

Shadows 151

Chapter 151 A Family Divided Kyla hung her head low , tears silently streaming down her cheeks . She sobbed , " Mom , I'm sorry . It's all my fault . If I hadn't stayed with this family , the incident wouldn't have happened to Dominic , and Tilda wouldn't have hurt us . This is all because of me ... " 1 " You silly girl , it's not your fault . Enough now , I have to go . " Blair wasn't in the mood to comfort Kyla . In fact , her mind was racing with questions she wanted to ask Tilda . As soon as the car arrived , Blair got in and left .

Kyla could only watch as Blair's car disappeared down the driveway . She gently bit her lip . Did I use this trick far too many times ? They seemed to be getting tired of it . I'd have to tone it down next time , probably not using the same trick . If she could tag along this time , Kyla was confident that her acting skills could stir up more trouble between the Jensons and Tilda . With a little push , maybe she could make Tilda disappear for good . She could use someone else to do her dirty work ; that would be the best outcome .

Right now , Tilda felt like some kind of awful virus clinging to Kyla . Every time Tilda was around , Kyla felt uncomfortable , almost sick to her stomach . There wasn't enough room for two daughters in this house . This war would only end when one of them was gone . It was all or nothing . Besides , Kyla could clearly feel that everyone was starting to see Tilda differently . If it had been before , knowing Dominic had been hurt by Tilda , their parents would've marched straight over to get revenge . Now , they just seemed calm about the whole thing . Wade , too .

Even Dominic was starting to feel guilty toward Tilda . All these changes were pushing Kyla into a corner . She needed to find a way to turn things around - fast ! Back at her condominium , Tilda took a long , hot shower . She changed out of her wet clothes and stuffed them in a trash bag . After all , her clothes had been touched by someone as gross as Dominic . Tilda wanted nothing to do with those clothes anymore . She planned to pack them up and toss them in the dumpster tomorrow .

She even placed a cool face mask on her face for the first time in ages . Something she hoped would help her get her good mood back . Relaxing in the tub . Tilda called Andy . " Dang . Tilda , I can't believe such a mess happened right after I left , " Andy said , totally shocked by Tilda's story . " Seriously ! What a crazy twist of fate . " Andy listened in disbelief as Tilda recounted everything that had happened . Was the world really this full of freaky coincidences ? " Don't even talk about it , Andy . I'm kicking myself for not listening to you .

I should never have tried to hold on to my principles . If I had just investigated DJ's real identity earlier , none of this would've happened ." Tilda sighed , a bitter smile tugging at her lips . " See ? You never listen to me , and now you pay the price , " Andy teased . " Tilda , I know how you are . When you care about someone , you'll do anything to protect them - even if it means ignoring the truth or hurting yourself . You're tough on the outside but soft on the inside . That kind of personality can get you hurt - just like what happened with your family .

" But honestly , I like you just the way you are , Tilda . You're full of life . If you were all cold and robotic , we wouldn't get along half as well . " " You really see right through me , Andy . I'll give you that . " Andy tried all sorts of ways to cheer Tilda up , and gradually , her mood started to lighten . " But you have to admit , Dominic has some nerve , putting his own initials up on the dark web , " Andy laughed . " I never would've guessed it . But if the wrong people ever figured it out , he'd be in real trouble .

If you hadn't taken him in and helped wipe his tracks , Dominic would've had a much harder time . " " That's enough , Andy . I don't want to hear anything more about Dominic . We've shared so many good times . -why waste energy on an awful person like him ? " " Okay , okay , I'll stop . Anyway , I have to run . You enjoy your bath , Tilda ! " After hanging up , Tilda climbed out of the tub , dried off , and slipped into her pajamas . She looked at her reflection in the mirror and sighed . No matter how hard she tried , she couldn't just leave the bad feelings behind .

Maybe a good night's sleep would help , and tomorrow would be a little brighter . Just then , Tilda's phone rang again . It was the building management . " Yes ? " she answered . " Ms. Tilda . There's a woman outside who says she's your mother . Would you like to let her in ? " Mother ? Hearing that word , Tilda's mind went blank for a second . Then she just found it ridiculous . Funny , even . Blair , oh Blair , you and your family really have no shame , do you ? Finished You had cut me off completely .

After everything that's happened , you still have the nerve to call yourself my mother ? If people heard about this , they'd laugh themselves silly . " Tell her to leave , " Tilda said , then hung up . As far as Tilda was concerned , she wanted nothing more to do with that family - ever again .

Chapter 152 No More Family Drama Tilda didn't want to see any member of the Jenson's . She just wanted to hide under the covers and get a good night's sleep . All she hoped for was to wake up tomorrow feeling a little better . She had no time or patience to deal with Blair . Tilda could already guess why Blair was trying to see her . It was definitely about Dominic . Tonight , Tilda wasn't in the mood for another argument with Blair . After Tilda hung up , the security guard glanced at Blair with a troubled look . " I'm sorry , Mrs. Jenson .

She doesn't want any visitors right now . We can't let you in ." This condominium had tight security . To get inside , you needed either a key card or help from the guards . That was one of the reasons Tilda

bought this place in the first place . If Blair weren't someone with influence , the security guard would never be this respectful . After all , it wasn't wise for a low - level guard to offend someone like her . Blair's expression darkened . But Tilda's refusal didn't surprise her . " I understand . Don't worry about it . " Blair turned around and left .

