

Shadows 131

Chapter 131 Faster Dominic even slapped himself , using the sting to snap back to reality . " She agreed ... she really agreed ... " Yeah ! " This wasn't a dream . It wasn't his imagination . Her words , her reply , and the feeling - it was all real . 43 % Finished Right now , he looked like a young guy who had just asked out his crush for the first time and actually got a yes . If anyone who knew Dominic saw him now , they wouldn't believe it . The giant CEO's office only had him inside . Good thing Russell and Blair weren't around .

If they saw their proud , perfect son acting like this , they would think he had lost his mind . Dominic wasn't cold , calm , or unreadable like before . He was just happy . DJ messaged . " Master , you really said yes ? Why so suddenly ? " Queen replied , " I've been through some things lately . I realized meeting a student I've trusted for three years isn't a big deal . After all , in this huge world , you're the only student I've taken in . Now that we're both in Slosa , I think this must be fate . " As Tilda typed , the corner of her lips curved into a faint smile .

Queen added , " And no , I never looked into your real identity . I hope that when I see you for the first time in a week , I'll recognize you right away in the crowd . Let's see how strong our bond really is . Tongue - out face . " That was Tilda's way of showing respect . With her skills , finding out who DJ really was would have been easy . She was the number one hacker on the dark web . There was almost nothing she couldn't uncover - except for rare cases like Jude . But because DJ was her student , she chose respect . In the dark web , exposing your identity meant certain danger .

Even if she never intended to hurt Dominic , protecting herself also meant protecting him . Every time she erased her tracks , she erased his too . She never once tried to dig into who he really was . She had warned him many times - never let anyone know who you are . Saying yes to meet him this time meant Tilda had finally let go . She thought maybe - just like with Andy - one meeting could bring her a lifelong friend . She actually looked forward to it .

carried himself , she trusted him . She only hoped he wouldn't let her down .

replied quickly , " Master , thank you for trusting me and agreeing to this . I promise - you'll never regret it . I'll be the most loyal student you could ever have , no exceptions ! "

Queen continued , " Then I'll wait and see . Alright , I have things to do . Let's meet in a week ." DJ typed , " Okay ! " Dominic couldn't hold it in - he jumped up , grinning like an innocent kid . He stood at the floor - to - ceiling window of the Jenson Group's 50th floor , but the glittering Slosa skyline outside meant nothing to him .

All he could see was the chat history with Queen , scrolling through it again and again . His smile only grew wider , and it didn't fade . The dark mood Tilda had caused him earlier in the day was completely gone . Now he was filled with nothing but happiness and excitement . One week . Just one week left . Dominic had never wanted time to move faster than right now . Faster . Faster ! He even wished he could skip the next seven days and jump straight into the moment he met his master- his idol , his Queen . He imagined it would be a perfect day . Flowers blooming .

The air is rich with fragrance . Even the wind plays a song of blessing just for them . He pictured it like a fairy tale - the prince and the princess meeting at last , walking together into the long road of life . Dominic didn't dare expect too much . He didn't want to scare Queen away . But his admiration for her burned inside him , with nowhere to go . How should I show her my sincerity when we meet for the first time ? That was the one thing he had to figure out in the next seven days . Still ... even if it all failed , Dominic wanted to try . He wanted to give it everything he had .

If he lost in the end , so what ? At least he tried . And besides , Dominic was confident in his skills and in his looks .

Chapter 132 Unexpected Guest Dominic used to look down on people who only relied on their looks . But now , it felt different . Queen didn't know what he looked like . She didn't know who he really was . 43 % Finished So Dominic decided . He had to give her a huge surprise . He had to make her remember him forever . When Tilda walked out of the restroom , Una came over . " Tilda , what took you so long ? Andy and I have already finished a dance . We were waiting on you . " " Sorry . I ran into someone I hadn't talked to in a while . We just caught up a little longer than expected .

" " Who could make you care that much ? Don't tell me ... Mr. Bell ? " Tilda didn't say it , but Una knew . It must have been Jude . And the way Jude had looked at Tilda - it was clear he cared about her . For someone as powerful as Jude , being interested in Tilda felt like he was reaching up to her level , not the other way around . But if Jude was truly the man Tilda chose , Una would support her with all her heart . " Secret ... " Tilda teased . " To be honest , I haven't even met him in person yet .

