeping my head high. The anger that had been simmering inside me since she showed up at the house burned quietly now. I went straight to my office, shut the door, and let out a slow breath. I didn't want anyone to see that she'd gotten under my skin. I sat down at my desk and started to go through emails, trying to distract myself, but the words blurred together. My hand was still slightly shaking from that brief encounter. She wanted a reaction, and I had given her one but at least it wasn't a meltdown. It was firm, and I meant every word. I was halfway through reorganizing some documents when I heard a soft knock. "Come in," I said. The door opened, and Mrs. Carter walked in. She looked graceful as always. Her presence always had an effect on me, but today, she looked a bit too serious. "Amy," she said gently, closing the door behind her. "I just saw what happened hallway."

I straightened up. "It's fine," I said automatically. "She brushed past me, and I told her to be careful." Mrs. Carter moved closer and sat across from me. "I know you can handle yourself," she said. "But I also know Selene didn't come here by accident." I frowned slightly. "What do you mean?" She folded her hands on her lap. "I have sources," she said quietly, lowering her voice. "People who still owe me favors. One of them called me this morning. He said Elias has his reasons for bringing Selene back and he had his reasons for making her disappear before." I blinked, unsure how to respond at first. "So she wasn't just gone because she wanted to be?" Mrs. Carter shook her head slowly. "No. There's more to her story and to Elias's involvement. Whatever it is, it's not just about Daniel." It made sense of her sudden reappearance, the perfectly timed stories about "personal loss," and the way Elias always seemed a little too composed when she was around. "So what do I do?" I asked quietly. Mrs. Carter gave me a sympathetic smile. "For now? Ignore her. The more she sees she can't shake you, the faster she'll lose ground. Don't let her drag you into a fight that she wants everyone to see." "That's easier said than done," I muttered. "She knows exactly how to push." "I know," Mrs. Carter admitted. "But that's how people like her operate. They thrive on reactions. Don't give her one." I sighed and leaned back in my chair. "Daniel keeps saying he loves me and that I shouldn't worry, but sometimes I can't help it. I know he's trying, but Selene..." I trailed off, shaking my head. "She's not just here to reconnect. She's here to test how far she can go." Mrs. Carter's gaze softened. "Then don't make it easy for her. Remember you already have what she's after. She's the one chasing a shadow." That thought comforted me more than I expected. I nodded slowly. "I'll try." "Good," she said, standing up. "And Amy... don't let her make you doubt Daniel. That's exactly what she wants." I nodded again, meaning it this time. "Thank you, Mrs."

Carter.” She smiled warmly. “You’re family now. That means you’re my responsibility I managed a small smile. “I appreciate that.” After she left, I sat there for a long while, staring at the desk but not really seeing anything. The hum of the office outside felt distant. My mind was spinning around her words. If Elias had been behind Selene’s disappearance before, then he could control her return too. Which meant this wasn’t about nostalgia or second chances. It was a plan. My life was beginning to feel like an onion. As one layer is settled another problem rolls off. Cedella is a passionate storyteller known for her bold romantic and spicy novels that keep readers hooked from the very first chapter. With a flair for crafting emotionally intense plots and unforgettable characters, she blends love, desire, and drama into every story she writes. Cedella’s storytelling style is immersive and addictive—perfect for fans of heated romances and heart-pounding twists.

#### Chapter 144 Not Convincing Enough DANIEL

The next day, Amy had been quiet all day. She came into work before anyone else, dropped her bag on the table, and went straight to her desk without the usual small talk. She barely looked at me during the morning briefing, only nodding when I asked if she was okay. It wasn’t like her. Normally, she filled the silence with a question or a sarcastic comment. But today, nothing. I tried not to stare, but every few minutes my eyes drifted back to her. She kept rubbing her thumb against a file like she wasn’t really reading it. I could tell something was eating at her. The air between us was off – heavy, quiet, and full of unsaid things. By evening, the office was empty. Everyone had gone home, leaving the sound of the clock ticking and the soft hum of the air conditioner. Amy was still at her desk, flipping through the same folder she’d been pretending to review all day. I walked over and leaned against the edge of her table. “You’ve been lost in thought since morning,” I said. “Want to tell me what’s going on?” She hesitated before answering. “It’s nothing serious.” “That’s not convincing,” I said, crossing my arms. Amy sighed, set the file down, and leaned back in her chair. “Do you ever wonder why Elias mated my mother?” The question caught me off guard. “You grew up in foster homes. You never knew her so you’d never really know except we ask Elias.” “I didn’t,” she said softly. “All I have are the photos Mrs. Smith gave me before she died. She said they were the only things my mother left behind.” Her voice had that quiet shake to it, the kind that comes from trying too hard to sound calm. I sat down opposite her. “What made you bring this up now? We’re not supposed to be in a place where Elias is.” Amy stared at the papers on the desk, not really seeing them. “I don’t know. Maybe it’s Elias. The way he looks at me sometimes reminds him of something he’s trying to forget. And now, with Selene back, everything feels off. Too many things are happening at once.” She paused. “I keep thinking there’s something I’m not being told.” I didn’t answer right away. I’d known Elias my whole life, but even I couldn’t say I understood him. He had that calm, controlled way of handling things, like every move he made was part of a long game only he could see. “I’ve wondered about him too,” I said. “He hides too much. Even when he’s honest, it feels like he’s leaving out the most important parts.” Amy looked up. “Exactly. He never talks about his mate. Not to anyone. It’s like she never existed. Don’t you think that’s strange?” “Very,” I admitted. “But Elias always had a reason for everything. He’s not careless. If he erased something from the past, it’s because he didn’t want it found.” Amy’s jaw tightened. “And what if that something is my mother?” The way she said it made me stop. She wasn’t just guessing – she was starting to believe it. I kept my tone steady. “You think Elias was involved with your mother before you were born?”