Her driver was waiting for her in the Maybach . Blair came out so soon ; clearly , she didn't get what she wanted . The driver quickly got out to greet her . " Ma'am , how did it go ? " Blair took a deep breath . " We wait . " It was the dumbest plan , really - doing nothing , hoping for a miracle . Still , she waited before the condominium entrance . After all , tomorrow was a school day at Orica University . Eventually , Tilda would have to come out . Meeting Tilda was the best way to figure out what was going on with Dominic . The next morning , Tilda slept in until nine .

She rubbed her aching temples . Sigh . She'd had another nightmare - one that actually fit her mood . In her dream , she was back at Cornerstone Café . She'd lost her memory , waiting hopefully for DJ to show up . DJ did come , but wore a mask . Finished Tilda chatted cheerfully with DJ . They discussed everything that had happened over the past three years . Tilda felt like she'd finally found a true friend . But then , suddenly , DJ's mask fell off . Underneath was Dominic's disgusting face .

He laughed at her and ridiculed , " Tilda , you really think I saw you as a mentor ? I was just playing with you . Now that I know Queen's real identity , if I tell everyone , do you think you'll ever have peace again ? " Before Tilda could toss her coffee at Dominic's face - or do anything worse - she woke up from the nightmare . Truth was , Tilda had been in such a rotten mood last night . She'd just chatted with Andy for a bit before she crashed . She hadn't replied to anyone's messages . When she finally checked her phone , she saw good morning texts from Una and Andy . And then ...

Jude . Jude had messaged her at eight last night . But Tilda , feeling awful , had gone drinking at Nightingale Bar instead of replying . This morning at eight , Jude messaged again , right on time . Tilda opened the text . Jude asked , " Bad mood ? " Tilda typed , " Yeah . Something really upsetting happened . Hard to explain . " She was about to put her phone down when Jude replied instantly . Jude offered , " I know I don't have the right yet , but if you want to talk , I'm here to listen . " Tilda wrote , " It's just silly little stuff , really .

I'm choosing to forget it so I can have a good day . Facepalm emoji . " After a moment , Tilda bit her lip and added another message . Thank you , Jude , for caring about me ." Jude answered , " You're welcome . Smiley face emoji ." Their conversation felt so old - fashioned . Tilda couldn't help but laugh. If

anyone else saw these messages , they'd never guess the two of them were dating . Well , they weren't . But because Jude cared enough to reply instantly , Tilda actually felt a little better .

Even a guy she barely knew was more caring about her than her family . Her family , though . What could she possibly hope for from them? Even a stranger was better than them . How could people who share her blood be so heartless ? All they ever did was make her miserable and sabotage her future . She didn't need a family like them . Tilda just wanted them out of her life for good . After Tilda finished getting ready , she left her condominium . She still had a class at university today - she couldn't be late . Tilda had taken a rideshare home last night .

Her car was still in the parking garage at Nightingale Bar . That meant she had to grab a ride to university this morning . After class , she'd pick up her car from the bar . Tilda swiped her access card and stepped out of the condominium entrance . A figure appeared in front of her . " Tilda , we need to talk . " It was Blair . Tilda glanced at Blair , then at the Maybach parked a short distance away .

Chapter 153 The Truth Hurts The driver got out of the car , his dark circles impossible to hide . Blair didn't look much better . Obviously , she hadn't slept all night . Blair had probably waited for her outside her condominium . Tilda ignored Blair and started to walk away . " Tilda ! I'm talking to you . I said , Let's talk ! " Blair was surprised to discover she wasn't even angry . She was used to Tilda's coldness by now . Today , she just wanted answers from Tilda . She needed something and didn't want another situation like Russell's .

Blair forced herself to be patient and spoke gently . " And why do you think that just because you want to talk , I have to stand here and listen ? " Who do you think you are ? " Tilda didn't hold back . She looked at Blair , her sarcasm cutting deep . She didn't treat this woman like her mother at all . " Tilda , I know you hate me . You hate our family . If I could , I wouldn't have come to you . Honestly , I wish I'd never looked for you in the first place .

" Maybe then , this family would still be like they used to be , and you'd be living a better life , without all this hate shadowing everything . " But the truth is , no matter how much I regret it or want to deny it , I still have to face it . " I don't want anything to do with you anymore . I don't want to look for you or even see you . But this time , it's about Dominic . I have no choice but to find you ! " " Oh ? " Tilda's lips curled up in a mocking smile . " Something about Dominic , and it's got to do with me ?

" She repeated Blair's words as if she was trying them out , tasting the meaning . Had Dominic actually told the family what happened ? Hahaha ! That's ridiculous . Did he really share something so

embarrassing with his family ? If he did , Tilda almost wanted to give him a round of applause for being shameless . Finished " Last night , Dominic had a high fever and passed out . Jody found him , and he was a mess . Jody said Dominic started acting strangely after meeting you . He's not the same as he used to be . He felt sad and guilty because of you .

Dominic would do anything you asked and even humbled himself . So what happened ? Tilda , what had you done to Dominic ? " Blair's voice grew louder , getting worked up . Her eyes were full of blame for Tilda and regret for herself . Blair resented herself . She was still regretting everything . More than ever . She kept telling herself to stay calm and stop getting worked up . But she couldn't do it . If she hadn't insisted on bringing Tilda home , would her family not have ended up in this mess ? Everything was in chaos now . Nothing like the happy , peaceful life they had before .