If I do and he turns out alright , I'll introduce him to you then ." " Oh , Tilda , you always keep me guessing ... " Una laughed . The next morning , after asking for leave , Tilda took Andy to the airport and put him on his flight . Then she drove back to Orica University for class . Una didn't have much to do , but Tilda did . She had already taken too many days off recently because of the lawsuit and spending time with Andy . Even though she had already finished Shaun's course and earned the credits , she still had other classes to attend .

If she skipped too many , she'd only fall behind and suffer later at finals . Truth be told , Tilda didn't need a college student identity . Her skills were already way beyond that . But if she wanted to keep building her name as " Queen " on the dark web , then having a normal , boring student identity was the perfect cover . After all , who would believe the most feared hacker online was just a regular sophomore ? It was the same as Andy - everyone in the dark web knew him as a famous fixer , but in real life , he was a top lawyer at Jeselton's ND Law Firm .

That kind of contrast kept them safe . Tilda's elective today was art class . 43 % Finished She had signed up for a few random electives , and this one was painting . The moment she stepped into the classroom , eyes turned to her . Tilda had become a big name at Orica University lately . She was the real daughter found after 19 years , only to break ties with the Jensons and even drag Russell into court . Add to that her natural beauty , sharp presence , and unshakable confidence - she was impossible to ignore . Tilda ignored the stares and quietly picked a seat .

She closed her eyes , resting . When the art professor , Simon Linscott , entered the room , he was smiling . " Today , " he announced , " I've brought along a very talented freshman to join us ." At that , Tilda opened her eyes . She saw the unexpected guest and smirked . It was Kyla . For a moment , Kyla froze when she saw Tilda . The truth was , Kyla was scared of her now . Gone was the smug confidence from when Tilda first returned to the Jenson Villa . Gone was the arrogance of someone who thought she could toy with others . Tilda had changed completely .

The other students knew about Tilda and Kyla's background and the drama with the Jensons . All eyes turned to the two girls , waiting for sparks to fly . Simon , a classic white - haired academic , had been away at a seminar in another city . He didn't know about the scandal rocking the Jensons . Smiling warmly , he introduced Kyla to the class . Her record did sound impressive . She was a freshman in the art department , admitted with top scores in both art and academics . On the surface , she acted gently , even pitifully , making people want to side with her .

And since she was a Jenson , raised with polished manners , she carried herself like high society . At Orica , she had quickly become a star among the freshmen . She was even voted into the student council and she got along well with Simon , That's why he brought her along today - to show her off a little , to give her more experience . After all , getting into Orica University as the top - ranked art student meant her talent was real .

Chapter 133 Of course , Kyla's talent wasn't just her own . The Jensons had poured money into her for years . They hired the best teachers , gave her every resource , and surrounded her with an " artistic " upbringing . After the professor's introduction , Kyla forced herself to stay calm . She smiled sweetly at the class . " Hi , everyone . I'm Kyla . It's a pleasure to meet you all , and I'm honored that Professor

Linscott invited me to join today's lesson . " Her acting skills were sharp . Her voice was soft , sugary , but not too fake .

And with her gentle , pretty face , she instantly won over half the guys in the room . The attitude toward her shifted . People warmed up quickly . " Alright , " Professor Linscott said . " Let's start class . Who wants to suggest a subject for today's painting ? " " I do . " A calm voice spoke up . It was Tilda . For a moment , Simon blinked . This was his sophomore elective class . Why is a student like her here ? Then he recognized her and adjusted awkwardly . " You're Tilda , right ? Very well , go ahead ." Tilda had taken so many absences before , and she usually kept to herself .

But now , after Simon returned from his seminar trip , she looked like an entirely different person . Her presence was overwhelming . Every move carried a quiet power , like starlight catching the room . Simon almost didn't recognize her . Tilda stood and looked straight at Kyla , who was already fidgeting nervously . A cold smirk touched her lips . " Professor Linscott , how about we make today's theme ... a snake ? " Hiss ! The whole class sucked in a sharp breath . Too harsh ! Everyone knew what she meant . Calling the theme " snake " while Kyla stood there as the guest assistant ?

That was like pointing a finger straight at her . Kyla's face stiffened . She quickly ducked her head . Her nose reddened , eyes watering in seconds . She bit her lip , fingers twisting in the hem of her skirt like a scared little rabbit . The sight of her like this only made others ache for her .

Even without saying a word , her whole body seemed to be crying out for help . That , in an instant , struck right at the instinct men carry to protect . That pitiful look worked . Half the guys immediately wanted to shield her .

