

Broken 311

Chapter 311 Come Home

AMY

Daniel and I thought we would settle, maybe breathe for a moment. Instead, the tension between us had been growing since last night, and I knew something was coming. I just didn't expect it to happen this fast. I walked into the living room and found Daniel standing near the floor-to-ceiling windows, staring at his phone. His jaw was tight. That was nothing new. What bothered me was the way he didn't look up when I stepped in. "Are you going to keep ignoring me?" I asked. "I'm not ignoring you," he said, still not looking my way I dropped my bag on the chair. "You're acting like I did something wrong." "You did," he finally answered. "You keep involving yourself in things I told you to leave alone." I folded my arms. "You're talking about Carter Holdings?" "You know damn well I am." I felt irritation rise. "I didn't do anything except follow the trail. Every time I pull back, something new drops on my desk. I'm trying to help." "You're trying to control everything," he snapped. "Control? Really?" He turned, "Yes, control. You don't listen. You push ahead without you're carrying all of this alone." waiting for the full picture. You act like "I am carrying it," I shot back. "Half of the mess keeps coming from your side. I'm the one digging through files every day." "You think that makes you the only one doing anything he asked, stepping toward me. "I'm managing a pack and a company at the same time. And somehow that's never enough for you." "That's not what I said." "That's what it sounds like." I felt my temper kick up. "Then maybe you're not listening." He let out a harsh breath. "I am listening. I'm listening to you put yourself at risk again and again. And you never stop to think about what that does to me." I stared at him, stunned. "So now it's about your feeling" "Don't twist this." "I'm not twisting anything," I said. "I'm trying to do my job. I'm trying to protect my family. I'm trying to protect you too." "You don't protect me, I am to protect you as your husband, as your mate and as your alpha." he said. "You stress me out." I blinked at him. "Wow." Daniel rubbed his face, frustrated. "Amy, I didn't mean "You did," I cut in. "You meant every word." "I'm just tired. We both are." "No," I said, grabbing my bag again. "You're tired of me." He stepped forward, eyes widening slightly. "That's not what I said." "But that's what it felt like."

His wolf stirred under his skin, but I ignored it. I couldn't listen to him justify anything right now. "Amy, calm down." "Don't tell me to calm down," I said sharply. "I'm done talking." His jaw ticked. "Where are you going?" "Out." "Amy-" I walked past him, heading straight for the door. "Amy." His voice came louder, more forceful. "Don't walk out." I didn't turn around. He tried to pull on our mind-link, trying to reach me through the bond. I shut it down instantly. His shock washed back through the dimmed link like a faint echo, but I blocked the rest. I needed space. A lot of it. I stepped outside, got into my car, and drove off before he came after me. The moment I hit the main road, a wave of regret tugged at me, but I pushed it down. I couldn't stay in that house another second. I drove without a destination, letting the city lights guide me.. The northern territory was big, and I knew it well. I just needed to be away from him long enough to think. My phone buzzed several times. Calls from him. Messages. A few from Cole checking in because he probably felt the tension through the damn walls. I turned the phone facedown and kept driving. After almost an hour. I ended up at a luxury hotel Carter Holdings partly owned. Familiar, expensive, quiet. the kind of place where executives stayed when they wanted privacy. The valet recognized me instantly and opened my door with a polite greeting. I barely heard him. I checked into a suite under a private corporate profile, o questions asked. Money made things easier: Daniel hated when I used it like this, but I didn't care tonight. Inside the suite, I dropped my bag on the bed and

sank into a chair. The silence pressed in on me. Without Daniel's presence, the room felt too still. I replayed every word from our fight, trying to understand how it got so bad so quickly. We'd been through worse than arguments. We'd survived threats, betrayals, near-death situations. But somehow, this felt heavier. Maybe because it came from him, not enemies. I reached for the mind-link out of habit, wanting to feel him, even for a second. The moment the bond stirred, I shut it again. My pride wouldn't let me reach out first. I tried to distract myself by opening my laptop and checking the Carter Holdings private network. Nothing alarming. No new messages. No flagged breaches. The stability almost irritated me. We'd been drowning in crisis for months, and now everything was quiet- except my marriage. My chest tightened with a mix of anger and guilt. I hated the feeling. By midnight, I still hadn't eaten. I ordered something simple from room service, but I barely touched it when it arrived. I tried lying down, but sleep didn't come. My mind kept circling back to Daniel's voice, his frustration, the way he said I stressed him. I knew he didn't mean it exactly how it sounded, but it still hurt. Around one in the morning, I finally showered and changed into one of the hotel robes. The warm water eased my muscles a little, but not my thoughts. I sat on the edge of the bed, staring at the city lights outside the window. My phone vibrated again. Another call from Daniel. I didn't answer. Then a message from him appeared. >"Come home."