Tilda suddenly leaned in close when Blair lost her cool . Her eyes were cold , so sharp they seemed to cut right through Blair . Blair stepped back . She was startled by the sudden change in Tilda's attitude . The chill coming off Tilda was so intense that even Blair , who was always tough , felt goosebumps . Here they go again . Why did her daughter , so young , give off such a powerful sense of pressure ? Whenever Tilda's eyes turned cold , even Blair struggled not to crumble . " Oh , you really want to know ?

" Don't blame me if your world falls apart when you learn the truth ." Blair bit her tongue , forcing herself not to lose to Tilda's presence . She couldn't let herself be crushed . If she did , what pride would she have left as a mother ? " Say it ! " " I poisoned Dominic , " Tilda said calmly . " The poison was deadly . There's no cure in this world . Now Dominic is just my puppet . If I tell him to live , he lives . He dies if I tell him to . " He has to obey my every command , no questions asked . If I asked him to get down on all fours and lick my shoes , he'd have to do it .

How's that ? Is that exciting enough for you ? " She stared as Blair's face turned even paler . Tilda felt a wave of twisted satisfaction for getting her revenge . After all the pain Dominic had caused her , this was payback . Her mood actually improved . " How could you , Tilda ! " Finished Blair's eyes were red , like a lioness whose cub was in danger . She grabbed Tilda's collar , gritting her teeth . " He's your brother , your blood ! How could you do this to him ? Are you insane ? " Brother? Have you ever treated me like your daughter ?

When did Dominic ever treat me like a real sister ? " Did you know ? Do you know the only thing Dominic ever said to me in secret ? He wished I were dead . He wanted me gone , out of this world , so I wouldn't ruin his perfect , happy life ! " Someone like him ? He'd be lucky to die . I want him to wish he had never been born ! " Blair demanded , " You're lying ! Dominic is such a good kid - he'd never say something so vile ! I won't fall for your tricks . Give me the antidote , now ! "

Chapter 154 The Devil in Disguise Finished Blair was so angry that she was about to lose control . She screamed at Tilda , then raised her hand , ready to slap her . " Mrs. Jensen ! " The driver saw Blair was on the edge of an outburst . He knew something bad might happen , so he quickly tried to step in . But before he could , Tilda caught Blair's hand mid - air , holding it tight . A cold , almost dangerous smile spread across Tilda's face . " Fall for my trick ? Why don't you go home and ask your son if he's ever said those things ?

And as for the poison - I made that up just to see how dumb you really are as a mother . " Turns out you're even dumber than I thought . You believe anything anyone says . How did your company get so successful with you and Russell running things ? Haha ! Honestly , the business world here in Slosa must be a joke . It's like a kiddie pool ." Tilda flung Blair's hand away . Blair stumbled backward , almost falling over . Luckily , the driver caught her just in time . " Mrs. Jensen , are you okay ?" he asked . Tilda didn't look back . She just walked away .

She doesn't want anything more to do with Blair . O " Tilda ! Dominic has a high fever . He's in the hospital . My boy is unconscious , all because of you ! Doesn't your heart ache , even a little ? Don't you feel any guilt ? " Blair screamed after her , desperate and out of breath . " No matter how much you deny it , you're still a Jenson . Dominic is your brother ! You turned your brother into such a mess ! You have no devotion to your family . Your blood is cold ! You're heartless - are you even human ? " Blair questioned her hysterically . Her anger and regret went far beyond words .

After Blair finished yelling , she could barely breathe . Clutching her chest in pain , she glared at Tilda's retreating back , eyes burning with hate . But then- Just as Blair had hoped , Tilda turned around . Tilda smiled , cheerful and carefree . Well , isn't that perfect ? I'm not even human , but a demon . As long as you're tied to me , you'll never know peace . " Don't come looking for me again . Well , unless you want to get so mad that you make yourself sick . If you die early , I'm sure you'll blame me for that too .

" In your eyes , I'm the worst of the worst . Want to live ? Stay away from me . " Tilda said all this like it was a joke , her voice light and almost happy . She even tapped her chin in fake thought . " Geez . Thank you , Mrs. Jenson . You coming all the way in the morning , just to yell at me , actually put me in a pretty good mood . " Thanks a bunch ! " With that , Tilda took off running . Blair was left behind ; she was so furious that she nearly passed out . " Mrs. Jenson ! Hold on ! " the driver cried , rushing to help .

Blair clenched her jaw so hard it felt like her teeth might shatter . She was forcibly holding back a wave of fury . Her eyes burned with anger . " Don't worry ! I'll live . This demoness ! I'll never forgive her . Never ! " Hopewell Hospital . At the hospital , Wade sat beside Dominic's bed . Dominic was still

unconscious . Russell had spent the whole night there . Come morning , he finally left for a nap after Wade insisted on taking his place . Once he was rested , he'd come back . Wade wanted Kyla to get some rest . Kyla just shook her head stubbornly . " I'm not tired , " she insisted .

" I'm not leaving until I know Dominic is going to be okay . " So Wade let her stay . Kyla held Dominic's hand tightly . Her eyes were red and watery , struggling not to let her tears fall . Dominic's condition made everyone feel awful . But Wade couldn't help it ; his eyes filled with wonder . If things really happened the way Jody said ... Dominic , what on earth had happened between you and Tilda ? Why did it make you change so drastically , so suddenly ? Just then , Dominic spoke , his voice barely above a whisper . Mentor ...

