

Broken 241

Chapter 241 Follow Up Documentation

MRS. CARTER

I stayed late in the office, papers spread across the desk, screens open with financial logs and council communications. I picked up the phone and called Cole. “We’re going to release part of the evidence today,” I said. “Not everything, just enough to show the council and the pack that Elias’ manipulation is clear and actionable. The board and investors need reassurance. Do not include the Southern Alpha in this release.” Cole responded promptly. “Understood. Partial release only. I’ll draft the statement and run it by you before sending.” “Good. Make it precise. Stick to dates, signatures, and movements. Facts only. No interpretations. We can’t give them a chance to spin this.” I hung up and turned back to the screens. The documents were ready. Some of the most incriminating files were sensitive—internal transfers, manipulated approvals, and Clara’s own notes. I couldn’t risk exposing them publicly yet. The Southern Alpha’s involvement was still under investigation. We needed more before we could make that move. Daniel entered quietly, leaning against the doorframe. He hadn’t slept much, and the lines on his face were sharper than usual. “Evening,” he said softly. “Evening,” I replied. “We’re moving forward with the public portion. The council and the board will see it first. The pack will hear the news indirectly. I want them to be calm but aware.” He walked closer and peered at the screens. “Have you checked every angle? If they counter it, we can’t have an opening.” “I have,” I said. “The statement will be factual. It will tie Elias and Clara directly to the manipulations. The council can’t ignore it. Carter Holdings will appear stable, because we only release what’s safe. Investors will see control is returning. The pack will see that authority is being restored. But the Southern Alpha? That piece stays in my drawer until we get proof. We can’t expose what we can’t fully back up.” Daniel nodded. “Makes sense. We’ll watch their reactions closely. I trust your judgment.” We finalized the statement together. Cole sent it out with instructions to confirm receipt and monitor reactions. Within an hour, we started seeing responses: council members questioning Elias’ claims, some publicly retracting statements, and board members acknowledging the partial release as a stabilizing measure. “Good,” I said. “The trap is working. Elias and Clara are contained for now. They can’t leave the North, and the council is too wary to act recklessly. We’ve forced them into a corner.” Daniel exhaled, rubbing his face. “It feels like the first time in weeks we’re actually gaining control instead of reacting.” I smiled faintly. “It’s the first step. But we can’t relax. Watch the small details. One mistake could undo all of this.” Cole came in with a tablet. “Mrs. Carter, the council just confirmed: both Elias and Clara are effectively on lock down in the North. They can’t leave, and travel requests are being denied until a verdict is given. The board is backing us quietly.” “That’s perfect,” I said. “Keep monitoring. I want to know if either of them tries to maneuver politically or financially. Any slip, no matter how small, is leverage.” I returned to the desk, scrolling through the latest transactions. Then I saw it. Clara had made a minor but critical error. “She’s sloppy,” I muttered. “This is the opening we needed.” Daniel glanced at me. “What did you find?” I held up the screen. “Clara left a trail. It’s small, but if we track the recipient and the timestamp, we can show her hand. She didn’t realize it, and it’s evidence we can use in private to pressure her and tighten our position.”

Daniel’s eyes darkened with focus. “Then we exploit it. Quietly, without letting her realize she’s exposed.” I nodded. “Exactly. We maintain appearances, control perception, and let the council and investors do the rest. Clara won’t see us coming until we decide the next move.” Cole stepped closer. “Do you want me to prepare the follow-up documentation?” “Yes. Everything must be airtight.”

Timestamped, verified, and cross-checked. No gaps, no room for argument. I want this ready for private council review once we're confident Elias and Clara are trapped and reacting." Daniel glanced at the clock. "Mum, it's late. You've been at this for hours. I know you're not used to slowing down, but we should pause before exhaustion makes mistakes." I shook my head. "Not yet. We need every last detail double-checked. This is the leverage that will keep the pack and company stable. Every late hour is worth it." Finally, after double-checking everything and confirming the partial evidence release had the intended effect, I closed my laptop and leaned back in my chair. My shoulders ached, but the satisfaction of control was palpable. Daniel came up behind me, wrapping a hand over mine. "We've made progress. Elias and Clara are exposed, contained, and reacting exactly as we wanted. And now, you've found something else." "Yes," I said quietly. "She underestimated us. She thinks she's playing a perfect game, but she's sloppy. This gives us an edge. We just need to use it carefully." He nodded. "We'll exploit it. Together." I finally allowed myself to relax enough to suggest something different. "Dinner?" Daniel looked at me, surprised. "Dinner?" I laughed softly, "We haven't had a proper meal in weeks. Between board chaos, council battles, and the pack, we've barely stopped. Let's have a quiet dinner, just us, before the next move. We need the energy. A family dinner with your wife and me will help us bond and laugh like a normal family should." He smiled faintly. "I think we deserve that. Finally." We went home together and Amy was already waiting for us. We sat down and had a very delicious and heartwarming dinner. After dinner, I glanced toward the city outside. The night lights shimmered, calm on the surface but full of hidden activity below. The board, the council, the pack—they were all moving, but we were positioned to control the next steps.

Chapter 242 Not Today

AMY

I woke to a dull ache running through my back and hips, the kind of constant pain that had been gnawing at me for days. I forced myself to sit up and took a deep breath. It hurt, but I could control it now. I focused, letting my healing energy flow through me. Gradually, the ache lessened, retreating until it was only a mild thrum. Daniel stirred beside me and opened one eye. "Feeling better?" he asked, his voice hoarse from sleep. "I am," I said, flexing my fingers. "Still sore, but I can move without doubling over." He sat up fully and ran a hand over my shoulder. "Good. I hate seeing you like that." I smiled faintly. "I've been pushing myself, but I think I'm finally getting a handle on it. The powers are... stronger now. I can focus on them better." He observed me for a moment, then nodded. "I trust you. Just don't overdo it." "I won't," I promised. "Not today." After breakfast, I insisted on going out. Daniel didn't argue. I wanted to do something normal—something that reminded me life could exist outside the chaos of politics and pack intrigue. We headed to a small boutique Daniel had discovered in the city. Baby clothes, blankets, tiny shoes—nothing extravagant, just practical things. When we arrived at the store, I walked around to have a look. My hands ran over a stack of pastel onesies, and I laughed softly when Daniel held up a tiny hoodie with wolf paw prints on it. "That's ridiculous," I said. "You're going to get our baby into werewolf fashion before they can even crawl?" "Absolutely," he said, grinning. "If the kid's going to grow up around our kind, they might as well start early." I laughed and shook my head, feeling some of the tension leave me. For a few minutes, the world felt simple. Safe. Daniel checked his phone, and I continued browsing. He stepped out to take a call, leaving me alone in the boutique. I picked up a soft cotton blanket and held it to my chest. The light ache in my stomach had returned slightly, but I pushed it aside, focusing on the small fabric and the feeling of normalcy. Clara appeared suddenly, stepping out from behind a clothing rack like she had been hiding. Her eyes were sharp, her expression