I don’t know,” she said. “But the dates match. The photos Mrs. Smith gave me... one of them was taken near the old pack estate. The same place Elias used to stay before he became council member.” She leaned forward, lowering her voice. “And there’s something else. Your mum told me earlier that

Elias had a reason for bringing Selene back. She said he also had a reason for making her disappear before." That made me sit up straighter. "She told you that?" "Yes," Amy said. "And she told me to stay out of it. But I can't. I need to know who really was and what Elias is hiding." my mother For a moment, the only sound in the room was the faint hum of the lights. I studied her face – the worry, the frustration, the stubbornness. She wasn't going to let this go. "Then we'll find out," I said. "But carefully. Elias doesn't like people digging into his past." Amy looked down, her fingers brushing over the edge of the file again. "He's already suspicious. I can feel it. Every time I'm near him, it's like he's watching, waiting for me to ask the wrong question." "You're not wrong," I said quietly. "He's been tense lately. More than usual." She glanced at me. "Do you think he knows I've been looking?" "I think Elias knows everything," I replied. "He just pretends he doesn't until it suits him."

That earned the faintest smile from her. "That sounds about right." We sat in silence again. Amy broke the quiet first. "What if my mother's disappearance had something to do with Elias himself?" "That's a dangerous thought," I said. "Maybe," she replied. "But what if it's true?" Before I could respond, I caught movement from the corner of my eye. A shadow passed the frosted glass of the office door. My chest tightened. Someone was outside. Amy didn't notice, she was still talking. "Maybe that's why no one mentions her. Maybe that's why there's nothing about her in the pack records. Because Elias made sure she vanished completely." I stood up, keeping my eyes on the glass. The shadow had stopped moving. "Amy," I said quietly, "hold that thought." She frowned. "What is it?" The door handle turned slowly. The sound made her freeze. Elias stepped inside. His expression was calm, almost too calm, but his eyes said otherwise. "Working late?" he asked, his tone calm. Amy straightened immediately. "Just reviewing some reports." Elias's gaze shifted to me, then back to her. "Reports, or secrets?" Neither of us answered. He took a few steps into the room. "You've both been asking too many questions lately. About things that no longer matter."

#### Chapter 145 Never Mine By Blood

ELIAS Amy's voice didn't shake when she spoke. "They matter to me." Her calmness made the air in the room feel more tense. I stood just a few steps from the door, my hand still resting on the knob. I had heard every word before my name, my bond with her mother, the questions they had no business asking. I stepped fully into the room, keeping my voice steady but sharp. "Then I suggest you stop before you find something you can't handle." Amy turned toward me, her face pale but stubborn. Daniel tensed beside her, shoulders straightening like a soldier bracing for impact. I looked directly at him. "You should know better, Daniel. Curiosity has a price." He opened his mouth to speak, probably to defend her, but I wasn't in the mood to listen. So I turned my gaze back to Amy and said, "Since you're so curious, I'll tell you everything." She didn't blink. "Then say it." I took a slow breath. "Years ago, I was mated to your mother. It wasn't a perfect bond, but I respected it. I gave her everything she asked for. Then one night, I found out she had been seeing another man—an Alpha from the South." Her lips parted slightly, but she said nothing. "When I confronted her, she didn't deny it. She told me she loved him. I broke the bond that same night and sent her away. I thought that was the end of it." Amy's fingers tightened around the file she was holding. Daniel's jaw clenched, but he stayed silent. I continued, forcing the words out before I could stop myself. "A few months later, I found out she was pregnant. I assumed it was mine—until I learned the truth. The child she carried wasn't mine. It was his. The Alpha of the South." Amy went still. No sound came from her, no movement. Just silence. "You're that child," I said, looking her straight in the eye. "You were never mine by blood." Daniel stepped forward slightly, as if to block her from me. "Elias—" I raised my hand. "Don't interrupt. You need to hear this too. I turned back to Amy.