Even though it was soft , Wade and Kyla both heard him . Kyla's heart leapt . " Dominic , are you awake ? " she called out agitatedly . But Dominic didn't respond . He just murmured , " I'm sorry . Tilda , I'm so sorry ." This time , Wade and Kyla both heard him clearly . Kyla's whole body went cold . She felt like she had plunged into an ice - cold cellar . Her hands were shaking as she held onto Dominic . It was happening again . Why ? No matter how hard Kyla tried , she just couldn't wrap her head around it .

What really happened between Dominic and Tilda ? Just yesterday , Dominic hated her to the core . Now , it was like he was someone else . As expected , Kyla's worst fears were coming true . Tilda was slowly breaking down all of Kyla's advantages . She stole away the love and attention that used to belong to her . " Dominic ... " she whispered . For some reason , Wade felt like he understood Dominic's feelings . After all , the bitterness in his heart was no less than Dominic's . Why is it that people only realize what's precious after they've lost it ?

Why do people always chase after what they can't have and take for granted what they do have ? Once you have it , it's so easy to forget how much it matters .

Chapter 155 A Birthday Party When someone's not the favorite , it feels like everything they do - even just breathing - is wrong . Finished Wade could understand how Dominic felt . However , he had no idea what Dominic and Tilda had really been through . If he did , Wade would just have to admit they all owed Tilda . Maybe this was fate's way of making them pay their debts . Russell walked in . " Dad . " " Daddy ." Russell looked nervous , but there was hope in his eyes . " I just heard some noise in here . Did Dominic wake up ? " Wade shook his head . He said , " Dominic's not awake yet .

He just talked a bit in his sleep . But don't worry , Dad - the doctor said he'll be fine . He's just exhausted and stressed out , so he needs rest ... Then , after a pause , Wade decided to speak up . " Dad , actually Dominic said- " Kyla interrupted . " Daddy , how about Mom ? Did she see Tilda ? " " She did , but , well , it went just as we expected . " There's no way Tilda would talk to us kindly now . " At this point , we'll

just have to wait for Dominic to wake up and explain what really happened ." The room went silent again .

The next day after class , Tilda headed to the cafeteria with Una . After class , Tilda headed to the cafeteria with Una . " Hey , Tilda ! My family's throwing a birthday party for my mom at our hotel tonight , " Una chirped . " Want to come ? My parents invited you ! " Tilda managed a small smile . " Sure ! I'll have to pick out a good present for your mom . " Una poked Tilda's cheek . " What's up ? Why do you look so down ? Didn't you win the lawsuit ? Or did your family come after you again ? Hmph ! If they did , I swear I won't let them get away with it !

" Una bared her teeth like an angry kitten . Tilda's heart warmed . She ruffled Una's hair . " Don't worry . If they come after me , I'll make sure they're carried out on stretchers . " But the episode with Dominic was something Tilda could only share with Andy , not Una . After completely breaking things off with Dominic , a day passed . Finished Tilda felt a bit better , but strangely empty , as if something important was missing . What was it ? Tilda felt like she'd lost her sense of direction in life .

Sure , she'd gotten rid of the Jensons and chased away all the toxic people who showed up looking for trouble . She'd protected the people she cared about . But deep down , she knew there had to be something more important for her to do . There must be something bigger than just getting caught up in petty grudges and family drama . For now , she tried to push those restless thoughts out of her mind . She'd take things one step at a time and just focus on finding some happiness along the way .

That evening , as night fell , Tilda picked up her car at Nightingale Bar and drove to the hotel for the birthday party . She signed her name at the door , handed over her gift , and stepped into a crowded , lively room . It was Una's mother's birthday , and the whole family was present , along with many guests . This was their big night . Tilda watched as Una's parents stood on stage , side by side , looking so happy and in love . Una was there too , along with her older brother and her little brother , who was still in middle school .

Everyone was dressed their best , smiling , giving speeches , popping champagne with the guests , and cutting the cake . The whole room buzzed with joy . Tilda's gaze softened . She knew she would probably never have this kind of warmth . A real family of her own seemed impossible . Still , she was glad that Una could have it . But thankfully , this kind of pain never touched Una's world . Una was the kind of kid who deserved happiness and a life full of light . As for this heartache , Tilda decided she would bear it alone and slowly overcame it on her own .

She picked up a glass of champagne but didn't feel like eating . Instead , she slipped out to the balcony for some fresh air . She looked out at the city lights , hoping it would help her calm down . Suddenly , she nearly bumped into someone . Tilda ?! Is that you ? " Clive was shocked . He couldn't believe his rotten luck . He'd been trying to avoid her at school , convinced she was nothing but bad luck . Ever since Tilda came into the picture , the Jensons had fallen apart . Jenson Group was in shambles .

The family , including his best friend , had all changed . Tilda just shot Clive a cold look . Not in the mood to argue with someone insignificant , so she walked right past him . Her reaction annoyed Clive . Finished " Hey , Tilda ! Why are you pretending you don't know me ? Are you feeling guilty or something ? " He called after her . " And what are you even doing here ? " Sure , Clive knew Tilda seemed to attract trouble wherever she went . Getting involved with her usually meant trouble . But being completely ignored ? That hurt his pride .