Chapter 312 Anonymous Video

DANIEL

I went to the office early because home was too quiet without Amy. The fight from last night replayed in loops, and every time I tried reaching for her through the bond, she shut me out. I didn't push because I didn't want to make things worse, Work was the only thing that kept me calm, so I buried myself in documents, contracts, new proposals, anything that didn't involve arguments or emotions. For the first time in weeks, there was no pack emergency, no Elias, no Clara, nothing looming over us The normalcy felt strange. I almost forgot what it was like. I signed off on a set of financial reports when my phone buzzed. It was Mom. She normally didn't call this early, so I answered immediately. "Mom?" Her voice sounded impatient. "Daniel, have you seen the video?" My hand froze around the phone. "What video?" "The one they sent me. It's—it's not on social media. It was sent privately. Which is strange." A cold heaviness spread through my chest. "Mom, slow down. What video?" "It's Amy," she whispered. "Amy and... Mark." My chair scraped back when I stood. "What about them?" She hesitated like she didn't want to say it. "Mom." "They're kissing in it, Daniel. Passionately." My heart went still. "What are you talking about?" I asked in utter confusion "I'm sending it to you now," she said. "Check your inbox. I didn't want to believe it, but you need to see it." The call ended. My phone chimed again instantly. I opened the attachment. The video was grainy at first, but the moment it focused I felt something inside me tighten. The set a hotel hallway. The lighting matched one of the upscale places in our region. The carpet, the wall trim—details I recognized instantly from business events. And there she was. Amy. My video blurred with anger. My wolf surged immediately, pacing to silently inside me that my hands show The office door opened without a knock Mom rushed in, breath uneven. You saw it," she said. Yea "My voice sounded nothing like mine. "Where did this come from?" don't know," she said. "Someone sent it directly to me No message, no sender Just the videos." played it again, forcing myself to watch every second. Something felt... off. Not the kiss—just the surroundings. paused the frame. Zoomed in. There was a small, distinct logo on the wall beside them. The emblem of he Royal Crest Hotel, one of the properties Carter Holdings invested in years back. My jaw tightened. She's at a hotel," I said quietly. Mom nodded slowly. "Daniel... what are you going to do?" What do you think?" I asked angrily. She left

the house after a fight," Mom said, her voice careful. "But this—" I know what this is," I cut in. "I can see it." Mom stepped closer. "Son, breathe." I stepped back. "I'm fine." I wasn't Not even close. The more I looked at the video, the harder my chest tightened. The woman in that recording was my mate. My wife. And she didn't push him away. She didn't look confused. She kissed him back. Was she doing this to get back at me?

Or would she say this was a plan? I grabbed my keys and walked out. Mom called after me. "Daniel, think before you get ther- But I was already gone. I drove faster than I should have, switching between pack speed and CEO calm, every turn guided by anger I couldn't hold down. My wolf kept repeating the same things in my head. "She kissed him." "She let him touch her." "She left you and went straight to him." When I reached the hotel, I didn't wait for valet or security. I mind-linked one of the guards stationed nearby and demanded the room logs. He sent the floor number immediately. I took the elevator up, fists tight at my sides. The hallway felt too quiet. I stopped outside the suite. I didn't knock softly. I slammed my fist against the door A beat later, it opened. Amy stood there in a robe, hair slightly damp, eyes tired. She froze when she saw me. "Daniel?" she said, confused. "What are you—" I pushed the door open wider and stepped in. "You have the nerve to act surprised?" She blinked hard. "What are you talking about?" I laughed once, short and sharp. "You really want to do this?" She looked completely lost. And for some reason, that made me angrier. "Where were you last night?" I asked. She frowned. "I... I don't know. I drove around. I came here. I didn't want to be home." "That part is obvious," I said. "You didn't even answer my calls." "You shut me out too," she argued. "What is going on with you?" "With me?" I stepped closer. "Are you really going to turn this around?" Amy's confusion deepened. "Daniel, why are you looking at me like that?" "Maybe because I didn't expect you to run straight to Mark the moment we had a fight." Her face instantly turned pale. "What?" "You heard me." "I didn't— Daniel, I didn't see Mark. I came here alone." My laugh felt bitter. "You expect me to believe that?" "Yes," she said, voice rising. "Because it's the truth! What are you accusing me of?" "You know what I'm accusing you of," I said. "Don't pretend you don't." She shook her head. "I swear I didn't do anything—" "You kissed him." My voice cracked on the last word, anger and pain mixing until I could barely breathe. "Willingly and passionately Amy." Her eyes widened. "What? No. I didn't—Daniel, I didn't kiss anyone." "Stop lying." "I'm not lying!" she snapped. "Why would I ever—" I pulled out my phone and opened the video. Her voice dropped to a whisper. "What is that?" "You tell me," I said. She took a step back. "Daniel... what is that?" "You," I said. "You and Mark." She stared, shaking her head slowly. "No. That can't be me." "Look at it." "I am!" she said. "And I still don't understand what's happening!" Her wolf pulsed wildly under her skin, confused, panicked, nothing like guilt. But anger pushed me forward before logic could. "Amy, we had one fight," I said. "One. And this is what you did?"