cruel. "Well, well, look at you," she said, her voice dripping with contempt. "Playing house already?" Before I could respond, she shoved me hard. I stumbled back, barely catching myself on the display table. The blankets and baby clothes fell around me. "What the hell?" I gasped. Clara laughed, a cold, hollow sound. "You think you're clever, don't you? Stealing Daniel's attention, acting like the perfect little wife. You're nothing but a slut." Daniel returned at that exact moment. His eyes went wide, then darkened immediately when he saw Clara. His jaw clenched, and I could see the shift in him—the wolf beneath the surface ready to erupt. "Stay back," he said, his voice low, controlled. His hand brushed mine, "Don't touch her again." Clara smirked, but I could see a flicker of uncertainty. Daniel's presence changed the room. He stepped toward her, his posture rigid, every movement deliberate. "Daniel, it's fine," I said through gritted teeth, holding his hand. "I'm okay. Don't—" "I won't lose control," he said, shaking his head slightly. "But you're not dealing with this alone." Clara laughed again, but the sound faltered. "Oh, you think you can protect her? Let's see how long that lasts."

Daniel's eyes narrowed, and I felt the power radiating from him—the control he had over his wolf and the ability to influence those around him. He didn't act on instinct. He didn't attack. He just stood there, a wall between Clara and me, and it was enough. "I suggest you leave," he said, his voice sharp. "Or I'll see to it you regret this. Cole." I turned to see Cole step into the boutique from the back. He nodded at Daniel, understanding the command. Within minutes, Clara found herself surrounded. Cole's tone was firm, professional. "Clara, you're coming with me," he said. "You're to be locked up in the pack dungeons until the council decides your fate." Clara's smirk disappeared completely. She glared at Daniel, then at me, but she had no choice. She was escorted out of the boutique under close supervision. I sagged against the counter, finally allowing myself to breathe fully. The sharp pain in my abdomen lingered briefly, but then I focused my healing energy again. Slowly, methodically, I pushed it back until it subsided entirely. Daniel came to me, wrapping his arms around my waist. "Are you hurt?" he asked, his voice gentle now, though still tense. "No," I said, leaning into him. "I'm fine. The pain's gone. Really." "You sure?" he asked. "I saw her shove you. That could have—"/ "I'm sure," I interrupted softly, placing my hand on his chest. "I'm stronger now. You'll see. I can handle more than before." He exhaled, holding me closer. "I don't doubt it. I just... I can't stand her touching you." "I know," I said. "But she's in the dungeon. She can't hurt me anymore." He kissed the top of my head and whispered, "I swear, if she ever tries anything like that again, she won't walk away." "I believe you," I said. My hands rested on my stomach, feeling the tiny shifts of life inside me. "That's why I can't let her control me, or this baby, or Daniel's focus. I need to stay strong." Daniel's grip tightened, but not painfully. "And you will. You always do." I smiled faintly. "Thanks for believing in me. That's half the battle." Cole returned a few minutes later. "Everything's secured. Clara's locked up. The pack dungeon team will keep her isolated until the council decides her punishment." "Good," Daniel said. "We don't need any surprises." I took a deep breath. Daniel looked at me, his expression softening. "You should rest. We've got more ahead, but for now, just... breathe." "I will," I said. "But we keep moving. We can't let her or Elias think they've got any control over this family- or the pack." He nodded. "Agreed. And I'm right here with you, every step."

Chapter 243 Do We Have Too?

DANIEL

Amy fell asleep halfway home from the boutique, curled against the window with a hand resting on her stomach. She looked exhausted, and I hated that I couldn't take the pain from her. After what Clara

pulled, my wolf was still restless. Every few minutes, my chest tightened as if I'd failed to protect my mate. When we got home, Cole opened the door for us. "Is she okay?" he whispered. "She's drained," I said. "And she shouldn't have had to deal with that today." Cole nodded, eyes dark with anger. "Clara's in the dungeons. No contact. No communication. Guards doubled." "Good," I said. He stepped back, and I carried Amy inside. She stirred when I laid her on the bed. "I'm awake," she muttered, eyes barely open. "You need to rest." She exhaled softly. "I don't want to sleep. I'll just start thinking too much." I sat beside her and brushed her hair behind her ear. "Then we'll do something that doesn't involve thinking." Her eyes opened a little more. "Like what?" I didn't answer yet. I just kept my hand in her hair. "You scared me today," I said quietly. "The moment Clara touched you—I almost lost control." Amy reached for my hand. "I wasn't scared of her. I'm only tired of all this. I want one day where we're just... normal." "We'll have that." "Really?" She raised an eyebrow. "Yes," I stood. "Which is why you're not cooking, you're not cleaning, you're not worrying, and you're not arguing with me." She gave a tiny smile. "So what am I doing?" "You're going to relax. Completely." Suspicion flickered in her eyes. "Danicl..."

"I booked something." "You booked what?" "You'll see." She sat up slowly. "I swear, if you bring me a stack of council documents and call it bonding time—" I lifted her chin. "It's a spa night." She blinked. "A what?" "You heard me." Her lips parted in surprise. "You... booked a spa date?" "Yes." "For us?" "Yes." She stared like I'd said something impossible. "You hate spas." "I know." "You said they smell like fake flowers." "I know." "And that massages are pointless because you're a wolf and—" "Amy." I pressed a finger to her lips. "Get up." Her smile finally broke through. "Fine." I helped her to her feet, and we left the room together. The spa room was set up in the private wing—dim lights, soft music, warm towels. Nothing fancy, just quiet. I didn't trust leaving the territory tonight, not with Elias out there panicking about losing everything. Amy stepped inside and inhaled slowly. "Daniel... this is actually nice." "I try," "You try once a year," she teased. "That's enough." She laughed gently, the sound I'd been waiting for all day. For the first time since morning, tension eased in my shoulders. Two therapists entered, and Amy stiffened. "I don't want strangers touching me," she whispered. She looked up at me. "Stay with me." "Always." I waved the therapists away. They left, closing the door behind them. Amy and I were alone again. She touched the edge of the massage table. "Now what?" I moved closer, close enough to hear her breath catch. "I make sure you relax." She searched my face. "And what about you?"