After all , he was a Rowse , and everyone at school thought he was the hottest guy around . Tilda didn't even break her stride . " This is the Colons ' birthday party . Una's my best friend . Why wouldn't I be here ? "

Chapter 156 Black Swan You're on good terms with the Jensons , aren't you ? The Colons and the Jensons aren't exactly friends right now . What are you doing here ? " Tilda didn't even look at Clive as she spoke . She just gazed out at the city lights beyond the hotel window , sipping her champagne . " You think I want to be here ? If it weren't for my brother- " Never mind . It's not your problem . I'm just so frustrated I started asking dumb questions . " " So you do realize you're not the brightest . Well , Mr. Genius , why don't you go somewhere else ?

You're kind of hurting my eyes . " Clive was wordless . He nearly choked on his drink . Now he finally understood how Wade felt every time he had to talk to Tilda . This woman ... Her words are sharper than a knife . One vile sentence is enough to make you cough up blood . For the sake of his own sanity , Clive bit his tongue and walked away . But he didn't go far . He stood at the end of the hallway . Clive watched as Tilda lingered by the balcony . She was holding her champagne and staring into the distance . The night breeze lifted Tilda's long hair .

The moonlight mixed with the soft yellow glow from the hotel's classic lamps . Tilda looked strangely beautiful . From where Clive was standing , he could just make out the side of Tilda's face . There was something about her posture - a kind of loneliness that you could feel , even from behind . Her evening gown wasn't expensive , but it looked just right on her . A black swan . Dancing alone in the moonlight . Clive couldn't help himself . He pulled out his phone and texted Wade a message . Wade , I know you're taking care of Dominic , but I just saw Tilda .

" He snapped a quick photo of Tilda's silhouette and sent it to Wade . Tilda stood under the starlit sky with the city lights sparkling below . Her chin was tilted up a little , and she held a champagne glass in one hand . Her pale legs and black heels peeked out from beneath her dress . She looked every bit the queen - proud and unbreakable . About 30 seconds later , Wade replied , " Where are you ? " Finished Clive typed back , " Umm ... Don't get mad , but Mrs. Colon is having a birthday party .

I didn't really want to be here , but my brother insisted . You know what he's like - if I refused , I'd never hear the end of it . " He tried his best to explain to his buddy . Right then . Wade called with a video chat . Clive hesitated for a second , then answered . Wade's face appeared on screen . " Clive , point the camera at Tilda ." " Wait , are you serious ? " " Please . " His reply stunned Clive . He paused for a second . Clive wondered if he was hearing things . He'd been friends with Wade since they were kids .

Yet , this was the first time he'd ever heard Wade sound so genuinely desperate . Is the world turning upside down ? Or ... Had Tilda really changed Wade that much ? Without a word , he turned his phone so Wade could see Tilda . Through the video call , Wade watched Tilda standing alone in the hallway . A lonely and icy aura wrapped around her . Wade lowered his eyes , and a flash of guilt passed through them . Memories of Tilda flooded his mind again . He recalled the first time she came home , nervous , shy , and full of hope .

He remembered when Blair introduced him as her big brother , how Tilda's eyes lit up with admiration and longing . Now , those memories played in Wade's mind more clearly than ever . He'd thought he'd forgotten , but the truth was , he hadn't . It was when he realized what he'd lost that everything started to come back to him . It turned out Tilda's eyes hadn't always been filled with hatred and anger . Once , there had been warmth , love , and admiration . And Wade was the one who ruined it all .

Finished Even now , he couldn't help but wish , deep down , that he could have the old Tilda back . He wanted to pretend nothing had ever happened , hoping everything could return to how it was the very first day they met . If he could turn back time , he'd give anything for another chance . Maybe then , their family could have been really happy and whole . Not broken and empty , like they were now . Everyone in the family felt guilty toward Tilda . The family was changing because of her - some for better , some for worse .

But in the end , the person who had really destroyed their peace wasn't Tilda . It was their prejudice against her . Tilda finished her champagne and set the glass aside . She took out her phone and scrolled through her contacts . Her finger paused on Jude's name . She thought about Andy . Tilda had already talked to him too much , and he had work to do . And Una - there was too much she couldn't say .

Besides , Una was hosting her mom's birthday party . After thinking it over , Tilda finally messaged Jude first . Tilda asked , " Are you there ? " She waited five seconds .

Jude replied calmly , " I'm here ." Tilda pressed , " Are you busy ? " Jude answered , " I am , but if you reach out to me , I'm always here for you . "

Chapter 157 Finding My Way Back Jude sent his last message . " Your problems are the most important thing to me right now . They're my top priority ." Finished Tilda sighed . " Jude , my head's a mess right now . You guessed it right . Yesterday was a really bad day . I finally started to feel a little better today , but then I realized , my life shouldn't be like this . " She wanted to escape the Jensons . Somehow , she kept getting pulled back in , stuck in this muddy swamp of hate .

Getting revenge felt good for a moment , but Tilda knew her life should be more than that She once had bigger dreams , but she'd forgotten them . She shouldn't let that happen . The pain from her family had taken up all her energy and pushed everything else aside . Jude messaged her , " If you've forgotten your real dream , do you want me to remind you ? Hugs emoji . " For once , the dominant CEO didn't just use his usual smiley face emoji . Tilda replied , " Yes , please . " Suddenly , she started to look forward to his message . What would Jude remind me of ? He seems so confident .