To them , Tilda suddenly looked too sharp , too harsh , too much like a tiger pouncing on a helpless bunny . But Tilda didn't care about their stares . She kept smiling calmly at Simon . The professor frowned slightly . " Tilda , are you sure about this ? That subject seems a little- " " Professor , " Tilda interrupted smoothly . " It's just a snake . Nothing more . If artists can't even paint something so simple because of internet slang , wouldn't that be ridiculous ? " And besides , if your conscience is clear , there's no reason to take it personally , right ?

" Her words left Simon speechless . He glanced at Kyla . Kyla sniffled , wiping her eyes , then gave a trembling smile . " Professor , I ... I think Tilda's right . Let's go with it . I'll be fine ... " " It's only a theme , " Tilda added coolly . " Don't be so dramatic . " She sat back down , arms crossed , lips curling in disdain . Her eyes flashed with a message only Kyla could read . Kyla's act worked wonders on men . But just like

in the cafeteria before , it didn't fool many of the women . Some whispered under their breath . " Don't you think Kyla's a little fake ? " " Yeah .

She really thinks she's hot stuff just because she got top marks in art ? " " I was top of my program too when I got in . Big deal . " " Hey , cut it out . Kyla's already being bullied by Tilda . She's pitiful enough without you piling on . " " Ugh , you guys are so easy to fool . Get lost before your low IQ rubs off on us . " " What did you just say ? " The room was seconds from chaos when Simon quickly raised his voice . " Enough . Snake it is . Everyone , start your sketches . Kyla , you draw up here . I'll use your work as an example for the class . " " Alright .

With the subject set , the chatter died down . Kyla steadied herself and focused on the canvas . 43 % Finished She really was talented . With her natural ability , her privileged training , and her practice since childhood , even something simple like a snake came alive under her brush - detailed , lifelike , elegant .

Chapter 134 Shattered Simon stood by the easel , nodding again and again with praise . 43 % Finished By the time Kyla finished fixing her work , a lifelike snake seemed to crawl right out of the paper . The girls who had been whispering and mocking her earlier shut their mouths . They couldn't deny it- Kyla's skills were amazing . The drawing was beautiful . " Thank you , Kyla . Everyone , take a look . Notice how she used soft pencil shading across the whole body of the snake ... " Simon explained the different techniques she had used . Just hearing him talk made it sound impressive .

The way people looked at Kyla started to change . Whether they pitied her , liked her , or even disliked her , they had to admit one thing - Kyla had real talent . Her clever composition and strong technique proved she wasn't ordinary . Sure , she wasn't born a Jenson by blood . But she was their chosen daughter , raised in one of the most powerful families in the city , spoiled with money , resources , and endless tutors . Anyone growing up in that world , surrounded by the best teachers and endless opportunities , could be molded into a top - tier socialite .

Kyla bowed her head humbly , accepting Simon's compliments . But from the corner of her eye , she shot Tilda a proud glance . Tilda , this is what it means to be a Jenson daughter - grace , talent , and class . Without the Jensons raising her , without the most expensive tutors , without her own talent and effort , she could never have reached this level at her age . This was her foundation inside the Jensons . This was why her brothers adored her , why her her , why others admired her . She wasn't some clumsy , fake princess .

parents favored And for a freshman art major to earn such attention from Simon - that was unheard of . " Now that we've gone over Kyla's composition , " Simon said , " do you all feel you understand more clearly ? In a bit , I'll ask some of you to raise your hands if you want me to analyze your work too . " He had barely finished when another voice cut in . " Professor Linscott , I'm done . Could you take a look ? " It was Tilda . Of course , it was her . But Kyla didn't even flinch . She had expected this .

After all , Tilda had chosen " snake " in the first place just to humiliate her . But what could Tilda possibly compare with ? Against her - the one with real skill ? 43 % Finished Kyla had never planned to make painting her life's goal . For her , art was a stepping stone . Something to get her into a top university , something to polish her name so the Jensons could be proud of her . Her real future was higher . Marriage into a richer , stronger family . Or maybe even breaking into the entertainment world . Someone like Jude ... Now that was a match worth dreaming of . Preston ?

He was fine , but he was forever stuck in Jude's shadow inside the Bells . No matter his ambition , he'd never measure up . Kyla had only met Jude twice , and yet his presence burned into her memory . He was untouchable . The sharp edge in her heart . She had grown up around wealthy heirs and powerful men , but none of them compared to Jude . His aura , his pride , his cold nobility - he stood above them all . Only by becoming stronger , more accomplished , could Kyla be worthy of him . She believed it . Jude was hers .