Chapter 313 Kissing Mark

AMY

Daniel's footsteps echoed all the way down the hallway after he stormed out. I stood frozen inside the hotel suite, staring at the open door he left behind. My hands felt cold. My head felt heavy. I kept trying to replay last night, but no matter how hard I pushed, nothing came back. Not a single clear memory. I shut the door slowly and leaned against it. My wolf paced in my chest, unsettled and confused. She wasn't guilty. She was scared. I looked around the room. My clothes were folded on the chair. My purse was on the table. Nothing looked disturbed. Nothing seemed out of place. But the emptiness in my memory made everything suspicious. I tried to link Daniel, but he shut the bond down on his end. The

rejection burned. I showered quickly and changed into what I had worn yesterday. Then I grabbed my bag and headed out of the hotel. The drive home felt longer than usual. Every turn made the confusion worse. I kept asking myself the same questions. Why was I kissing Mark of all people at the hotel? What did I do? Where was I before I came here? Why couldn't I remember anything? By the time I parked in front of the house, I still had no answers. I walked inside and found Daniel in the living room. He had thrown his suit jacket over the couch. His tie was loose. His eyes... his eyes were nothing like the man who held me last night before our stupid fight spiraled. He looked at me like he barely recognized me. "Daniel," I said quietly. "Can we talk?" He didn't stand. "Where were you last night?" "I told you I don't know," I said. "I came here, I guess. But before that... I can't remember anything." He scoffed. "How convenient." I blinked hard, trying to hold my voice steady. "Can you please not attack me? I'm trying to explain." He leaned forward, elbows on his knees. "Explain? You want to explain? Then start with why you shut me out through the bond. You didn't even tell me where you were." "We were fighting," I said. "I needed space." "So you ran to a hotel?" Yes. I said quietly. "I didn't want to yell anymore." His jaw tightened. "You didn't want to yell. Right. So after shutting me out, you went to the one place where Mark could easily walk in?" "I didn't see Mark," I repeated. "I didn't meet him. I swear," He didn't blink. "Amy, stop" "I'm not lying!" I snapped. His voice rose. "Then explain the video." I felt like my chest caved in. "Daniel, I don't even know what video you're talking about." He grabbed his phone and pulled up the file. He handed it to me without a word. I held it in both hands and pressed play. The moment the image sharpened, my stomach dropped. It was me. Standing in a hotel hallway. My hair was damp, my robe tied loosely. And then Mark stepped into the frame. He touched my arm. He leaned in. He kissed me.

And the woman in that video—me—kissed him back. My throat tightened. "That's not possible." Daniel let out a rough breath. "Say something else." "That's not possible," I repeated, voice shaking. "I didn't do that." "You're right," he said coldly. "That wasn't a kiss. You must have tripped and fallen into his mouth." I looked up sharply. "Daniel—" "You're telling me you have no memory at all? None?" "I don't," I whispered. "I really don't." He rose from the couch, pacing the room. "Amy, it's a simple question. Where were you? What did you do? Who did you meet?" "I don't know!" My voice cracked. "I don't remember anything after leaving here last night. I got in my car. I drove. And the next thing I remember is waking up in that hotel room." Daniel turned to face me fully. "Why would you wake up in a hotel room if you didn't plan to meet someone?" "I wasn't meeting anyone," I said. "I just... I just wanted to clear my head." He shook his head. "Do you realize how this looks?"