Jude understood everything about me . Logically , Jude couldn't know more than what was on the surface . Tilda was confident in her skills as the dark web's top hacker . She knew how to hide . Jude replied , " You once said you wanted to use your talents to serve your country ." To be honest , when Tilda first read Jude's message , she froze . For a moment , it felt like a shadow in her heart was suddenly pierced by light . It broke through the clouds and warmed the dusty , hidden corners inside her . Jude's words echoed in her mind .

" You once said having this kind of talent was a gift - a blessing from above , You wanted to use your skills to serve your country . That's what your mentor hoped for , too . You believed you owed it to the world to do something good with your abilities . " You also said it didn't matter if nobody ever knew your name . Even if you were just an unsung hero , as long as you had a clear conscience , that was enough . " You promised you'd never hurt innocent people , never cross the line for money , and never do anything to shame your country . Isn't that right , Queen ?

" Tilda almost typed , " How do you know all this ? " She found her reply sounded silly , stopped herself , and deleted it . Of course , Jude could figure it out . He knew Queen had the rare Omega blood type . Jude also knew Andy was a broker on the dark web and that Andy and Tilda were close . It wasn't hard

to put the pieces together - people with Omega blood were rare , after all . Finished And those words ... Those were the rules Tilda herself had posted when she was starting out as Queen .

It had been so long , she'd almost forgotten them . She never thought Jude would remember - even after all this time . Jude wrote again , " Sorry , Tilda . Figuring out you're Queen - that was my own guess . " I know you're mixed up in a lot with the Jensons , but I'm not going to judge you . People on the outside can never truly understand what someone in the middle of it is feeling or going through . " All I can do is be the right kind of shoulder for you ; whenever you need someone to lean on , you can come to me .

" If you ever feel down , I'll just be here to listen , standing by your side , supporting you no matter what . " But Tilda , I hope you don't let yourself be trapped by hate . You're strong . You once had big , noble dreams . If you've forgotten , I hope my words help you remember the promises you once made to yourself . " As Tilda read message after message from Jude , her restless , uneasy feeling slowly faded away . She couldn't help but smile . " Thank you , Jude . I know what I have to do now .

" Get to live a second time and finally see her family's true colors - what an incredible chance . Not everyone gets the chance to start over and fix their regrets . Tilda knew she had to treasure it , picking up her old dreams again . She also needed to remember her mentor's hopes for her . Getting tangled up in all this hatred with the Jensons , letting herself get sick with anger - that wasn't what she wanted . She'd already found so many good friends . Now , it was time to find herself again . Jude wrote , " You're welcome . If you ever want to pay me back , just buy me a meal sometime .

" Tilda laughed and wrote back , " Of course ! We're friends now , aren't we ? Sticks out tongue emoji . " When Jude saw Tilda's message , he almost forgot to breathe . His heart was pounding . For the first time in his life , his hands shook as he typed . He took several deep breaths before finally sending his reply . " Yes . Thank you , Tilda , for calling me your friend . " He'd thought it through carefully . His reply doesn't come too fast nor too slow , just enough to make Tilda happy , but not too much .

A smile slowly spread across Jude's face . If someone tried to put it in simple , cheerful words , it would go like this : " Oh my God ! Tilda finally said something nice about me - she even called me her friend ! " Honestly , if anyone who really knew Jude saw his face right now , with that big smile , they would've been completely stunned .

Chapter 158 Out of Character Anyone who saw Jude's face right now would probably think the world was ending . Otherwise , why would Jude be making such a scary expression ? Just then , Vassal walked in , sounding both cheerful and respectful . Finished " Boss , we just signed the big deal - billions of dollars ! Everyone's talking about throwing a party to celebrate . Are you coming ? " On the surface , Vassal was just Jude's bodyguard and all - around assistant on business trips .

But behind the scenes , he'd help Jude with pretty much anything , even cleaning up messes when things got out of hand . This time , Jude had come all the way to Lucien just for this deal . The Lucien branch had been struggling for a while . When Jude showed up and took charge , things finally worked out . Vassal happened to see Jude's smile at that very moment . His first reaction ? Am I seeing this right ? He even rubbed his eyes just to check . Wait - no way ! The boss is smiling ! Jude put away his phone and said calmly , " I'll join the party . " " Hmm , I'll let everyone know .

Wait , Boss , did you say you'll join ? " " Are you deaf ? " Jude shot Vassal a cold look . Vassal instantly felt a chill run down his back ; his back broke out in sweat . He lowered his head and stammered , " No - no ! If the team finds out you're coming , everyone will be thrilled ! " He hurried out of the office like he was running for his life . Vassal's heart was still racing , and his brain was reeling in disbelief . Jude Bell ... actually agreed to come to a celebration party ? This is a first !

No matter how big the deals their company closed or how much money they made , Jude had never attended any celebration parties . In Vassal's memory , Jude only ever accepted invitations from Alfie or Maurice once in a while . What in the world happened to put my boss in such a good mood ? Meanwhile , Clive was still sneaking around . He was secretly recording Tilda . " Hey , Wade , Tilda's talking to someone . She actually looks pretty happy ... not so cold and distant anymore . " " I know , " Wade replied , his voice sounding sour .