"I sent you to a good foster home out of duty, not love. You were a responsibility I didn't ask for. I could have sent you away with her to rot and be a rogue, but I didn't. I did what I thought was right. But don't ever think it was because you were my daughter." Her eyes became teary, but she didn't let a tear fall. "So all this time," she said quietly, "you knew?" "Yes." "And you just let me grow up thinking I didn't have anyone?" I felt the question like a hit to the chest, but I didn't flinch. "You had a home. That was enough." She took a shaky breath. "What about my real father?"

I looked away, just for a second. "He didn't want you. He didn't want her either when he found out the truth. When I told him she was pregnant, he said he had no interest in a bastard child born out of betrayal. His words, not mine." Daniel muttered under his breath, "That's cruel." I turned to him. "Cruelty has its place when truth is involved. Sometimes the only way to end a lie is to burn it down." Amy pushed herself up from the chair. "You think telling me this fixes anything? You think it makes you noble?" "It makes me free," I said quietly. "You wanted to know what I was hiding. Now you do." Her voice trembled, the first sign of emotion slipping through. "You didn't have to hate me for what she did." "I don't hate you," I said, though the words felt strange in my mouth. "I hate what she turned us all into. I hate what that betrayal did to this family. But you—you're not the cause. You're just the reminder." She looked at me like she didn't know whether to yell or cry. Daniel stepped beside her and placed a hand on her shoulder. "That's enough," he said firmly. I let out a tired breath. "You can think whatever you want. I don't owe either of you anything else." I turned toward the door, pausing for just a moment before I left. "Your mother's name doesn't deserve to be dragged through more dirt. Let her rest where she is. Stop digging before you find something worse." Neither of them answered. Amy's breathing was uneven, her face blank as stone. Daniel's hand was still on her shoulder, steady but tense. I opened the door and stepped out. The sound of it closing behind me felt like a door I'd never reopen. For a moment, I stood in the hallway, staring at the wall. My chest felt tight, not from anger, but from the weight of everything I'd just said. It wasn't easy to tell her. It never would be. But she needed to know the truth, even if it tore her apart for a while. Plus, that would be more than enough to keep her off my back. Inside the room, I could hear faint movement and Daniel whispering her name, Amy trying to breathe evenly. That sound would stay with me longer than I wanted it to. But I kept walking. Some truths couldn't be softened or taken back. They just had to be heard. And I'd been carrying this one for far too long. It was just one of my truths anyway, but nowhere close to the ones I wanted to keep a secret for ever. With this, I could gain their trust even if it's just a tiny bit. A little fraction of it would help me move forward. I went to my office and picked up my things. At least, for tonight I'll have a good night's sleep. One I haven't had in a very long time. While leaving the office building, I saw Amy crying against Daniel's chest and I could tell it was a cry of utter frustration.

#### Chapter 146 Pretense Amy

I didn't sleep that night. I laid on the bed staring at the ceiling as my mind replayed Elias's words over and over again. Every time I tried to close my eyes, I saw his face – calm, cold, and sure of what he said. By morning, I felt hollow. Not sad, not angry. Just empty. The kind of emptiness that doesn't make sense until you've lost something you didn't even realize you were still holding onto. I sat up slowly and rubbed my eyes. Daniel was still asleep beside me, his hand loosely draped over the blanket. For a second, I wanted to wake him, to talk, to cry, to just stop feeling like I was being pulled apart inside. But I couldn't. He deserved rest. So I got out of bed quietly and went to the dresser. There was an old photograph in the top drawer the one Mrs. Smith had given me the day I clocked 10. She'd said it was my mother. It was one of the few things I'd kept from my time in the foster home. The woman in the