"I know how it looks," I whispered. "But I swear on my life—I didn't choose to be with Mark. I didn't choose to kiss him. I don't even know how I got there." He stared at me for a long time, searching my face for something he couldn't find. "You really expect me to believe you don't remember kissing another man?" he asked. "Yes," I said. "Because it's the truth." He scoffed again. "Amy—" "I would never cheat on you," I said firmly. "Not even after a fight." His eyes flickered, like my words hit something in him, but he pushed it down fast. "That video wasn't edited," he said. "Your scent was in that hallway. You were there." "Maybe it was staged," I said quickly. "Maybe someone—" "Staged?" He stepped closer, jaw tight. "You think someone dragged you into a hotel hallway, positioned you perfectly, and made you kiss him like that? Are you hearing yourself?" I felt tears hot in my eyes. "Daniel, please—just listen." "I've been listening," he said. "I've been replaying that video. I've been trying to make sense of it. And every version points to the same thing." "No," I whispered. "No, there has to be something else going on." He stared at me, and his anger cracked just enough for me to see the hurt under it. "You made me

look like an idiot," he said quietly. "Just once. Just once, we could've had something normal. Something easy. And instead, you walked out, shut me out, and ended up in a hotel with another man." My voice broke. "I swear I didn't do that." He didn't answer. I wiped my face quickly. "Daniel, someone is setting me up." "Then explain the missing hours," he said. "Explain why you were drugged or manipulated or whatever you're trying to claim—but you can't. Because you don't know. Or you're not saying." I shook my head. "I'm not hiding anything." He let out a harsh breath and ran a hand over his face. "You kissed him, Amy," he said. "I don't care what excuse you give. I saw it." "It wasn't me," I whispered. "It can't be." His jaw clenched so hard I heard the faint grind of his teeth. Then he snapped.

Chapter 314 Listen To Me

AMY

I flinched. He grabbed his jacket from the couch and headed for the door. "Daniel, don't walk out," I said. He didn't look at me. He opened the door. And he left. Daniel walked out of the room so fast the door rattled. I stood there staring at the empty doorway, feeling numb. My hands were shaking. I kept looking at the phone he had shoved into my palm, replaying that video I still couldn't believe existed. Me. Pressed up against Mark. Kissing him like I had been waiting for him. It made no sense. Nothing in me understood it. My wolf didn't understand it either. She was quiet, not guilty, just confused. I kept whispering to myself, Why Mark? Why would I ever touch him? I tried pulling my thoughts apart, step by step, hoping something would click. But every time I reached for the memory of last night, I hit a wall. I remembered leaving the house angry. I remembered shutting the mind-link. I remembered wanting space. After that, it was empty. A blank spot that felt too deliberate. I walked out of the room slowly, trying to breathe normally. Daniel's scent was faint down the hallway. He was still inside the packhouse somewhere, probably trying to calm down or destroy something. I didn't know which. His reaction had been raw. I could feel the disappointment rolling off him even after he walked away. I left the house because staying there made my skin crawl. I thought fresh air would help. It didn't. The more I walked, the more confused I became. Then, out of nowhere, a strange pull hit me. It was light at first, like a nudge in the center of my chest. I stopped walking. The pull stayed. I didn't recognize the feeling. It wasn't pack-bond related. It wasn't a call from my wolf. It felt foreign, yet it somehow guided my steps. I followed it without thinking, which now annoyed me. I should have turned around, gone home, confronted Daniel, done something rational. But I didn't. The pull kept leading me until I ended up near a small eatery at the edge of town. The kind of place no one from Carter Holdings ever used. I didn't have a reason to be there. I stood outside the glass door, trying to understand why the hell I had been drawn here, when the door opened from inside. Mark stepped out. My entire body froze. For a second, I actually felt that same pull again. It centered on him, which only made my stomach twist harder. I didn't feel anything toward him—not even anger—but the reaction came anyway, like something inside me responded before I could think. Mark looked just as confused to see me. He stopped in front of me, hands half raised. "Amy," he said. "Hold on, wait—don't go." I should have gone. I knew that. Every logical part of my mind said he was the last person I should be anywhere near. But the pull made me pause. I hated that I paused. "It's not what you think," he added. "I don't even know what I think," I said. My voice wounded flat. He let out a long breath and stepped aside, motioning toward one of the outdoor tables. "Can we talk?"