Wade didn't even need Clive's live updates . Through the video feed , he could sense everything . Wade's voice was laced with obvious jealousy . Clive fell silent for a moment , almost doubting his own senses . Am I just imagining it ? Why do I get a feeling that Wade is actually jealous ? The world hasn't collapsed , has it ? Suddenly , a sharp voice startled him . " What are you doing ?! " Clive jumped , fumbling his phone , which crashed to the ground with a loud crack . The screen went black - instantly . Seriously ? My super - expensive titanium phone broke that easily ? Total scam !

Clive spun around and found Una standing there . Her arms were on her hips , eyes blazing as she glared at him . " Were you just secretly recording Tilda ? You creep ! And to think you're supposed to be our senior and a Rowse ! " " Hey , stop making things up ! Why would I record Tilda ? I'm not crazy ! " Clive denied it repeatedly . Just to get rid of evidence , he stomped on his expensive phone , crushing the screen to pieces . Now , the evidence was gone . " You creep ! " Una glared at him , rolling up her sleeves , ready for a fight . Tilda walked over after noticing the argument .

" Una , what's going on ? " Una wasted no time . She complained , " Tilda , he's being a total creep ! Hiding here and filming you . He's gross ! " Oh Tilda raised an eyebrow . Her eyes turned cold as she stared at Clive . Hey , Una , don't throw away baseless accusations ! I wasn't recording anyone ! " Clive insisted . Tilda replied coolly , " Well , it's simple . I'll just call Andy . I hate to bother him , but clearing up my name is important . " " Wait - please , don't ! " Clive instantly caved .

If his family found out about this , or if Andy got involved , it would be a disaster for Clive . Things would be out of control , and he'd be in real trouble . Clive had probably ended up with a broken leg . Backed into a corner , Clive threw his buddy under the bus . " It was Wade ! He was the one spying on Tilda ! He must have been planning something really shady ! " Una clenched her teeth in anger . If Wade had been there , she would have punched him right in the face , no questions asked . Clive thought to himself , " Sorry , Wade , but better you than me .

If this blows up , I wouldn't survive it anyway ! If things really blew up , how could Clive handle it ? He'd get beaten up for sure ! But to everyone's surprise- " Oh . " That was all Tilda said . Una and Clive both stared at her in shock . Seriously ? Just one word ? Nothing else ? Tilda looked at Una and said , " Relax . Everyone's watching . It's your mom's birthday party . Let's just enjoy the party ."

Chapter 159 Going Back to the Old Tilda " What ? Hmm ... yeah . " Tilda's words left Una speechless . Tilda didn't even look at Clive again . She just took Una by the arm and walked away . Clive took a while to snap out of it . He let out a long sigh . How strange , " he muttered . " Tilda didn't snap back at me ? Seriously , these people's moods changed faster than the weather . I'm going to lose my mind . " " Tilda , are you sure you're not mad ? " Una asked . " Nope . Let him look all he wants . It's not like it hurts me .

I don't want to get mad over the Jensons anymore , " Tilda replied . Una could tell Tilda seemed different . She wasn't confused or upset like the morning . Una reached out to touch Tilda's forehead , just to check . " Relax , Una . I'm fine . Seriously , " Tilda said . " Sorry , Tilda . I thought you were coming down with something . I'm just glad you're okay . Right now , it feels like ... hmm ... you've just leveled up , " Una said with a smile . Una thought Tilda looked a lot more mature and confident than before . " I just found my way back to myself , " Tilda said .

" It's time to pull myself out of this pit of hate . If I stay stuck like this forever , what's the point ? " What is the point of coming back to life if nothing changes ? If I didn't let go of the past , how is this life different from before ? The path might have changed , but it would end up the same way . " Una , your dream is to open an esports club , right ? Run your own business , play as a pro , and compete all around the world for the S - Championship ? " Tilda said suddenly . When Tilda brought that up , Una nodded quickly . " Yep ! But , Tilda , don't make fun of me .

I really mean it ! " Tilda playfully messed up Una's hair . " Why would I make fun of you ? That's an amazing dream ! And now , it's my turn to start over , too . " Una was curious . " You've never told me your dream . What is it ? I don't think I've ever heard from you . It's a secret . Someday , you'll know , " Tilda teased . Ugh , Tilda , you're so annoying ! Now I'm mad at you , " Una huffed . After Clive hung up the phone , Wade found himself wandering out of Hopewell Hospital without really knowing why .

He sat in his Porsche 911 outside , not daring to go in . So he stayed outside , standing across the street , hiding in the shadows of an alley . He watched from far away , feeling silly . Wade knew he looked ridiculous . If Tilda saw him , she'd definitely give him a hard time . But he just couldn't help it . He couldn't let go of his little sister . Now that he knew where she was , he just had to do something . Even something as silly as standing here , watching her from a distance . The birthday party had ended . People started coming out , one after another - including Tilda .

She didn't rush to get her car . Tilda pulled out her phone , probably calling someone . Her face lit up with a big , happy smile . Wade recognized that smile right away . It was the same smile Tilda used to show only to him . Now , that smile would never belong to him again .. She'd only show that smile to others . Just thinking about it made Wade's chest ache . He felt like a giant invisible hand was squeezing his heart . Jealousy , regret , even self - loathing . Those bad feelings weighed on him like a ton of bricks . Before he knew it , Wade started following Tilda .