"I'll worry about myself later." "No," she said firmly. "We're doing this together." She reached for my shirt and tugged gently. "Sit." I sat on the edge of the table. She stood between my knees and rested her forehead against mine. "I thought something would happen today," she whispered. "When Clara pushed me... it crossed my mind. I thought the baby—" I held her waist gently. "Don't say it." "I was scared." "I know. And I'm sorry I stepped out for that call." "You were working," she said. "It wasn't your fault." "It feels like it." Amy cupped my cheeks. "Daniel... I'm fine. The baby is fine." I pressed her hands against my face, calming myself in her warmth. "I need you," I whispered. "I'm right here," she whispered back. I pulled her onto my lap, and she curled into me. Her legs hung over one side of mine, and she rested her head on my shoulder. "You reek of stress," she murmured. "I am stressed." She smiled against my neck. "Then relax." "I'm trying." "Try harder." I chuckled quietly, and she squeezed me. We stayed like that for a long moment, breathing together. My wolf calmed, finally convinced she was safe. When she pulled back, her eyes were softer. "Lay down." "What?" "Your turn." "Amy—" "Daniel," she said, I sighed and stretched out on the table. "This is ridiculous." "Relax." "That's the problem." She gave me a look, then placed warm oil in her palms. Her hands touched my shoulders, and I nearly jolted. "Amy—" "Shh."

Her hands moved slowly, gently pressing tension out of my muscles., “You hold too much,” she whispered. “Comes with the title.” “That title is yours. Not Elias’s.” She leaned over me. “Look at me.” I opened my eyes. “You’re the Alpha,” she said. I laughed quietly. She smiled too, then brushed her thumb over my shoulder. “You’re mine,” she said softly. “And I’m yours. Don’t forget that.” “I won’t.” She leaned down and kissed me. It was slow, sure, full of everything we’d been holding in since morning. I pulled her closer, deepening the kiss, letting her taste bring me back to myself. Her hands slid to my chest. My arms wrapped around her waist. The heat between us intensified. I lifted her slightly so she straddled me, and she gasped softly against my mouth. “Daniel...” she whispered. “We shouldn’t rush.” I said. “We’re not rushing.” “I want you,” she said quietly. I closed my eyes for a second, “I want you too.” We kissed again, deeper, slower, and I let my hands roam her back. She held onto me like she needed the closeness as much as I did. “We should finish the spa part,” she said. “Do we have to?”

Chapter 244 A Distraction

DANIEL

Three weeks passed, and I still didn’t feel like I could breathe or rest well. The council chamber was crowded, loud, and tense. It was the hearing of Elia and a verdict would be passed too. +5 Pearls The elders sat in their rows, whispering among themselves. The delegates who had been suspended stood off to the side, as if hoping the ground would swallow them before the verdict landed. I sat still, hands clasped, every muscle locked, watching Elias like a hawk. He stood in the center of the chamber with his wrists bound in reinforced cuffs. He always had an arrogant posture, but today it looked even worse. Chin high. Eyes half-lidded. A tiny curl of amusement at the corner of his mouth. He looked like someone who thought he had already won. One of the councilmen cleared his throat. “Proceed,” he ordered the clerk. My mother sat near the front looking calm, but I knew her well enough to catch the tension in her shoulders. She wasn’t nervous. She was impatient. She wanted this done. She wanted the danger removed. The clerk lifted the first folder. “The evidence gathered includes transaction logs, concealed emails, unauthorized fund diversions, tampering with pack records-” He kept listing them one by one. Elias’ smirk started to slip. Not fast. Not dramatically. Just small cracks at the edges. I watched every shift. His jaw twitched once. His eyes narrowed slightly at the mention of a shell account Clara revived. His fingers curled in the restraints when they mentioned the footage of him meeting with an unofficial envoy from the South. He didn’t look smug anymore. He looked irritated. “Elias,” one of the elders said sharply, “do you deny these charges?” He lifted his chin. “I deny the conclusions you’re jumping to. Evidence without context can be twisted. I demand a full legal review-” “You’ve had three weeks of review,” the elder snapped. “The evidence stands.” Elias opened his mouth again, but my mother rose before he could speak. “There is more,” she said. The room quieted immediately. She held up a slim folder. “This is the final piece. The one that confirms the motive.” Elias stiffened. That reaction alone told me everything I needed to know. The head elder nodded. “Present it.” my mother walked forward and handed it over. The elder flipped the folder open- And that was the moment the building shook. It wasn’t subtle. The entire chamber jolted sideways, walls rattling. Light fixtures swung. A loud blast echoed from somewhere beneath us, like something had ruptured or someone had set off a controlled charge. Screams burst from every corner of the room. People stumbled. Papers flew. Dust shook loose from the ceiling. I didn’t think, instinct took over. I grabbed the councilwoman nearest to me before she fell and pulled her away from a collapsing shelf. “Stay down,” I ordered. Smoke came in through the vents. My eyes burned instantly. The chamber lights flickered hard, buzzing, then steadied with a sickly glow. “Everyone remain calm!” one elder tried to shout, but he sounded terrified. My vision

blurred from the dust. I blinked hard and scanned the chamber. Elias. I had to find Elias. Through the smoke, I saw movement at the center of the room. I pushed forward, coughing, ignoring the people scrambling around me. By the time I got close—he was gone. His restraints were on the floor. Cleanly cut through. No struggle. No blood. No sign he fought his way out. He'd been moved. Someone had timed this blast to the second. I crouched and picked up one of the metal restraints. The cut was smooth, neat. Whoever had done this hadn't used brute strength. This was a blade. A specialized one. Someone really skilled. "Secure the doors!" I shouted. Guards finally rushed in, trying to restore order. Elders shouted over each other. Delegates panicked. Smoke continued to drift through the chamber, making everything harder to see. Cole stumbled toward me through the haze. "Danjel! Are you alright?"

