

Broken 125

Chapter 125 Digging Deep

DANIEL Mark's visit had been bothering me since the moment Amy told me about it.

She said he looked lost, that he just wanted to apologize and talk about Clara – but I didn't believe that for a second. Mark didn't do anything without a reason. He'd been quiet for too long to just suddenly reappear out of guilt. And after what Elias had pulled recently, the timing was too convenient. I decided to start diggin but I didn't tell Amy. She had enough on her mind. But I called Mason, one of our internal auditors, and asked him to pull Mark's financial traces for the last few months. Mason owed me a few favors. The results came back the next morning. It was quiet, discreet, but clear enough for me to understand.

Several deposits, all routed through a chain of offshore accounts an the source was a consultancy firm that did not exist on paper but I recognized the parent company as one on Elias'. Mark was compromised so whatever story he'd fed Amy about Clara's illness, it wasn't the full truth. He was in contact with Elias, which meant Clara wasn't the only one tangled in something dangerous. I leaned back in my chair, staring at the report for a long minute before closing it. I could feel my blood boil but I had to stay calm. If I went to Amy with this without proof of intent, it would only worry her. For now, I'd watch quietly. At least, that was the plan until Brian opened his mouth and got me upset that afternoon. We had a quarterly strategy presentation with a few senior council partners. Amy was presenting her findings in her usual clear, composed, way. I watched from the end of the table, I felt so proud of her until Brin–an decided to ruin the moment by interrupting. He stood up, smiling like the room belonged to him. "I just want to say," he began, "Amy's report is one of the most efficient we've had this year. Her insight saved us from making some costly mistakes." The other executives nodded approvingly. Amy smiled politely, but I could see her discomfort. I didn't say anything right away. I waited. But when he added, "Honestly, she's the best thing that's happened to this department," something inside me tightened.

I straightened slightly, meeting Brian's eyes across the table. He noticed. "Noted," I said flatly. "Let's move on to the next item." WIFE GEN Finished He sat down, still smiling. The rest of the meeting went smoothly enough, but I didn't hear a single word anyone said after that. Later that afternoon, I called Brian into my office. He came in with that usual confident stride of his. "You wanted to see me?" I gestured to the chair. "Close the door." He did. Then he sat down waiting for me to talk. "I noticed," I started slowly, "that you've taken quite an interest in my wife's work lately." He gave a small, polite smile. "Amy's very capable. It's hard not to notice." "That's not what I meant."

He tilted his head slightly, pretending not to understand. "Then what did you mean?" I looked him dead in the eye. "Keep things professional." His smile faltered. "With all due respect, Daniel, I've done nothing inappropriate." "Alpha, you will refer to me as alpha and not call me by name. You must show me respect jus like every other person does." He finally said, "Okay alpha. You don't need to worry. Amy deserves respect, and she has it from me." "Good," I said, my tone final. "Then we understand each other." He stood up after that, buttoning his jacket. "Of course, Alpha. Always." There was something about the way he said it, but edged with something I couldn't quite place. He left without another word. I stared at the closed door for a long moment. Later in the evening, Elias added his own poison to the day. He sent a formal invite to Brian for a private council dinner – one that, apparently, I wasn't

supposed to know about. But of course, I did. Nothing that happened in this family stayed hidden for long.

It was a calculated move. Elias was building connections, testing loyalties. And Brian, as ambitious as he was, wouldn't easily say no to that kind of opportunity. I could already see how Elias was playing it, using Mark as bait, Brian as a distraction, and Amy as the center of every possible pressure point. But he was going to learn that I wasn't the man he could manipulate anymore. That night, I found my mother in the sitting room, reading through council reports. She looked up when I entered. "You look like you've been chewing on glass." "Mark's back," I said. "He's taking money from Elias. And now Elias is pulling Brian into his circle." She didn't look surprised. "Elias has always known how to make a mess without lifting a finger." "I don't like the way Brian looks at Amy," I admitted. "I know it's harmless – but it's not harmless to me." My mother's gaze softened slightly, but her tone stayed firm. "You can't protect Amy from every man who desires her, Daniel. But you can protect her from the ones who mean her harm." I exhaled slowly. "I'm trying. But every time I think things are settling, Elias moves another piece." She closed the file in her hand. "Then it's time you stop reacting and start anticipating. You're his equal, not his victim. Remember that." When I finally went upstairs, Amy was already asleep. The lamp cast a soft glow across her face. For the first time all day, the knot in my chest loosened just a little. I sat beside her for a moment, brushing a loose strand of hair from her cheek. She stirred faintly but didn't wake. I wasn't just protecting my wife anymore. I was protecting the only person who'd managed to bring me back from everything Elias had taken. And as I sat there, I made myself a promise. Whatever Elias was planning, whatever game he thought he was playing would end soon.