picture had soft eyes and a kind smile. I'd spent years imagining her voice, wondering what it would have been like to grow up with her. I picked up my phone and checked the photo she gave to me before she died and wondered why she told me they were both my mother. Nothing made any sense. Now, staring at it, I wasn't sure what to believe. Elias's words kept echoing in my head: "You're not my blood. You're not hers either." I turned the photo over and ran my thumb across the faded ink where Mrs. Smith had written, "Your mother." Two words, one lie. The thought made my stomach twist. I grabbed my bag, dressed up quickly, and left for the office before Daniel woke up. I couldn't face him yet. I needed to face Elias first. — When I reached the company, I walked straight past everyone who greeted me. I must have looked different maybe tired, maybe detached but no one asked. I went up to Elias's office and knocked once before walking in. He looked up from his desk, his expression calm, almost expectant. "Good morning," he said, as if nothing had happened last night. I didn't answer. Instead, I pulled the photograph from my bag and placed it on his desk. "Is this the woman you meant?" He leaned back in his chair and looked at the picture. His face didn't change. Not a twitch, not a He studied it for a few seconds before he spoke. "That is not your mother," he said. Then, after a short pause, he added, "Neither of them are." I frowned. "What are you talking about? This picture—Mrs. Smith told me—" "Mrs. Smith lied," he cut in. His tone was sharp but calm, like a man discussing the weather. "That woman is no one to you." "You're lying," I said. My voice came out quicter than I expected, but steady. "You don't want me to find out the truth." He sighed, the kind that came from someone who'd already decided the conversation was over. "I have nothing to gain by lying to you. I've told you what I know." I clenched my fists. "Then tell me more. Who was she? Who was my mother really? You said she cheated, but you never said her name, or what happened to her after she left."

He didn't look up this time. "You should stop wasting your time chasing ghosts. Some pasts are better left buried." "You can't say that to me," I snapped. "You had a family. You had a mother. You had people who told you who you were. I didn't. All I've ever had are questions, and now you're the only person who can answer them." Elias finally stood up, and when he did, the room seemed to shrink. "You think knowing the truth will fix anything? It won't. It'll only break you further." I shook my head. "You don't get to decide that for me." He looked at me for a long moment. "Amy, you're chasing a past that doesn't exist anymore. The people you're looking for are gone. Let them stay gone." And with that, he picked up the photograph from his desk, stared at it once more, and then set it down. "This woman means nothing. Stop wasting your time." He brushed past me and walked out, the sound of the door closing behind him echoing louder than it should have. I stood there for a long time, staring at the photo. My throat burned, but I couldn't cry. Not here. Not in front of him. When I finally picked up the picture and left, my hands were trembling. I walked down the hall, ignoring everyone who called my name, and locked myself inside my office. The moment I sat down, the tears flowed. I pressed my palms to my eyes, trying to stop the shaking, but it didn't help. Every word Elias said replayed in my mind. Not your mother. Not her either. It felt like every part of me was unravelling, thread by thread. A knock on the door pulled me back. I wiped my face quickly. "Come in." Daniel stepped inside, looking worried. "You left early again," he said softly. "Cole told me you were already at the office when he got here." I nodded without looking up. "I had things to do." He didn't buy it. He came closer, stopping by my desk. "Amy, talk to me." I took a deep breath. "I went to see Elias." His expression changed immediately. "What did he say?" "He said the woman in the picture isn't my mother. That none of them are." I gave a bitter laugh, though it came out broken. "So apparently, I'm no one." Daniel's eyes softened. "You're not no one." I looked at him, trying to hold myself together. "Then who am I?" He walked around the desk and crouched beside me. "I don't have that answer," he admitted.

Chapter 147 Tearing Down Every Lie DANIEL “But we’ll find it together. You won’t go through this alone.” I assured Amy. The office began to feel like a cage. Amy hadn’t said a word since Elias left her with the cold truth. She kept mopping after I left her in her office and wouldn’t move. By noon, I couldn’t stand it anymore. “Come on,” I said, grabbing my keys. She blinked, slow and detached. “Where are we going?” “Anywhere but here.” She hesitated, but something in my tone must’ve gotten through because she finally stood up. I didn’t wait for her to argue. We left everything behind the files, the tension, Elias’s shadow and drove until the city thinned out and the roads grew quiet. — I stopped at a small park outside the main district. It was almost empty, just a few trees shedding their leaves and the faint sound of running water from a nearby fountain. I thought the silence might help her breathe again. Amy sat on a bench and hugged her arms around herself. She looked tired in a way that had nothing to do with sleep. I sat beside her, leaving just enough space for her to choose if she wanted closeness or distance. For a long while, she said nothing. Then she finally spoke, voice small. “I feel like everything I thought I knew about myself was a lie.” I looked at her. “You’re not a lie, Amy.” She shook her head. “Then what am I? My mother cheated. Elias isn’t my father. And the man who is... didn’t even want me. Do you know what that feels like? To realize you were unwanted before you were even born?” I didn’t answer right away. Some truths didn’t need to be met with explanations. They needed silence. Amy kept going, her words trembling now. “I spent years wondering why I never looked like anyone in the foster homes. Why I didn’t belong anywhere. And when Mrs. Smith gave me that photo before she died, I thought I finally had something. A piece of who I was. Now even that’s gone.” Her voice cracked. She didn’t cry, not fully, but her eyes shimmered like she was holding herself together by sheer will. I leaned forward, resting my arms on my knees. “You know, family isn’t just about blood. It’s about who stays, not who leaves. Elias may have told you the truth about your birth, but that doesn’t define you.” She gave a small, bitter laugh. “Then what does?” I met her eyes. “The choices you make now. The people you let in. That’s what builds who you are,” She looked away, watching a group of kids chasing each other across the grass. “You make it sound simple.” “It’s not,” I said. “But it’s real. And right now, you need something real.” Silence settled again. The kind that hums between two people who’ve both been broken in different ways.