"I'm fine. Elias escaped." Cole's expression dropped. "How? We have guards surrounding the building—" "He was helped," I snapped. "No one escapes this clean unless someone inside arranged it." My phone buzzed in my pocket—one alert after another. My men were reporting disturbances across the compound. Minor, but coordinated. Enough to pull guards in different directions. A distraction. All of this had been planned. Cole steadied himself on a bench. "We need to lock down the entire compound." "I'm already on it." I pushed past him and headed for the chamber exit, shouting at the guards lining the hall. "No one enters or leaves! Shut down all access points. Secure the lower floors first. Then the perimeter." They scrambled, tripping over each other as they obeyed. I rushed toward the main stairwell. The smoke was thicker out here. Someone had set a fire in the east corridor. I smelled burning plastic and wiring. I heard shouts from the upper floors. I pushed through it all, my chest tightening with each second Elias stayed free. I ran down the hall and skidded to a stop at the main entrance. Guards were already sweeping the area, looking for signs of Elias. "He didn't go through here," one guard said. "No visual on him." "He wouldn't take a main route," I muttered. Which meant he was still inside. Or underground. Or hiding until someone retrieved him. I turned sharply and followed the scent trails around the door. Nothing familiar. Nothing that belonged to Elias alone. But then... A faint trace brushed my senses. I crouched, inhaling again. Cole rushed up beside me. "What is it?"

"Someone was here. Not from our territory." "You know the scent?" "No." "Then who—" "I don't know," I said, cutting him off. "But they got him out." I stood slowly. My hands curled at my sides. Elias escaping today wasn't an accident. Someone powerful had stepped in. Someone with resources and boldness. Someone who wanted to pull him out before the verdict was given. Someone who benefited from keeping Elias alive. Cole watched me carefully. "What now?" I stared down the hall, still catching the fading trace of that foreign scent. "We need to find Elias," I said quietly. "And we find whoever helped him."

Chapter 245 Inside Knowledge

DANIEL

After a while of looking around and trying to figure out Elias Escape, I realized that the place was supposed to have collapsed to the ground with the kind of blast I heard. The blast we felt inside had been strong enough to shake the floor under my feet. I thought I'd find rubble, fallen beams, maybe injured guards scattered across the hallway. Instead, everything looked untouched. The walls stood firm, the lights were steady, no debris. Nothing was out of place. It was like stepping into a completely different reality. I froze for a moment, trying to match what my senses were telling me with what I'd just experienced. The illusion clicked instantly. Whoever had extracted Elias wasn't interested in destruction. They wanted confusion. They wanted noise without damage. And they wanted it timed perfectly to

cover his escape. I swallowed my frustration and shifted fully into command mode. I called out to the closest guards, my voice sharp. "Perimeter sweep. Full lockdown. No exits open. I want every corridor checked." I didn't wait for them to respond. I moved past them, heading toward the next security point. More guards were already running in, confused and asking questions. "Treat this as an infiltration," I told them. "Someone staged that blast on purpose. Elias didn't escape on his own." I reached the end of the corridor and pulled out my phone. Cole picked up almost immediately. "Leave whatever it is you are doing, take my mother and Amy home now," I ordered. "Straight to the estate. No stops. No talking to anyone. Once you get inside, lock the gates. Nobody gets in unless I personally authorize it." Cole didn't push back. "Understood. I'll update you when they're secured." I ended the call and immediately dialed my mother number. She answered out of breath, probably already halfway down the exit stairs. "Leave now," I told her. "Your involvement with the council is done for the day. I'll handle the rest." She didn't argue. "I'll take Amy with me." "Good." She hung up to keep moving. Amy was still near the doorway, waiting with a worried look. She stepped toward me as I approached. "Daniel, I can stay with you—" "No." I kept my voice calm even though everything inside me was running hot, "Go with them. This isn't safe." "But you—" "I'll be fine. Please go." She held my gaze for a few seconds. She knew I wasn't saying it to be dramatic. She knew enough to recognize the tone I only used when something was truly off. Her shoulders sank slightly as she nodded. She left the chamber without another word. When the doors shut behind her, I turned back to what was left of the scene. Investigators were already sweeping the room, collecting samples, taking photos, and checking air vents. They were talking over each other, unsure what they were even looking for because half the signs of a real explosion were missing. I walked over to the head investigator. "I need the footage from every camera in this wing," I told him. "And I want the scent analysis run immediately." He nodded, pulling a technician closer to hurry things along.

My attention drifted toward the door again. The strange scent I'd picked up earlier was faint now, but it was still there. It didn't belong to anyone in that room. And it didn't belong to Elias. Someone had helped him. Someone who had access, timing, and enough recklessness to think they could get away with freeing a criminal from the middle of a council hearing. Clara. Her face flashed in my mind. Her desperate loyalty to Elias. Her resentment toward anyone who stood in his way. Her history of siding with him even when it made no sense. I clenched my jaw, refusing to jump to conclusions but unwilling to ignore the obvious. She was the only one close enough to Elias to risk something like this. And she was the only one unstable enough to think it was a fight she could win. I would not be surprised if she escaped the dungeon I walked toward the chamber exit with fast steps. A pair of guards approached me with updates. "Sir, outside units report no suspicious vehicles leaving the compound. No signs of forced entry either." "Check again," I said. "Then check the blind spots. If someone got in, there's a way out." They nodded and left. The investigators called out behind me. "We'll update you when we get something!" I lifted a hand without looking back. I was already moving. Standing still felt like wasting time. My thoughts kept circling the same facts. Elias hadn't escaped on his own. He didn't have the strength or the nerve. Someone lifted him out of that chamber with careful planning. Someone who didn't fear the council. Someone who underestimated me. I reached another hallway and kept going, the sound of my footsteps echoing off the tiled floors. The scent lingered again as I moved past the next intersection, weaker than before but still present. It pulled me forward like a trail leading out of the building. I didn't slow down. Every instinct in me sharpened to a point. If they wanted to create a spectacle to delay justice, then they had chosen the wrong person to challenge. They could run, hide, or pretend they were smarter, but I wasn't going to sit behind a desk waiting for reports. 72 +5 Pearis I pushed through a set of double doors that led to the administrative wing. More council workers stared

at me, startled by the force I entered with. I ignored them and kept walking. The building felt too calm for what had just happened. That illusion bothered me more than the false explosion itself. Someone wanted me chasing the wrong kind of chaos. But they miscalculated. As I reached another corridor, the scent cut off completely. The trail ended. That only confirmed how prepared the extraction had been. They covered their tracks quickly. They knew how to mask physical clues. They knew the council's protocols. Which meant whoever helped Elias had inside knowledge. I stopped in the middle of the corridor, chest tight from holding too much inside. Then I turned around and headed back toward the security center. I needed the footage. I needed the analysis. And I needed names.