The class , meanwhile , all turned to watch Tilda with a mix of curiosity and excitement . Kyla's snake drawing had been stunning , and she hadn't been shaken at all . But no one could recall Tilda ever showing off her art before . Could the disowned " real daughter , " kicked out of her family , actually compete with the pampered , polished " fake daughter " who had been trained since childhood ? " Tilda , " Simon said , surprised at her speed , " please bring up your work so we can all see . " He had noticed her earlier .

While he was explaining Kyla's work , Tilda hadn't even started sketching . That meant she had finished her piece in almost the same time - or maybe even faster - than Kyla . " Okay . " Tilda walked up calmly and set her work on display . The room went silent . All anyone could hear was the wind rattling the trees outside and the distant shouts and laughter of students running laps on the field . Even Kyla froze . The pride she had just felt , her confidence in her own ability , was shattered in an instant .

Chapter 135 Outshine Everyone " Uh ... " Simon's whole body trembled . Tilda's painting showed a coiled green snake . It stretched across an old wooden table . The floor was dark and worn , and next to it stood a sliding glass door . Beyond the hallway , a grove of tall pines swayed in the wind . Shadows flickered in shifting shades of green . The scene was woven with black and green . The table itself carried faint carvings of birds , glowing as if alive . The green air .

snake 115 gave off a strange mist , and if you leaned closer , you could almost smell sharp metal in the It was only the fragrance of ink . Scattered across the table were fallen petals and a few pine needles . In the corner , a cat had strayed into the picture , its tail slipping into view , stepping so elegantly it looked like it might walk right out of the frame . There weren't enough words to describe what it felt like to look at that painting . It was too real . It didn't look like a drawing . It looked like a photo taken with the best camera in the world .

But even a camera couldn't capture that kind of composition . Only imagination on a canvas could hold a world like this . The moment you looked at it , you felt pulled straight into the picture - like you were standing inside that quiet forest . Simon finally came back to himself . He couldn't hold back his excitement as he stared at Tilda . " Tilda ... how did you even make this ? " " I just sketched whatever came to mind casually , " she said softly . The class gasped again . She calls this casual ?

If this was what she did without trying, then what would she be capable of if she took it seriously ? Kyla's drawing had been really good . But compared to this , it wasn't even close . Even to people who didn't know a thing about art , the gap was clear . Finished < " Tilda , " Simon said quickly , " may I keep this painting for now ? One person alone can't judge a piece like this . I need to call some colleagues to see it ! " His voice shook like he had just found a treasure . It wasn't just that he doubted his own skill . It was that he was overwhelmed by Tilda's talent .

Her work carried something rare - something born , not taught . A gift that might only appear once in a million people . " Of course , " Tilda said . " But I have one condition . " " Anything . " " Let this count as me finishing this elective . No more credits needed . " " Approved ! " Simon agreed instantly . " But leave me your contact . I'll forward you the feedback once my friends see this . " He knew a student like her didn't need a beginner's art class . The system , the drills , the rules - it might even ruin her gift . That would be a tragedy .

If she kept going on her own path , she was destined to become a star in the art world . " Thanks . " Tilda never once looked at Kyla . She added Simon's WhatsApp right there in front of everyone , grabbed her bag , and walked out with calm confidence . The class was left stunned . Wow ... Tilda is incredible . She's amazing ! It was the first time they had ever seen a girl like her . Not only had she broken Wade's record in Shaun's coding class , now she had crushed Kyla - the so - called top freshman in the art department - without even trying .

Just how much can Tilda do ? She is unstoppable . This was the real Jenson daughter . She had inherited Russell and Blair's brilliance , maybe even surpassed them . 43 % Finished Even without 19 years of

elite tutoring , private schools , and polished manners , her raw talent alone was enough to outshine everyone . Meanwhile , Kyla stood off to the side , invisible . Simon , who had praised her minutes ago , had turned completely toward Tilda . The upperclassmen who had admired her earlier now only had eyes for Tilda - eyes full of awe and wonder .

Kyla bit down so hard her teeth almost cracked . Her chest ached , sharp and heavy , until she could barely breathe . This had to be a nightmare ...