After a while, she said quietly, “Do you think Elias was telling the truth? About my mother, about the Alpha?” I thought about it before answering. “I think Elias told you what he wanted you to believe. But he left out too much. His story doesn’t fit. If he truly didn’t care, he wouldn’t have raised you at all. And if your real father was the Alpha of the South... Why hide that for so long?” She frowned. “You think he’s protecting someone?” “I think he’s protecting something,” I said. “Maybe even himself.” Amy turned to me then, searching my face like she was hoping for a different answer. “Then what do we do?”

“We start finding the truth. All of it.” Her brow furrowed. “How?” “I still have a few contacts in the South. Old connections from before my accident. One of them might know something about the Alpha the year you were born or what really happened with your mother.” She exhaled slowly, her shoulders dropping as if the thought of movement, of action, gave her some ground to stand on again. “You’d really do that for me?” I looked at her, steady and sure. “For us. This stopped being just your burden the moment you trusted me with it.” Amy didn’t answer, but her lips pressed together in a way that said more than words. She was trying not to fall apart, and I wasn’t going to let her. We stayed at the park until the sun began to set, painting everything in soft orange light. She barely spoke, but I didn’t mind. Sometimes silence is the only thing that doesn’t hurt. When the chill started to creep in, I led her back to the car. The drive home was quiet, the kind of silence that was deafening but not suffocating. Halfway

there, she reached across the seat and held my hand. Her fingers were cold. By the time we got back to her place, night had fallen. She kicked off her shoes, sat on the couch, and looked exhausted. I sat next to her, unsure if I should say something or just let her. Finally, she whispered, "I just want to know who I really am, Daniel." I looked at her, that flicker of determination in her tired eyes, and I knew she wasn't giving up. "You will," I said softly. She rested her head on my shoulder. The weight of it felt right, grounding. I could feel her breathing even out, her body slowly relaxing for the first time in hours. Outside, the wind brushed against the windows. Inside, everything was still. As she drifted off beside me, I looked ahead – not to the night, but to what came next. Elias's version of the story didn't add up, and there were too many unanswered questions. If Amy's mother really had ties to the Alpha of the South, then someone out there knew the truth. And I was going to find them. Even if it meant tearing apart every lie Elias built to protect it. The truth was waiting buried deep, ugly, and dangerous. But it didn't matter. Amy deserved to know where she came from, and I was done letting secrets decide who she got to be.

#### Chapter 148 Can I Say Something Else?

The next morning, I tried to act normal. I woke up as usual, showered, dressed up, and went to work like I always did. But everything felt off. The walls of my office seemed too close, the air suffocating. Every document I looked at blurred together. Words stopped making sense after a few minutes. My head wouldn't stop replaying what Elias said. His face, his tone, the certainty in his voice. Every time I thought about it, my stomach tightened. By noon, I gave up pretending. I told my assistant I wasn't feeling well and needed to rest. She nodded, probably too politely, and I left before anyone could stop me. The drive home felt longer than usual. I didn't even remember most of it. My hands were on the wheel, but my mind was somewhere else entirely. By the time I got home, I kicked off my shoes and dropped my bag on the couch. The silence of the house was almost a relief. I walked straight to my bedroom and lay down. I didn't bother to close the curtains. The light coming in through the window was soft enough, and I was too tired to give a damn. My head hit the pillow, and for the first time in days, I let my eyes close. Sleep came fast and I like that it pulled me away from your thoughts for a little while. Then my phone rang, ruining my beauty rest. I groaned and reached for it, half awake. Daniel's name flashed on the screen. I answered without opening my eyes wide. "Hey." His voice was gentle. "You okay?" "I'm fine," I said automatically, though I didn't sound convincing even to myself. "I just came from your office," he said. "Your assistant told me you went home early. I was worried." "I couldn't concentrate," I admitted. "Everything just... felt heavy. I thought I should come home and rest." He was quiet for a moment. Then he said, "Good. You needed that. I'll be back early tonight. I want to check on you." I opened my eyes and looked up at the ceiling. "You don't have to, Daniel." "I want to," he said. "I'll see you soon, okay?" I nodded even though he couldn't see me. "Okay." When the call ended, I put my phone down and turned on my side. I stared at the wall for a long time, not really seeing it. Part of me was grateful he cared enough to leave work early, but another part of me felt uneasy. Elias's words had left a hole in my chest, and I didn't know how to fill it. After a while, I got up and went to the kitchen for some water. I sat at the counter and stared at my phone again. There was something I'd been thinking about since last night. I couldn't just sit around waiting for the truth to fall into my lap. If Elias was lying and I was starting to believe he was, I needed to find out for myself. Without thinking too much, I scrolled through my contacts until I found Cole's number. I had snuck out of the office without his, not for anything serious anyway. But he always had connections. If anyone could point me in the right direction, it was him. The phone rang three times before he answered. "Amy? Is everything okay?" I