Chapter 246 Anchor

AMY

Cole kept one hand on my back as he guided me toward the car. My legs felt steady enough, but my nerves were all over the place and I felt like I would pass out any moment. The council chamber had been packed with tension long before the fake blast happened, and Daniel's warning still rang in my ears. He spoke like someone who saw danger before anyone else did, and I hated that I couldn't stay and help. But the tone he used... I'd learned not to fight him when he sounded like that. I rarely saw him in those moods but when I do, I understand better and just obey him. The moment the car doors shut, Cole locked them from the inside. No one said anything. Mrs. Carter kept her eyes forward, jaw tight, her fingers tapping restlessly against her lap. Cole drove faster than usual, but not recklessly. Every few seconds he flicked his gaze to the rearview mirror. I tried to breathe evenly, but my chest still felt tight. The "explosion" replayed in my head over and over. It hadn't felt right even before the smoke hit my eyes. Something in me tightened seconds before it happened, like a warning. O There had been no heat, no pressure wave, nothing that matched an actual blast. The idea that someone staged it so precisely made my stomach twist harder. The drive felt longer than usual even though Cole barely hit the brakes the entire way. My fingers kept curling into my palms. I couldn't shake the feeling that Elias disappearing wasn't the worst part. It was how he disappeared. Clean. Fast. Planned. And Daniel was still inside that building trying to manage whatever came next. When we finally reached the estate, the gates slid shut the moment the tires crossed the threshold. Cole didn't wait for the engine to fully settle before he got out. He opened my door first. "Mrs Amy, please go inside quickly," he said. I didn't argue. My heartbeat hadn't slowed since the chamber. I wouldn't even deny that I needed the rest right now. If not for me, for the sake of my baby. The house was quiet when we entered. Too quiet. No staff in sight. No chatter. No movement. Cole seemed to notice it too. His eyes flicked from room to room as he led us in. "I would advise that you both stay together," he said. "I'll secure the perimeter." Mrs. Carter nodded. "Go. We'll be fine." He gave me a look before he walked off—half reassurance, half warning. I didn't try to decode it. The dizziness caught up with me the moment I walked further into the house. My chest tightened and my stomach swirled. I pressed my fingers to my temple. "I just need to lie down for a bit," I said quietly. Mrs. Carter's face softened with worry. "Of course. I'll get you some water. Maybe something light to eat."

I nodded, grateful, even though my mind was still stuck on Daniel and that fake explosion. I headed straight to my room and shut the door behind me. The silence inside was thick. I sat on the edge of the bed, then lay down slowly, letting my muscles loosen. My hands moved to my stomach, rubbing small circles without me thinking about it. The nausea wasn't strong, just persistent enough to make me uncomfortable. Stress never helped. I focused on my breathing. In and out. Slow and steady. It helped,

but only a little. My mind kept drifting to Daniel's face in the chamber right before he sent me away. There had been no fear in him—just calculation. He was already forming a plan before the smoke even reached us. That alone made my chest ache in a different way. The house was still too quiet. Usually by this time, at least two staff members would be moving around the hallway, talking or carrying something. But I heard none of that. Just silence stretching from room to room. I shifted on the bed, trying to ease the restlessness creeping up my spine. Maybe I was just paranoid after everything that happened. Maybe the staff had been told to leave for the day. Maybe Cole asked them to clear out. But usually, someone said something when plans changed. To be frank, it was the first time that there was no single soul in sight in this house. I rubbed my stomach again and tried to dismiss the uneasiness. It didn't work. Then a sound broke through the quiet. A sudden heavy, sharp thud.. Not the kind of noise someone made when dropping a pillow or closing a door. It sounded like something—or someone—hit the floor.. I sat up immediately. The rush of movement sent a wave of dizziness through me, and I had to steady myself with a hand on the bed. My breath picked up. I listened carefully, waiting for a follow-up sound. A voice. Footsteps. Anything that could explain it. Nothing. The silence settled again, thicker than before. My heart pounded hard enough that I felt it in my throat. I stood up slowly, testing my balance. My legs were steady enough, even if the rest of me wasn't. I stepped toward the door, every nerve in my body alert. That sound wasn't normal. And it wasn't random. Halfway to the door, I realized I was holding my breath. I exhaled quietly and put my ear against the wood. Still nothing. I tightened my grip on the doorknob. I knew I should call Cole or Mrs. Carter, but something in me pushed me forward instead, like I needed to confirm the danger before anyone stepped into it. Maybe it was foolish. Maybe it was instinct. It didn't matter. I couldn't stay frozen. I turned the knob slowly. Before opening it, I whispered Daniel's name under my breath. I didn't even realize I'd done it until the sound left my lips. His name felt like my anchor at the moment.

Chapter 247 She Is Dead

AMY

I stepped out of my room and froze before I could take a full breath. Mrs. Carter looked dead flat on the floor. Her body was limp, her head tilted at an odd angle. The glass cup of water she'd been carrying was shattered beside her, water spreading slowly across the tiles. My stomach flipped. "Mrs. Carter?" My voice cracked. I rushed to her and dropped to my knees. My hands shook so badly I could barely touch her shoulders. I shook her lightly. "Mrs. Carter... please wake up. Please." Nothing. Her eyelids didn't flutter. Her chest moved, but the breaths were shallow and slow. A wave of panic surged up my throat. I looked down the hallway, waiting—begging—for Cole to turn the corner. He should've been here. He should've been seconds behind her. He'd said he was checking the perimeter, not disappearing into thin air. I strained my ears, waiting for any sound. There was nothing. No guards. No footsteps. No staff. Only silence stretching through the house like a warning. "Cole!" I shouted, even though my voice wavered. "Cole, I need help! Nothing answered back. My hands trembled more. Fear crawled under my skin. I tried to push myself up from the floor, but my legs wobbled strangely. The dizziness from earlier returned, except stronger. Denser. My head spun as if someone had pulled the ground out from under me. This wasn't normal. My heart pounded harder. I pushed a hand against the wall to steady myself. My limbs felt weak in a way that wasn't stress or pregnancy or exhaustion. Something was wrong, Very wrong. I backed away slowly, trying to get my breathing under control. I needed to get to my phone. I needed to call Daniel, call Cole, call anyone- A voice slid through the hallway behind me. She Is Dead "Looking for someone?" My entire body stiffened. I turned sharply. Clara stood at the far end of the