Chapter 136 Nightmare Kyla felt like she was dreaming . Once she woke up , everything would go back to normal . How could Tilda have that kind of talent ? It was already crazy that she beat Wade in programming Now she even crushed me in painting - the thing I'm most proud of ! She's a monster . Why am I having this nightmare ? Kyla clenched her fists tight . Her nails dug deep into her palms . The pain made her flinch . Ouch ... This wasn't a dream . It was real . Finished She still had to smile and pretend to be calm , finishing the class with Simon as if nothing had happened .

When class ended , she overheard whispers in the hallway . " Figures . Kyla really is just the fake daughter . " " Yeah . She's only adopted . She doesn't have the Jensons ' blood " Look at Tilda - the real daughter . She never even got the Jensons ' expensive tutors , but just by talent alone she crushed Kyla . " " My parents told me the Jensons spent so much money and effort on Kyla . They said she was gifted . But now ? She's just average . " " Ha ! This is too good . Post it on the school forum ! It's like a TV drama . " " You think the Jensons regret cutting Tilda off ?

She beat Wade , and now even Kyla ." Kyla froze . Tears filled her eyes . She ran into the girls ' restroom , shut the door , and buried her face in her hands . " Why ? " Why does Tilda have talent like that ? It's impossible ! Is it really because I'm adopted ? Because I didn't inherit Mom and Dad's good genes ? Nightmare " Since Tilda is their real daughter , does that mean her blood alone makes her better than me ? " For the first time in her life , Kyla hated someone this much . She wanted to kill Tilda .

If Tilda disappeared , Kyla would be the only princess . The only daughter . Not a fake . " To me , the Jensons ' daughter can only be me . Never Tilda ! " Night fell . Tilda was at home playing League of Legends with Una . Una played Caitlyn . Tilda played Janna . Tilda dominated the game , while Una laughed so hard she couldn't stop . Finished " Tilda , you don't even know . " Una giggled . " You're blowing up on the school forum again . Kyla got dragged so bad , ha ! She's supposed to be the best in the art department , but against you , she's nothing !

" And think about it - Russell , Wade ... None of them can beat you either ! " They won the match . Una hit Diamond I rank . Caitlyn paired with Janna was basically a free win at Diamond I. The moment they locked in those two champions , their teammates immediately started throwing out " friendly greetings . " But every time the enemy tried to dive at Una , Tilda always managed to shove them back with her ball and throw out a shield in time , keeping Una perfectly safe . On top of that , Una's mechanics were solid , and her damage was insane .

Before long , the rest of the team shut their mouths . The win was effortless . When the victory screen popped up , Una saw MVP next to Janna . She tossed her phone aside and stared at Tilda with shining eyes . Tilda tapped her on the forehead . " Why are you staring at me like that ? Do I have something on my " You fight well , you code well , you dance well , and now you paint well ... You're like a total idol ! face ? " Tilda , what if we just ... dated each other ? Forget guys . I don't want anyone else to take you away ! " Una whined , half laughing , half crying .

Tilda smirked . " Dating you , huh ? That's not happening . But don't worry - no guy is taking me from you that easily . They'd have to pass a lot of tests first . " " Ugh ! Another rejection . You're breaking my heart ! " Just then , a special alert from the dark web popped up . Tilda excused herself , saying she needed the bathroom , and left Una playing alone . Inside the bathroom , she checked the message . It was from DJ . DJ suggested , " Master , let's meet on the day we agreed . Cornerstone Café ." Cornerstone Cafe ?

Tilda knew the place . It was one of the most popular coffee shops online , the kind everyone posted about . Which meant it was always crowded .

Chapter 137 Why Should She Hide ? DJ figured Tilda might worry about her safety . So he picked a crowded café on purpose . In Cetherland , no hitman would try anything in a crowded area - it's way too messy to clean up But ... This Cornerstone Café carried some ugly memories for Tilda . In her past life , Dominic had been a regular here . Finished afterward . Even though it was a popular café , it wasn't one of those flashy chain spots that just focus on hype , make a quick buck , and disappear . This place was run with real care . The vibe and the décor had a classic , timeless charm .

The coffee beans were top - quality imports, and the baristas followed strict rules to get each cup just right . The coffee they brewed was perfect in color , aroma , and taste . Even though each cup was pricey , people loved it anyway . The owner was Dominic's close friend , Jody Granger . Dominic had taken his family here countless times . Kyla came most often . But he never once brought Tilda . After hearing Kyla rave about the place constantly , Tilda finally gave in to her curiosity . Then the memory surged .