hesitated. “Not really.” “What’s going on?” he asked, his voice alert. “Can I ask you something first?” “Of course.”

Do you have any contact who could help me... look into something? Someone private. Like a private investigator.” There was a pause. “That’s a strange request coming from you. What’s this about?” I rubbed my forehead. “It’s personal.” “I figured,” he said. “But you don’t sound like yourself. Talk to me, Amy. What happened?” I swallowed. It wasn’t easy to explain, and saying it out loud would make it too real. Still, I needed help. “Elias told me something about my mother,” I said quietly. “And about me. It’s... complicated.” “Complicated how?” “He said he’s not my father and he was mated to mother and bla bla bla.” There was a short silence. “What?” I nodded even though he couldn’t see it. “He said my mother had an affair with the Alpha of the South and that I’m their child. But something about it doesn’t feel right. The story doesn’t add who I am, where I come from, what really happened.” up. I need to know the truth Cole exhaled sharply. “That’s a lot.” “Yeah,” I said flatly. “It is.” He was quiet again. Cole never rushed when things got serious. Then he said, “Okay. I know just the right person to help you. A private investigator I’ve used before. Discreet and reliable.” Relief flooded through me, but I tried not to let it show in my voice. “Thank you. I just... I need answers, Cole. I can’t keep living like this.” “You don’t owe me an explanation,” he said. “You just tell me what need.” I took a deep breath. “I appreciate it. Really.” He hesitated. “Does Daniel know you’re doing this?” you That question made my stomach twist. I looked toward the window, watching the light fade outside. “No,” I said quietly. “Are you going to tell him?” “I don’t know yet.” He didn’t push. He never did when I wasn’t ready. That was one thing I liked about Cole — he respected silence. After a moment, I said, “Cole, can I ask you something else?” “Anything.” “I know you answer to Daniel. You’ve always been loyal to him.” “Yeah,” he said slowly. “Why?” I hesitated again. I could feel the weight of what I was about to ask. My throat felt dry. “I’d really like for this to stay between us,” I said finally. “Just this. Please.” And that was where the words stopped. I didn’t wait for his answer. I was too nervous to hear no. Cedella is a passionate storyteller known for her bold romantic and spicy novels that keep readers hooked from the very first chapter. With a flair for crafting emotionally intense plots and unforgettable characters, she blends love, desire, and drama into every story she writes. Cedella’s storytelling style is immersive and addictive—perfect for fans of heated romances and heart-pounding twists.

#### Chapter 149 A Private Meeting AMY

Daniel came home earlier than usual later in the evening just like he said he would. I was sitting on the couch in my pajamas, a blanket around my shoulders and an empty tea cup on the table. I heard his car pull into the driveway and, for some reason, my chest relaxed a little. He walked in a few seconds later, looking tired but still managed a small smile when he saw me. “You’re still awake.” “I tried to sleep,” I said, pulling the blanket tighter. “Didn’t work” He came closer, bent down, and kissed my forehead. “Rough day?” I nodded before responding. “Something like that.” He sat beside me and loosened his tie. For a moment, we didn’t talk. We were just quiet. He leaned back and sighed, like he’d been holding his breath all day. “Were you able to occupy your mind with something else,” he asked. “I couldn’t focus,” I admitted. “I kept trying to go through documents but it felt pointless. My mind kept wandering back to everything Elias said.” Daniel nodded slowly. “I figured as much.” We sat there, both staring at nothing. After a while, he turned to me. “Amy, I think you should take some time off work.” I looked at him, surprised. “You want me to stop working?” “Just for a while,” he said. “You’ve been through too much. You can’t think straight when you’re forcing yourself to act fine. Take a break, clear your head.” I thought about it for a moment. The idea didn’t sound bad. In fact, it felt like the perfect cover to do