It was awkward as hell. My wolf growled low in my head, but she wasn't angry—she was unsettled. That bothered me more than anything. She should have been furious. She should have been ready to tear

him apart. Instead, she stayed silent, almost watchful. I sat down because Sing there felt worse. Mark sat across from me. For a moment we didn't say anything. The noise from the street felt distant, like it wasn't real. He leaned forward a little. "You look like hell." "I guess that makes two of us," I said. He gave a small tired nod. "You don't remember last night." It wasn't a question, but I answered anyway. "No. Nothing. Just pieces. And none of it explains that video." His eyes flicked away. "You weren't yourself. I wasn't either." "That doesn't excuse anything." "I didn't say it did." We sat there staring at each other, and the longer I looked at him, the more unsettled I felt. Being near him. felt wrong. But I wasn't angry. That was the worst part. I wasn't even disgusted. I was just... blank. Confused. Like something had numbed part of me. I pushed my chair back a little. "Mark, did you know someone recorded us?" He shook his head. "No. When I saw the angle, I realized the camera was placed before we even got there. Someone wanted to use that footage." "So this is a setup." "Obviously," he said quietly. A tight pain hit my chest. If someone wanted to trap me like this, they had gotten exactly what they wanted. "I don't understand why I didn't fight you off," I said. "Why didn't I snap out of it?" He hesitated. "Amy... I felt it too. That pull. I've never experienced anything like it." That admission made my skin crawl. If it wasn't just me, then something else was happening entirely. Something intentional. Before I could respond, the air shifted sharply. I didn't need to look up to know what caused it. Daniel's presence struck the area like ice. I turned and saw him standing by the entrance of the eatery. His eyes were cold and too steady. His jaw was locked so tight the muscles twitched. He didn't speak. He didn't even blink. He just looked at me like the ground under his feet was gone. My whole chest throbbed. I stood up slowly and walked toward him, but his expression didn't change. He stepped back like he didn't want me anywhere near him. "Daniel," I said quietly. "Please. Listen—" He turned away and walked off without a single word. I didn't pause. I followed him immediately. The moment we rounded the corner out of sight, he spun around. His eyes glowed, and his wolf was right under the surface.

Chapter 315 Fix Yourself

AMY

"I trusted you," he said. His voice was low, rough. "I stood in that room defending you, trying to understand you, trying to believe you didn't want any of that—" "I didn't." I said firmly. "I swear—" "Then why were you with him? Why are you still sitting with him? Why did you follow him? Why aren't you angry? Why weren't you fighting him off?" All of those questions hit me like stones because I didn't have a single answer. "I don't know," I whispered. "I can't explain the pull. I can't explain last night. I can't explain anything." "That's the problem," he snapped. "You can't explain it. You just keep repeating what you don't know while I'm standing here watching my wife—my mate—walking toward another man like he has some kind of link to you." "That's not true," I said. "I don't feel anything for him. I don't want him. I don't—" "Then what the hell was that video?" His voice rose. "What was that kiss? What was today? You left our home angry. You blocked the link. And the next thing I see is you in his arms and now I left to get some air and I got a calm that my wife is meeting up with a foe." "It wasn't like that." "Do you even hear yourself?" he said. He looked exhausted, defeated. "You talk like you don't care what this is doing to us." "That's not fair." He stepped closer, eyes sharp. "Answer me one thing. If I hadn't walked in... would you have stayed with him longer?" I felt something break inside me. "I don't know." He stared at me like he couldn't believe what he heard. His wolf flared hard, and before I could step back, he growled and pushed me away from him. The shove wasn't meant to injure me, but it was forceful. It knocked me off balance, both physically and mentally. I stood there stunned. He looked just as shocked at himself, but he didn't say anything. He turned away again, shoulders stiff and breathing

hard. I swallowed down the sting in my throat. "Daniel... Please don't walk away again. Please." He didn't turn. "I can't talk to you right now. I need to think. I need space before I say something I won't be able to take back." He walked off, leaving me standing alone on the quiet street, feeling like the entire world had tilted sideways. I didn't follow him this time. I couldn't. I stood there for minutes, trying to steady myself. I touched my lips, trying to understand how they could have touched Mark's at all. Trying to understand how I could sit with him without feeling anger. Trying to understand the hollow feeling in my chest where my memories should have been. Something was wrong with me. I knew it. Something deeper than stress or rage or bad decisions. And whatever it was, it had now pushed Daniel further from me than he had ever been. I stayed standing there until the sky shifted colors. I had no idea what I was supposed to do next, but I knew one thing clearly:

Someone wanted to ruin us. And if I didn't figure out why, fast, I was going to lose the only man I had ever trusted with my whole life. I went back to the Carter estate because I didn't know where else to go. My head felt like it was full of static. Every step toward the house made me more irritated with myself. I couldn't remember last night. I couldn't explain the pull toward Mark. I couldn't explain why I let myself sit with him. All of it made me feel sick. The guards outside looked at me longer than usual. I didn't blame them. If the video made it to Mrs. Carter, then half the estate probably heard something already. I kept my head down and walked straight into the house. Mrs. Carter was standing in the main living room. She didn't say a word at first. She just looked at me. And the look wasn't confusion or shock. It was disappointment—a heavy one that hit harder than Daniel's anger. I stopped a few feet from her. "Mother—" "Don't call me that right now," she said sharply. That shut me up fast. Her tone wasn't loud, but it had weight. It wasn't the stern tone she used when the board messed up or when Daniel pushed himself too far. This one was personal. Direct. Cold. She folded her arms and stared at me like she didn't recognize me. "I saw the video." My chest tightened. "It's not what it looks like." She gave a short, humorless laugh. "That line is older than I am." "That's not fair," I said quietly. "I didn't plan any of that. I don't even remember half of yesterday. Something is wrong. I'm trying to figure it out." "And in the meantime," she cut in, "you put my son through hell. You walked out on him. You cut the mind-link. Then you ended up in a hotel kissing a man who has done nothing but cause problems for this family." I lowered my head. "I know how it looks... but I didn't choose it." Her eyes narrowed. "You didn't choose to leave home? You didn't choose to block your mate out? You didn't choose to sit with Mark today at an eatery like nothing happened?" I swallowed hard i can't explain that part. I felt something pulling me. I didn't understand it. I still don't" She shook her head slowly. "The only thing I understand is that you hurt him. I've seen my son angry. frustrated, stressed, even reckless. But today? I saw something worse. I saw a man who looked like he'd been stabbed in the back by the one person he trusted most. "I'm not lying." I whispered. "I wouldn't do that to him. Not willingly." Mrs. Carter's expression didn't soften. If anything, it hardened. "I believed you were good for him. i defended you when others doubted you. I stood by you when people thought you were too inexperienced. too emotional, too reckless for a Luna. I told them you were loyal, I told them you were trustworthy." I forced myself to meet her eyes. "And now," she , "I don't know what to tell them "Let me fix this." She stepped back. "Fix yourself first." I reached out slightly. "Please. Just listen-

Chapter 316 It Hurts

DANIEL

the eatery because if I stayed another second, I was going to say something I wouldn't be able to take back. I stepped outside, shifted halfway without even meaning to, then forced myself to calm down before I tore through the damn parking lot. The drive home felt endless. My wolf paced the entire time inside my head, restless and angry. He wasn't just mad at Amy. He was mad at me. He kept throwing the same thing at me—You're our mate. Fix it. But how was I supposed to fix something that broke in front of my face? The moment I reached the estate gates, the guards sensed my mood and didn't say anything. They opened the gates fast and gave me space. I parked the car and sat still for a moment. My hands were shaking, something that didn't happen often. My chest felt tight, like someone was squeezing everything inside it. My wolf pushed again. "She is ours." "I know," I muttered under my breath. He growled at me. Not aggressive. Just hurting. And that made it worse. I got out and walked into the house. The place felt different. I knew it was in my head, but it didn't feel like home. It felt unfamiliar, tense. Amy was there. She was standing in the hallway, her eyes red and puffy. She looked scared, confused, frustrated—all at once. The moment she saw me, she took a step forward, "Daniel—" I walked right past her. If I looked at her, I would break. And I wasn't ready for that. She turned and followed me. "Please, don't do that. Talk to me. I'm trying to explain." "Explain what?" I said without turning around. "Which part should I listen to first—the part where you shut me out, or the part where you spent the night somewhere you can't remember?" Her steps faltered. "I told you I don't remember. I didn't do it on purpose." I kept walking toward the stairs. "You don't accidentally kiss someone like that, Amy." My wolf didn't like the tone I used, but I wasn't in control of much right now. Everything inside me felt raw. She followed me anyway. "Daniel, please. I know how it looks, but something is wrong. I felt... I don't know. Something felt off." "Off?" I stopped halfway up the stairs. "Off enough to walk out? Off enough to ignore your mate? Off enough to kiss Mark and meet up with him again in less than 24hrs?" Her voice cracked. "Stop saying it like I wanted it. I did want any of it." I turned but kept my eyes slightly averted because I didn't trust myself. "Then what did you want, Amy?" "I wanted space to cool down. I was angry and tired. But didn't want him. I swear." My wolf whined at her tone, but the image of the video was burned into my mind. Amy in Mark's arms. Amy leaning into him. Amy letting him touch her. I swallowed hard. "I can't do this right now." I started walking again. She ran ahead of me and blocked the top of the stairs. "No. You don't get to shut me out like this. Not when I'm trying to talk to you." I clenched my jaw. "Move." "No." "Amy." "Daniel, look at me." I forced myself to raise my eyes. The second I did, I regretted it. Her face was tear-stained. Her scent was distressed. And the part that killed me the most—she looked lost. My wolf pushed hard in my chest, wanting to get closer to her, but I kept my feet rooted. She reached out slowly. "I didn't betray you."