That day , she went alone , ordered a latte , and wanted to see what made this café so special to her older brother . The coffee at Cornerstone Café was excellent . It had a calming magic that could wash away stress . Just as Tilda sat quietly by the window , savoring her drink alone , Dominic walked in with

Wade and Kyla . When they spotted her , Wade sneered . " Wow , look who's trying to copy Kyla now . Pathetic puppet ! " All eyes turned to Tilda . Dominic didn't even glance at her . He just turned and walked out with Wade and Kyla .

As he left , he tossed a cruel remark over his shoulder , " This café's been spoiled by someone who doesn't belong . Even the coffee tastes awful now . Let's go somewhere else ." That cold , dismissive attitude , like she was some kind of germ It left Tilda frozen , humiliated , roasted by all those stares . That feeling ... It had been a long time . But just hearing " Cornerstone Café " brought it all flooding back . It was like it had just happened . The memories hit her like a punch to the chest , sharp and sudden . Finished " Mentor ...

are you still there ? Is this place not okay ? We can go somewhere else if you want , " DJ typed again , afraid she might not like the place . This café was Dominic's buddy place , and the coffee was amazing . He always went there and really liked it . It was also considered the most famous café in Slosa . Taking all these factors into account , it was completely safe for Queen . Picking that place to meet up with Queen wasn't random - Dominic had thought it through . He kept thinking maybe Queen hated loud spots , or maybe she didn't even drink coffee - what if he totally messed up ?

If Queen got irritated and bailed before they even met ... He'd regret it forever . " I'm here , " Queen replied . " This place is fine . " Even though Tilda had bad memories here , she refused to let her past life control her . She wasn't going to let the Jensons ' drama rule her anymore . If she skipped the place just because Dominic liked it , letting the ugly memories from her past keep dragging her down , then she hadn't really cut ties with them , and she still hadn't stepped out of that shadow to stand on her own .

In this life , Tilda wasn't gonna waste tears or feel hurt over the Jensons anymore . If she wanted coffee , a night out , or to see anyone she liked , she'd do it . She wasn't running from them - if anything , they should be the ones staying away . She hadn't done anything wrong . Her conscience was clean . Why should she hide ? What a joke . " Alright , I'll see you next Friday . Can't wait ! " DJ texted . " Sounds good ! " Queen replied . She logged off the dark web . Then ... A WhatsApp notification popped up .

Tilda's heart skipped a beat when she saw the sender It was Jude . She didn't know why it affected her so much . Shaking off the feeling , she opened the message . It was a photo . Stars spread across the night sky . Colorful auroras stretched over a mountain at night . The photo was incredibly artistic . " Passed by here , caught the aurora , " Jude wrote . " Thought you'd like it , so I snapped this for you . Wow , thanks , it's so pretty , " Tilda typed back . " Oh , and how come you never mentioned you were flying out to Lucien for work that night ? "

Chapter 138 Lost Track of Time Jude stared at her message for a moment . Then he texted , " Wait ... are you wondering where I'm going ? " Tilda immediately regretted her action . She felt silly for even asking . It came off like she was annoyed he never mentioned his business trip to Lucien . Truth was , they were only friends - nothing beyond that . So why did she even send that message ? It didn't make any sense . And now it was sent ; no way to undo it . Finished " It's nothing , Mr. Bell , " she typed . " Just chatting . Your trip to Lucien looked awesome you even caught the aurora .

" " Tilda , just call me Jude , " he replied , a little seriously . " Don't call me Mr. Bell , alright ? " Her finger shook slightly as she typed . After hesitating for a moment , she finally typed back , " Okay , Jude . " " Thanks , Tilda , " he replied , with a cheeky smile emoji . She was completely caught up in the chat with him , until her phone suddenly buzzed . " Tilda ... seriously ? Did you bail on me ? You've been in the bathroom forever - like an hour ! " Tilda stared at her phone for a second , then noticed the time - 9 : 30 p.m. already .

Somehow , whenever she was chatting with Jude , the hours just slipped away . The whole day had vanished before she knew it . She texted back to Una , " On my way ! " After that , she dropped Jude a quick note , " Sorry , Jude , my friend's calling me . " As she scrolled back through their messages , she noticed how much they'd talked - just everyday stuff . The weather , little things that happened , nothing big . Still , she couldn't figure out why she got so wrapped up in it . She'd totally lost track of time . " Thanks , Tilda . I feel really good having you around , " Jude texted .