what I really needed to do finding answers about myself without everyone hovering. — “Maybe you’re right,” I said. “I could use the time.” He smiled faintly. “Good. I’ll handle things at the office for now. Just rest, okay?” I nodded. “Okay.” He reached over and took my hand. “You’re not alone in this, Amy. Whatever you find or don’t find, I’m here. Always.” Something about the way he said it made me believe him. I leaned against him, and for the first time in days, I didn’t feel completely hollow. Later on, we ate dinner together quietly, and when I went to bed, I slept better than I expected. The next few days passed slower than usual. I stayed home most of the time, reading, cleaning up things that didn’t need cleaning, and thinking more than I should. Daniel still went to work, but he checked in often, either by calling or coming home early. Cole came by every morning like he always did, just in case I needed to go somewhere. He’d been my driver long enough to know when to talk and when to stay quiet. Since I took time off, most of our drives were short. To the grocery store, the park, once to Mrs. Carter’s house. Three days after Daniel suggested the break, Cole called me early in the morning. “Morning, ma’am,” he said. “Morning, Cole. What’s wrong?” “Nothing’s wrong. The investigator I told you about, he wants to meet.” I straightened up on the bed. “That was fast.” “He’s good,” Cole said simply. “And discreet. Said he’d prefer somewhere quiet.” “Where?” “The town library. There’s a secluded section near the back. Not many people go there.” “Alright,” I said. “When?” “In an hour.”

Okay. Pick me up.” He agreed and ended the call. I got ready quickly, wearing something simple like jeans, a long-sleeved shirt, and a cap. I didn’t want to draw attention. When Cole arrived, he was in his usual black car, the one Daniel assigned to me months ago. He greeted me with a small nod as I got in. “You sure about this?” he asked as he started the engine. “Yes,” I said. “I need to know who I am, Cole.” He gave a small sigh but didn’t argue. “Then let’s do it right.” The drive to the library was quiet. The morning traffic was light, and sunlight streamed through the windows. I watched people walking their dogs, shop owners opening stores, kids heading to school – normal lives, untouched by secrets or family scandals. I envied that. When we arrived, Cole parked near the side of the building, away from the main entrance. We went in through the back door, where it was quieter. The librarian at the front desk barely glanced our way. Cole led me through the aisles until we reached a small reading area tucked behind a row of tall shelves. It was empty except for a man sitting at one of the tables. He looked to be in his forties, clean-cut, with sharp eyes that missed nothing. He stood up when he saw us. “Mrs. Carter?” he asked. I hesitated. The name sounded strange, still new, but I nodded. “Yes.” He extended his hand. “I’m Mason. Cole told me you needed help.” I shook his hand. “Thank you for coming.” Cole stayed beside me, watching carefully but letting me speak. Mason gestured for us to sit. “He gave me a general idea of what you’re looking for. You’re trying to trace your biological background.” “That’s right,” I said. “I grew up in foster care. I didn’t know my parents. The man who was mated to my mother in the past said he’s not my father. And the story around my mother doesn’t add up.” He nodded, taking brief notes. “Do you have anything to start with? Names, photos, locations?” — I opened my bag and handed him the small envelope I’d kept since Mrs. Smith’s death the old photographs, worn from age. “These are all I have. The woman in this one, she’s supposed to be my mother. But now I’m not sure.” Mason studied the photos carefully, nodding once. “This helps. I’ll need a few days to run checks, see if I can match faces or records. You might be surprised what can still be found.” “Whatever it takes,” I said quietly. He slipped the photos back into the envelope and placed it in his folder. “I’ll contact Cole when I have something. It might take a week or two.” “That’s fine.” He stood up and extended his hand again. “It’s good you’re doing this. Knowing the truth is better than living in someone else’s version of it.” I shook his hand again. “Thank you.” When he left, I turned to Cole. “Do you trust him?” Cedella is a passionate storyteller known for her bold romantic and spicy novels that keep readers hooked from the very first chapter.