hallway. Her hair was messy, her expression bright with sick satisfaction. A knife dangled from her fingers, catching the light with every small sway of her hand. Her smile was wide, sharp, and dripping with victory. My stomach dropped. "What did you do to her?" I forced out. The words scraped out of my throat, shaky, but strong enough. Clara tilted her head, amused. "Relax. She's not dead. Yet. I needed her out of the way. She was getting annoying." My hands curled into fists even though my arms felt like they weighed far too much. "Where's Cole?" "Oh, please." Her eyes lit up with twisted delight. "Do you think I came here without a plan? Everyone who could interfere is already dealt with." My chest tightened. "What did you do?" I asked again, this time sharper.

She lifted the knife and dragged the tip against the wall as she walked toward me. The sound screeched down the hallway. "Just a little insurance," she said casually. "Wolfsbane in the vents. A strong dose, timed perfectly. I couldn't risk you fainting in the car before I arrived. I wanted to see your face when you realized you were finally alone with me." My breath shook. My hands were cold. The weakness in my limbs suddenly made sense. The dizziness. The heaviness. It wasn't exhaustion, stress, fear, or poison. "You're insane," I whispered. Clara laughed—loud, unrestrained, thrilled. "And you're slow/ You should've realized earlier." She kept walking forward, her footsteps steady and confident while mine felt unsteady and unpredictable. My vision blurred at the edges, the hallway tilting slightly. I blinked hard, trying to keep her in focus. "You planned this," I said. "You staged Elias's escape. You did everything." "Oh, now you're thinking." She clapped softly with her free hand, mocking, "I knew if the council took him down, everyone would forget about me. So I fixed it. I made sure he slipped right through their fingers. And now..." She shrugged, pleased with herself. "...now it's your turn." I swallowed hard. The taste of metal filled my mouth. I tried to straighten my posture, but my knees buckled again. I held onto the wall tightly. My voice was barely audible. "You won't get away with this." Clara smirked. "I've already gotten away with plenty. Her pace quickened. I tried to take a step back, but my legs felt disconnected from my body. My arms were heavy. My breathing turned shallow. Panic built rapidly in my chest. "Don't bother trying to shift," she said. "The wolfsbane in your system will crush your wolf before it even starts." My jaw clenched. Every part of me wanted to attack her, claw at her, scream, anything—but my body refused to cooperate. My muscles trembled violently just from trying to stay upright. Clara stopped a few feet from me, lifting the knife to eye level. "You know, I thought I'd have to work harder to get to this point. But you just keep handing me opportunities."

"You won't touch my baby," I said, hearing the rawness in my own voice. She smiled wider. "You really think care? I only need you gone, the baby will die with you. Everything else is extra." A cold surge of fear shot through me, but anger followed right behind it. My legs threatened to give out again, but I pushed all my remaining strength into staying on my feet. Clara watched my struggle with a delighted expression. "You really are hard to kill. I'll give you that." My vision flickered. The hallway tilted again. My breaths grew shorter faster. I tried to call out for Daniel, for Cole, for anyone—but the words didn't come out. My throat tightened too much. Clara lifted the knife higher. "Well," she whispered, "this is the part where you fall." She Junged. The blade scraped against my forearm as I blocked the hit. The impact jolted up to my shoulder. Pain spread through my whole body and I stumbled. I kept moving backward even though my legs felt like they weren't listening to me anymore.

Chapter 248 Time Is Up

AMY

Clara swung the knife again, and I barely lifted my arm in time. Clara didn't give me a second to breathe. She backed up a little, watching me with a smile that made my stomach twist. "So this is you without your mate protecting you," she said. "I wondered how long you'd last." "Clara... stop," I forced out. She laughed. "Strong mate bond, strong will, strong baby. Good for you. But wolfsbane doesn't care about any of that. It drops everyone." My knees almost buckled. The fog in my head grew thicker. The pressure behind my eyes hurt. My arms shook each time I tried to steady myself. "Why are you doing this?" I asked. My voice sounded weak even to me. "Why?" Clara raised the knife and shrugged. "You took everything." "You exist. That's enough." She stepped closer. I pressed a hand against the wall, trying to hold myself. My vision blurred. I blinked hard, but it didn't clear. The hallway shifted. The lights dimmed at the edges. I could tell I had seconds left. Maybe less. Clara dragged the tip of the knife along her palm as she thought. The sound of it made my stomach clench. She tilted her head to the side, almost curious. "I should've done this sooner," she said quietly. "Watching you walk around pretending to be strong was irritating. You've always been weak." I forced my body upright. "Move back." "You can barely stand." She raised the knife. "Let's finish this." My heart hammered too fast. Not normal fast. Wrong fast. Each pulse hurt. I could feel the wolfsbane crawling through every part of me. I pushed against the wall, trying to keep my footing. "Stay away from me," I said again, louder. Clara smirked. "There she is. The little fighter. Don't worry, I'll make it quick." She didn't mean that. She wanted to scare me. She wanted me helpless I took a shaky step forward anyway. "You won't touch my child." Clara rolled her eyes. "The famous child. The miracle. The heir. Spare me." I swallowed hard. My throat felt raw. "You're unhinged." "And you're dying," she said simply. She moved fast this time. I ducked, but my body reacted too slowly. Her fist slammed into my jaw. My head snapped to the side, and I hit the floor on my hands. My arms trembled violently, struggling to hold my weight. Clara crouched in front of me. "You look tired," she said softly. "Want me to help you lie down?" "Clara-" She shoved me back. My spine hit the floor. The air rushed out of my lungs. I gasped like someone was pressing something heavy on my chest. I rolled to my side, trying to crawl. My arms barely worked. My fingers kept slipping on the tiles. Clara walked behind me at a slow pace. "Keep crawling. It won't change anything, but it's cute." O She grabbed my hair and yanked my head up. Pain shot through my scalp. "Let go," I hissed. She bent closer until her breath touched my ear. "I'm going to get rid of you and your precious child. Then I'm going to tell the Alpha that you failed him. That you got yourself killed because you were careless. Everyone will believe it. You're always so exhausted and emotional." I clenched my jaw. "You're insane." "Maybe." She pulled me up slightly, just enough to drag me before dropping me again. My cheek hit the floor hard. My head spun so badly I nearly threw up. "You're making this boring," she said. "I expected more." I pushed myself halfway up, shaking uncontrollably. "I'm not dying here." Clara raised a brow. "You don't get to choose that."