Same here , " she typed back with a grin . " Guess us two unlucky Omegas better try to actually sleep tonight ." Almost right away , Jude replied , " We will . Because ... you're with me ." 12:28 Mon , Sep 8 Tilda stared at the screen . She froze , unsure how to respond . His words felt way too flirty , and no matter what she wrote back , it wouldn't feel right . She just wasn't ready to take things further with Jude . But ... she could sense it . Things between them were changing bit by bit , and they were starting to get under each other's skin .

Before , Tilda would've freaked out . Jude was dangerous . His family was elite - the kind she always tried to avoid . Now though , she couldn't push it back anymore . All she could do was let it play out , one step at a time , no matter where it went . Then another message popped up . " You're the only one I'd ever choose . " I choose you . " I choose you again and again . " No hesitation , no doubts , unswerving . " I picked this up earlier in Rogrith , a small town in Lucien . Some guy was proposing to his girlfriend , and that's what he said .

" It stuck with me , so I wanted to share it with you . " No matter what the options are , my choice is always you . " Tilda pressed her lips together , totally blank on what to say back . So , she just dropped a facepalm emoji and backed out . 79 14 Yeah , maybe she chickened out - but what else was she supposed to do ? Jude's message came out of nowhere and hit way too hard . Ugh ! Time passed quickly , and before she knew it , the day came when she was supposed to meet DJ . At exactly 2 p.m . , she walked into Cornerstone Café , just like they'd planned .

The baristas welcomed her with friendly smiles and waited for her order . She scanned the menu for a few seconds . " One latte , please , " she said . She chose the same latte from her previous life . She loved the taste . Even though the café carried some rough memories , the coffee wasn't to blame . Coffee was innocent . This time , she wasn't going to mess anything up . She headed straight for the same window seat as last time , her chest steady , her mind at ease . Lost Track of Time Taking slow sips of her latte , she looked out at the street .

Chapter 139 Meeting Her Apprentice People laughed and shouted happily around the café . Even Tilda felt a spark of excitement . She rested her chin in her hand , eyes shining with anticipation . She was about to meet her apprentice . She had to see if they would recognize each other right away . Tilda showed up at Cornerstone Café but didn't text DJ . She wanted to test something . She wanted to see if their connection as master and apprentice was real . She wanted to know if they could find each other immediately in this bustling café .

They'd missed each other in their past lives , but maybe this time things would finally click . Maybe she'd gain a real friend she could talk to . Just then , the café doorbell chimed . Someone stepped in . Tilda's eyes shifted toward the entrance . She hoped it was DJ . But no- It wasn't her apprentice . It was someone she did not want to see . Dominic . Her good mood cracked the second she saw him . She took several slow breaths and told herself to stay calm . She had sworn she wouldn't let the Jensons get under her skin this time .

Taking slow sips of her coffee , she waited patiently for her apprentice to show up . Dominic scanned the café as he entered . The moment his eyes landed on Tilda , his expression turned cold . Why the hell is she here ?! Damn it ! Still , with Queen on the way , he forced himself to stay calm instead of tossing Tilda out . Starting drama now wasn't worth it . Finished The baristas at Cornerstone Café knew Dominic well - he was tight with the owner and dropped by all the time . " Mr. Jenson , your usual ? " one of them asked .

Yeah , he answered flatly . " Right away , " the barista replied . He soon brought over an orange peel civet coffee with extra care . Dominic took it and chose a seat far from Tilda . The last thing he wanted was to look at her . Still , he had to keep watch on the café . He couldn't risk missing Queen's arrival . He'd already checked out everyone in the café . Besides that irritating Tilda , no one gave him the feeling that they were Queen . As the top hacker on the dark web , Queen knew how to vanish into a crowd .

But Dominic trusted his instincts - he'd recognize her presence no matter what . Queen had made her name in the dark , turning into a legend among hackers everywhere . No matter what , she could never erase her presence completely . Even the slightest hint would have been enough for Dominic to spot . Anyone who laid eyes on her would be struck , unable to turn away . At the moment , nobody in the café gave Dominic that vibe . Dominic sat quietly , sipping his coffee . The trouble at Jenson Group had finally passed , and life was settling down again .

The only sore spot was the fallout with DY Group - it still bothered him . Today , Dominic cleared his calendar and took the whole day off . Everything was for meeting Queen , his mentor . She was the most important person in his life . Minutes passed quickly . Soon , it was 3 p.m. People flowed in and out of the café , but Dominic still did not see anyone that could be Queen . He frowned . Queen was already an hour late . And she hadn't sent him a single message . That wasn't like her . She would never leave him hanging .