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#### Chapter 150 Little Amy AMY

"With my life," he answered. , By the time we left the library, the sun was already going down. The meeting with the private investigator had been intense, but it also gave me some kind of hope. Finally, there was a chance I could learn where I came from, who I was before everything changed. Cole drove quietly and I enjoyed every bit of the silence. I stared out the window, trying to calm the storm inside my head. After a while, I sighed and said, "Let's stop somewhere for ice cream. I could use something cold and sweet." He looked at me through the rearview mirror, nodded and pulled into a small eatery by the road. It was quiet, not crowded, and the lights inside gave it a soft, warm glow. I got a cone of vanilla with chocolate drizzle and sat by the window while Cole waited near the car. The first few bites helped. I hadn't realized how tight my chest felt until I started eating. Slowly, the weight of the day began to fade. After finishing, I went to the ladies' room to freshen up. I looked at myself in the mirror and all I saw were my tired eyes, messy hair, but better than I'd felt all week. I was just about to wash my hands when I saw someone step out of one of the stalls. I was surprised to see Selene. Her smirk hit me before her words did. "Amy," she said, calling my name out like it annoyed her to say it. "Didn't expect to see you here. Guess your life's treating you well." I froze for a second. Of all people, why her? I forced myself to breathe, calm down and turned to leave, not wanting to give her the satisfaction. "Not today, Selene. I'm not doing this with you." She laughed, that same mocking sound I'd hated since the first time we met. "What's wrong? Scared I'll tell everyone who you really are?" That hit a nerve. I turned back sharply. "You don't know anything about me." "Oh, I know enough," she said, stepping closer. Her tone grew sharper. "Everyone sees you pretending to be perfect. But you're just a lost little girl playing grown-up." I clenched my fists. "You have no idea what I've been through. Stay out of my life." She smirked again and moved even closer, her face was now inches from mine. "Make me." I was about to push past her when another voice echoed from behind. "Selene, what's taking so long?" I turned and saw Clara walking in. My stomach sank. "Great," I muttered under my breath. Clara's grin was worse than Selene's. "Look who we have here. Little Amy." I didn't respond. I tried to move around them, but Selene blocked my path. "Leaving so soon?" she said. "We were just getting started." I tried to ignore them and pushed forward, but Clara grabbed my arm. That was it. I yanked free, glaring at both of them. "Get your hands off me."

Selene shoved me hard. I stumbled back against the sink, my heart racing. "You think you're better than us now, huh?" she hissed. Before I could answer, Clara joined in, pushing my shoulder. "Maybe she needs a reminder of who she used to be." The two of them were on me in seconds. Selene slapped me across the face, and I tried to block Clara's hands as she grabbed my hair but unfortunately, my back hit the tiled wall. Pain shot through me, but anger burned hotter. I shoved Selene off, trying to get to the door, but Clara swung again, catching me in the side. "Stop!" I yelled, pushing back harder this time. But it was two against one. I slipped, and Selene grabbed a handful of my shirt, dragging me down. Then, suddenly, the door flew open. "Hey!" Cole's voice roared through the room. Selene froze, and Clara's grip loosened. Cole didn't waste time, he pulled me up and stepped between us, his face dark with anger. "What the hell do you think you're doing?" Neither of them answered. Selene looked shocked while Clara looked like she'd just been caught stealing. Cole glared at them, his jaw tight. "Touch her again, and I swear—" "Cole," I cut in, my voice shaking. "Let's just go." He looked at me, then nodded and

placed a hand on my back as we walked out. My knees were weak, but I kept moving. I didn't want to cry there, not in front of them. The air felt too cold outside. Cole helped me into the car and got behind the wheel, his hands gripping it tight. For a long time, neither of us said anything. The sound of the engine was the only thing filling the silence. Finally, he asked quietly, "You okay?" I nodded slowly. "Yeah. Just... angry." He didn't push for details. He just drove. I looked out the window again, watching the lights blur past. The evening that had started so simple with just a craving for ice cream had turned into something ugly. But as we neared home, one thing settled in my mind. Whatever Selene and Clara thought they knew, whatever games they were playing, I wasn't going to let them stop me from finding out the truth about myself. Not this time and as we pulled into the driveway, I could still feel the sting of Selene's slap, but beneath it was something else. I was thinking about what I would tell Daniel when I got home. He cannot know that I was seeing a private investigator. At least, not yet. Until I have solid information to show him to avoid him being unnecessarily worried about me. As if Cole read my mind, he turned back to face me. "What do we tell Daniel? I need us to say the same thing." I bit my lips for a second. Telling him about the private investigator was an opinion yet so I clicked my tongue when a thought came to mind. Cedella is a passionate storyteller known for her bold romantic and spicy novels that keep readers hooked from the very first chapter. With a flair for crafting emotionally intense plots and unforgettable characters, she blends love, desire, and drama into every story she writes. Cedella's storytelling style is immersive and addictive—perfect for fans of heated romances and heart-pounding twists.