She lifted the knife over her head. My vision doubled. Her body became two blurs instead of one. I blinked, but it didn't help. I could feel my body shutting down. Piece by piece. My legs were gone. My arms felt numb. My breaths came out short and sharp, like my lungs were squeezing in on themselves. I tried to summon strength. Any strength. For myself. For my baby. +5 Pearls My knees gave out again, and I slumped forward. My hands barely stopped me from face-planting. I could hear my heartbeat buzzing in my ears. Clara stepped right in front of me. "Goodbye, Amy." Something in me snapped awake. Not strength or instinct. I didn't have the energy to fight. Not physically. But I had one thing left. One thing Clara couldn't touch. My bond with Daniel. I forced my eyes shut and pushed my consciousness toward Daniel. It felt like shoving my mind through thick mud. My head throbbed. The link flickered, faint and unstable. "Daniel," I whispered inside my own head. "Help me... please." I barely

knew if I had sent anything. It felt like shouting underwater. The connection buzzed faintly. Then— A jolt. I felt him. His panic slammed into the bond like a shockwave. His fear. His rage. His sudden, sharp alertness. I pushed again, even though my mind felt like it was cracking. “Daniel... hurry...” The link flickered once more—weak, but alive. My body gave out entirely. I collapsed onto my side. I couldn’t lift my head. I couldn’t move my fingers. Clara laughed softly. “Time’s up.” She grabbed my chin and forced my face upward so I’d watch her raise the knife. “You should’ve stayed weak and silent,” she whispered. “It would’ve hurt less.” I stared at her through half-open eyes. My body was done. But my mind wasn’t. Not completely. “You... won’t win,” I whispered. Her expression hardened. “Watch me.” She lifted the knife higher. My vision dimmed around the edges. Sounds grew distant, like someone was lowering a curtain between me and the world. I used the last flicker of consciousness I had left to look at Clara with every bit of defiance I could still manage. I didn’t blink. I didn’t look away. Not even as darkness rushed over me. The bond flickered one last time—Daniel’s energy hitting mine like a distant, frantic echo. Then it faded. My body hit the floor fully this time.

Chapter 249 Just Stay With Me

DANIEL

I could feel Amy’s pain as it was sharp and sudden, slicing through the quiet of my apartment. My stomach dropped. It wasn’t just the ache. It was the rhythm of it, the panic, the desperate struggle in her body. My heart hit my ribs. “Amy?” I whispered. The whisper didn’t reach her, I knew, but I could feel it in her like a thread connecting us, faint but undeniable. Something was wrong. The image of Clara standing over Amy, knife glinting in her hand. My blood went cold, then hot. I shifted, feeling the familiar surge of power, fur and muscle snapping into place. The wolf inside me roared awake, hungry, feral. My senses expanded, the world sharpening to edges and scents and sounds. I moved like a shadow, my claws extended instinctively, my fangs bare, my muscles coiled. Clara barely had time to blink before I struck. The first impact sent her sprawling across the floor. She screamed but the sound barely registered before my wolfed senses cut through it. I followed, snapping at her side, the steel of my claws raking across her arm. Pain registered in her face, and I knew I had done damage, deep enough to slow her down. She hissed, cursed, and tried to swing the knife at me again, but her movements were sloppy, hesitant. I growled low in my chest, controlling the primal rage threatening to consume me. This wasn’t about power or revenge. This was Amy. My mate. Our child. Everything I had to protect in the world was right there, vulnerable, and I had failed to stop it in time. Another swipe of my claws slit Clara across the shoulder. She fell back scrambling to her feet, but her confidence was shaken. She hadn’t expected me to appear this fast. I moved again, my wolf form carrying me across the hallway, my claws shredding anything that dared come near me. Then I heard Amy’s whisper. Barely more than a sound in my mind, but enough to snap me out of the pure predator frenzy. “Daniel...” her voice quivered, almost lost beneath the pain, but it was there. My ears twitched, my chest heaving. I paused mid-lunge, panting, suddenly aware of her on the floor, barely conscious. I shifted back instantly, muscles shrinking, fur retreating, claw’s retracting. I was me again. But the scent of Clara and the iron tang of fear lingered. My hands went to Amy, lifting her gently even though every part of me still wanted to hunt Clara down, tear her apart completely. “Amy,” I said, “I’ve got you. Stay with me. Just stay with me.” Her eyelids fluttered. Her hand trembled against my chest. I brushed a strand of hair from her forehead. She tried to speak, to form words, but pain kept her silent. I held her closer, feeling her small, rapid heartbeat against mine. The baby. I couldn’t let anything happen to her. Clara was behind me somewhere, I knew it. I could still sense her lingering threat, the arrogance, the anger. But I couldn’t focus on her now—not

until Amy was safe. I shifted slowly, readying myself. If she fell again, if she lost consciousness completely, I would tear through anyone in my path to reach her.