She was on the phone with Andy . " Tilda ! Why are you calling me now ? Weren't you at Una's mom's birthday party ? " Andy asked . " The party's over , " Tilda said . " Andy , I need a favor . Can you help me find any programming jobs in Cetherland that nobody else can solve ? " After thinking it over , Tilda decided it was time to get back to what she was best at . She knew Andy was well - connected . Some secret research group in Cetherland used to ask him to post mysterious jobs on the dark web .

Most of those jobs were about Cetherland's future . Finished After all , the dark web is full of talented people . Sometimes , that's the only way to fix urgent problems . Of course , the dark web is a mixed bag . People could only contact Andy . He acted as the go - between , posting jobs that need someone tough and smart . Most jobs were long and tough , paid peanuts , and were always ignored . Only the old Tilda - whenever she had time , she would take on these jobs through Andy .

She became friendly with Cetherland's underground organizations through those jobs . Later , to find her family , Tilda had given up a lot - she'd even forgotten her dream . Blair claimed her ; DNA tests proved she was a Jenson . After everything that happened , Tilda lost herself . Now , she wanted her old self back . " Why are you suddenly bringing this up ? " Andy asked . " Andy , do you remember when we

first met ? You saw my profile . And you told me I was too naive and beyond saving ? " Tilda said . " Oh , I remember , " Andy replied , with a crooked smile .

" You called yourself a hacker on the dark web , but you always insisted you'd never threaten national security . You said you'd never turn against regular people , never hurt anyone innocent , and never work for the bad guys . "

Chapter 160 Starting Point " At the time , I just laughed . How could someone so innocent and hopelessly naive end up on the dark web ? With those kinds of restrictions , how could you ever find a job ? " But even so , Andy still ended up meeting Tilda . And now , they're best friends . Andy used to be a careful , self - centered person . He could never understand what was on Tilda's mind . He even thought Tilda was a bit crazy . She acted like a show - off on the dark web , doing all that just for attention .

But in the end , it was Tilda's incredible skills that made Andy approach her and ask to work together . That's just how the world works . Nobody cares about who you are inside , at least not at first . Who would've guessed Andy and Tilda would become close friends ? Back then , Andy kept things simple - school , her looks , and skills As long as you're strong , you'll shine like a star , and people will gather around you . But if you're weak and powerless , who cares how you feel or what you've been through ? At best , people ignore you . More often , they just want to crush you .

" Things are really tense right now . The research group you helped before is playing it safe . Still , with your skills and history with them , you'll be fine if you reach out , " Andy said . " Think it through , Tilda . It's hard work , and there's not much reward - it just takes up your time . " " I've thought about it , Andy . I want to find the real Tilda again - the one who shone so bright . That's who I really am . That's what my mentor wanted for me . He taught me everything so I could stay true to myself .

" She thought of her mentor's serious face and the strict training that sometimes has a little kindness mixed in . Sorry , Mentor . If you could see the Tilda I've become , you'd probably be really upset with me . I was lost , trapped in anger , and almost forgot what you taught me . But I've found my way back now . I promise , as long as I'm alive , I'll never lose my way again or let you down ! " Okay , since you're set on this , I'll reach out for you ... But Tilda , I've got some interesting info . Want to hear it ? " " Go ahead .

" " There's a private forum , just for people from Cetherland . They're all your fans . I looked it up - there are four members . Each one is ranked on the dark web hacker leaderboard , though not very high .

These four are always fighting off hackers who try to attack Cetherland's firewalls and cause problems . Honestly , they seem pretty patriotic . If you ever showed up there , they'd probably freak out . " That got Tilda's attention . " Andy , please send me their info . I'll check it out myself and decide . " " Sure .

I'll text it to you . " The call ended . Tilda stretched and let out a lazy yawn . She suddenly felt a strange sense of strength in her body . Is this what it feels like to find your purpose again ? She'd almost forgotten her purpose . M Luckily , Jude's words today woke her up and helped her get back on track . Just then , Tilda sensed someone's eyes on her from behind . She stopped walking . " Come out . Hiding is getting old , don't you think ? " Tilda knew the person lurking had heard her . Would they come out or run ? The person following her hesitated for a moment .

Eventually , he stepped out . He didn't run away . Wade knew Tilda had noticed him . If he ran , it'd just make her look down on him even more . As her big brother , Wade already felt like he could never hold his head up around Tilda . He didn't want her to think even less of him . " What are you following me for ? " Tilda narrowed her eyes , giving off a dangerous vibe when she saw it was Wade . " Did you hear from your mother about how I embarrassed her today ? Are you here for revenge ? " Wade panicked and quickly tried to explain . " No , it's not like that , Tilda .

I - I just came looking for Clive . I happened to see you . Since you're walking alone at night , I get worried . I thought I'd walk with you - just to keep you safe . " Worried ? " Tilda looked at Wade like some kind of monster . Wade claimed he was worried about her , which was about as believable as a pig flying . What's with the Jensons and their weird games ? Playing the sympathy card ? Acting all caring and protective ? How ridiculous ! Tilda's look made Wade feel terrible , but he couldn't argue back .

It made sense for Tilda to doubt he had a hidden agenda . He had already lost the right to be her brother - to protect her . " I mean it , Tilda . I'm not lying . " Wade repeated himself , hoping she'd believe it . Finished But Tilda just shook her head . " Save your fake concern , Wade . I'm in a good mood today , and I don't want to get tangled up in any more of the Jensons ' drama . "