If something came up , she'd tell him . Maybe she was already here . Did Dominic really miss her ? The thought made him tense up - he shot to his feet and began looking around . His eyes moved from one woman to the next . Not a single one had the striking presence Queen was supposed to carry . Instead , plenty of them turned red and squealed quietly as the good - looking , confident guy glanced their way . No way ... There was no way he wouldn't recognize her . She'd been his mentor for three years . She had guided him through everything .

Then- Dominic's eyes shifted toward Tilda . She didn't seem all that cheerful either . Her attention kept drifting to her watch . It was almost like she was expecting somebody . Then Tilda pulled out her phone and started typing . A second later , Dominic's phone vibrated . That was the unique alert tone from the dark web .

Chapter 140 Couldn't Run From the Truth At that exact moment , it felt like an invisible hand had grabbed Dominic's heart and squeezed it tight . It was like a funeral bell ringing right next to his ear . One thump after another . It made his soul feel like it wanted to crawl out of his body . That tiny possibility he had once pushed aside came stabbing back , like a splinter in his heart . The tear split open again , spreading wider , turning into a massive scar , and then ... Blood rushed out . Dominic had wondered if Tilda's crazy hacking skills were connected to Queen .

Tilda already knew Andy and Jude , but no one could say how deep those ties actually went . What if she were keeping other identities secret , with extra contacts and resources tucked away ? Or maybe- Maybe she is Queen herself . The thought had crossed his mind once . But he immediately pushed it away . How could the legendary Queen of the dark web be a broke , homeless , 19 - year - old college sophomore girl ? It had to be a coincidence He must be overthinking . Maybe Queen was already at the Cornerstone Café , and he just hadn't noticed her . Or maybe she got busy and couldn't make it .

Dominic repeated these thoughts to himself , over and over , just to calm down . Finally , he took out his phone . Even then , his finger shook as he touched the phone screen . It took him 30 seconds just to open the message from Queen on the dark web . Queen wrote , " I give up , DJ . I guess we just weren't meant to meet . I've been waiting for you at the Cornerstone Café for an hour now . Honestly , I hope you haven't arrived yet , so I wouldn't recognize you . " Dominic's eyes darted instinctively to Tilda .

Then he typed back quickly . " Mentor , I'm already at the Cornerstone Café . Where are you ? " Ding ! The café buzzed around him , so he didn't hear Tilda's dark web notification . But the second he sent his message , her phone buzzed , Tilda's phone lit up . She pulled it out . Her brow creased slightly when she saw DJ's message . Then she started typing . Thump , thump , thump ! Dominic's heart beat like crazy . The world around him melted into mist . All he could see was Tilda typing her reply . Everything else disappeared . Cold sweat ran down his face . Soon , he was drenched . No way .

God , this can't be real . How could Tilda be Queen - his mentor , the person he admired like the sun ? The little sister he once despised , wished would vanish , brushed off , and acted like she didn't matter . She can't be Queen ! Absolutely not ! Inside , Dominic prayed like mad . He would give years of his life if it could undo this . Please , let this not be true ! But Tilda finished typing . Ding ! That awful notification chimed again . Dominic froze , his whole body going cold as he stared at the screen .

Queen wrote , " I'm by the window , corner seat . Hair's kinda short . Brown trench coat , jeans , sneakers . Don't freak , I'm only 19 , lol ." She couldn't have made it clearer . As much as Dominic wanted to deny it , he couldn't run from the truth . His eyes drifted from his phone to Tilda , sitting by the window . With sunlight spilling over her , Tilda's eyebrows lifted just a little . Her bare , pale face caught the autumn glow , giving her an almost untouchable , angelic look . Her lips , soft and red , curved into a small smile .

Her lowered eyes seemed to hold layers of emotion , and her lashes were long and curled . The hair she had cut off because of something Wade said was slowly growing back . Wade wasn't kidding . Tilda really did look incredible with long hair . It was full , smooth , glossy , and jet black -way nicer than Kyla's . A bit

of unease crept over Tilda . She casually glanced around the room . And there was Dominic , phone in hand , looking at her with an expression she couldn't read . She froze for a moment . What now ? All she wanted was to march over and dump her coffee on him .

Why was this weirdo staring at her like that ? He was killing her vibe . If she didn't care about DJ not being able to find her , she would have walked out already .