Daniel..." she whispered again, weakly, the sound scratching at my nerves. "Yes, Amy. I'm here. I won't let you go. Not ever." I pressed my forehead against hers, feeling the shiver running through her body. She was burning, her pulse erratic, her breath shallow. Every instinct screamed at me to destroy Clara, but I forced myself to stay still. To control myself. I glanced up, catching movement out of the corner of my eye. Clara tried to step forward again, knife poised. My wolf reflexes snapped back automatically, and I reacted. I grabbed a nearby chair, swinging it between us, forcing her back. The impact sent her staggering. I didn't let up. I lunged, my hand catching her wrist and twisting it painfully, making her drop the knife. "Stay back!" I barked, voice sharp, full of authority I didn't need to fake. "You're done." She snarled at me, eyes blazing, but the damage was clear. One wrong move, and I'd be on her again. I could feel my wolf simmering beneath the surface, a low hum of threat. I had tasted the fear in Clara before, and I knew I could push her over the edge if I wanted. But Amy needed I returned my focus to Amy, lowering myself beside her on the floor. I checked her pulse, breathing, warmth. My hands trembled slightly—not from fear, but from anger, from relief, from the intensity of what had just happened. "Look at me, Amy. You're safe now. You're going to be fine. You hear me?" I repeated, firm, letting no room for doubt. She murmured something I couldn't fully catch, but her eyes met mine, and I saw recognition, trust, the faintest flicker of life pushing through the pain. I lifted her carefully, using my arms to support her fully. "We're going to get out of here," I said. My wolf's rage was still simmering, I couldn't let it endanger her. The scent of Clara lingered, taunting, reminding me she was still here. I hissed low, letting her know, letting anyone who could hear that I was aware, and I was ready. But my priority—my anchor—was Amy. I carried her toward the stairs, careful not to jostle her too much. Her hand clung weakly to my arm. "Daniel," she whispered again. I pressed my forehead against hers. "I'm right here." Cole's voice echoed from the entrance. "Daniel! Status?" "She's stable for now. Keep your eyes open. No one moves until I say," I growled, every syllable controlled but lethal. Clara appeared again, trying to rush toward us. I didn't think. I reacted. I shifted once more, wolf instincts sharpening, lunging at her with enough force to throw her against the wall. At this point, I really cared less if I killed her.

Chapter 250 Clara's Attack

DANIEL

Pain registered in her shriek, a sharp smack against the concrete, and I caught her with my claws, enough to leave her staggered and groaning. "Stay down," I warned, my human voice now layered with threat. "You touch her, you won't walk away." I returned immediately to Amy, dropping beside her again. She weakly smiled through her pain, lips trembling. "You... you came," she whispered. "Of course," I said, holding her closer. My heart raced, but my control never wavered. "I always do. You hear me? Always." The room was tense, heavy with silence except for our breathing and the faint shuffle of Clara, who was barely recovering from my strike. My wolf snarled inside, ready to erupt, but I kept it locked down. "I won't let you—anyone—hurt you," I murmured into her hair. Her hand traced my chest slowly, a faint pressure, grounding me in a way only she could. Clara hissed from the corner, wounded, frustrated, but still standing. I didn't look at her. "Daniel..." she whispered again, softer this time. "Don't leave me."

"I won't," I said firmly. "I'll stay right here. I'm not going anywhere." I shifted fully back to human form, keeping my protective arms around her. My wolf simmered beneath the surface, ready if needed, but for now, I was Daniel. And as her eyes closed briefly, exhaustion overtaking her, I whispered, "You're safe. I promise. No one will touch you again." I lowered Amy onto the bed, careful not to jostle her more than necessary. Her body was still trembling, weak from the effects of the wolfsbane and the fight with Clara. I pulled the blanket over her, brushing hair from her forehead. "Sleep," I murmured, "Rest. I'm right here. Nothing will touch you." Her lips parted slightly, a soft exhale, and her hand instinctively rested on her stomach. I stayed beside her for a long moment, watching her chest rise and fall, listening to her shallow breaths. My stomach twisted knowing how close Clara had come, how easily she could have hurt my mate. I didn't let myself linger. Amy needed rest, and I needed answers. My mind shifted to my mother. She had been in the hallway, unconscious, when I first arrived. I had picked her up, moved her somewhere safer while still keeping my focus on Amy. I walked quickly down the hall, scanning for any signs of danger. The house was eerily quiet. Guards and staff were nowhere to be seen. Clara's presence had left a trace of chaos, but for now, the corridors were empty. I found my mother where I had left her, sprawled on the floor, pale and groaning softly. Her breathing was shallow but steady. I knelt beside her, pressing a hand to her forehead. "Mom," I said, voice tight. "Stay with me. You're going to be fine." She stirred slightly, eyes flickering open, confusion mixing with pain. "Danicl..." she whispered, her voice weak. "I've got you," I reassured her. I lifted her carefully into a sitting position, then onto a chair nearby. I grabbed a blanket, wrapping it around her shoulders. She looked at me, fear and gratitude in her eyes. "Clara..." she croaked. "She... she-"

I know," I interrupted, gently but firmly. "I'm going to handle her. You just stay here." She nodded, too exhausted to argue. I stood, jaw tight, fists clenched. Clara had overstepped in ways wouldn't recover from. She had attacked my mate, my mother, and tested every line I drew. That line ended now. I left my mother in the relative safety of the room and moved back through the hallway, retracing my steps to where Clara had been lying in wait, knife in hand. My wolf instincts were simmering beneath my skin, claws itching, teeth bared even as I stayed in human form. My entire body hummed with controlled rage. Clara was slumped against the wall, arm bleeding where my claws had caught her, knife discarded. Her chest heaved, her smirk gone, replaced with a sharp, wary glare. She saw me approach and tried to stand, but I didn't give her the chance. I grabbed her by the neck with both hands, lifting her slightly off the ground. Her eyes widened in shock and fear for the first time. "You," I said, voice low and dangerous. "You are going to regret ever existing if you ever touch my wife or my mother again." She struggled weakly, spitting blood from the corner of her mouth. "You think you can-" she started, but I cut her off. "Listen carefully," I said, tightening my grip just enough to hurt but not kill. "You came here thinking you could hurt the people I care about. You thought you could get away with it. You were wrong." Her breathing grew faster, panic creeping in. I could see the calculation in her eyes, realizing how far I had pushed her, how completely she was exposed and powerless. "You're done," I continued, voice steady, filled with authority. "If anything happens to Amy, if she loses one second of peace because of you, I swear... I will make sure you wish you were never born. No one will protect you. No one will stop me." Clara's lips trembled as she tried to speak again, but I leaned closer, keeping my eyes locked on hers. "No more words. No more games. You're going to stay exactly where you are until I decide what to do with you." I released her slightly, enough to keep her on her knees but still under my control. Her shoulders slumped, the fight draining out of her. She understood now, She had underestimated me. "Move," I barked, motioning toward the pack dungeon. "Cole will take you down. One step out of line, and I won't hesitate again." She didn't move immediately, hesitating, glaring at me.

I felt my wolf twitch beneath my skin, wanting to finish the job myself. But I forced control. I had rules, lines I didn't cross.