It felt like someone twisted something inside me. "I want to believe you. I really do. But I can't ignore what I saw." "You think I'm lying?" "I think something happened. Something you're not telling me." She flinched. "I told you everything." "You told me everything you think happened," I corrected. "Not everything that actually did." Her eyes widened. "Daniel—" "I'm not accusing you of planning it," I said, voice low. "But you didn't fight it either." That broke something in her expression. She took a shaky breath. "If I knew how to explain it, I would. I don't know why I followed him. I don't know why I didn't feel angry at him. It felt like... like my body wasn't responding right." My wolf's ears pricked at that. He didn't like the sound of it. It didn't match normal instinct or behavior. But I was too angry to let that lead my thoughts. "That doesn't make it better," I said. She stepped closer. "Then what do you want me to say? I let out a slow breath. "I want you to understand what this did to me."

"I do," she whispered. "I'm trying." "No." I said. "You're trying to fix it fast, but you're not seeing the damage." She looked like she was about to cry again. "Then show me. Talk to me. Don't shut me out." I stepped back. "I can't do this tonight." "Daniel—" "I need time." The moment I said that, her shoulders slumped. She looked away, wiping her face. "How much time?" "I don't know." She nodded slowly. "Fine." I tried to walk past her, but as I did, she spoke again—very quietly. "Do you still love me?" The question hit harder than anything else. My wolf growled inside me, furious she even asked. He yelled the answer inside my head, over and over. But I couldn't say it. Not like this. Not with that video still burning in my mind. I swallowed hard. "I'm going to stay in the guest room tonight." She didn't stop me. She didn't speak again. She just stood there, arms crossed over her chest, trying to hold herself together. I walked into the room and shut the door. My wolf started pacing again, pushing against me, hating the separation. "It hurts. Fix it." "I can't," I muttered. "Not until I know what actually happened."

Chapter 317 Falling Apart

DANIEL

He growled in frustration, louder than before. I sat on the edge of the bed and forced myself to breathe. But the room felt stiff. Quiet. Wrong. I wanted her scent next to me. I wanted her beside me. I wanted our routine back. Instead, I was sitting alone, angry, hurt, and exhausted. My phone buzzed. A message from my mother. "She's home. Don't make decisions while you're angry." I put the phone face down. I wasn't making decisions. I was trying not to fall apart. Minutes passed. Then an hour. Then two. I didn't sleep. Neither did my wolf. He stayed restless, pushing and tugging, wanting her, needing her, but I forced myself to stay still. Tonight, distance was the only thing keeping me from spiraling. I didn't know what tomorrow would bring. I didn't know what truth was waiting for me. But I knew one thing for certain— I had never felt pain like this before. Not even during pack betrayals. This one was different. This one felt personal down to my bones. And the worst part? She didn't deserve all of my anger. But I didn't know how to stop feeling it. I didn't know when I finally slept. My head had been pounding for hours, and my wolf had settled into this dull, steady hurt that refused to ease. At some point exhaustion won, and my body shut down. A hand shook my shoulder hard, dragging me out of the little rest I had managed. My eyes opened to see Cole standing over me. He looked tense. "Get up," he said. "The Council called for a meeting. It's about Amy." My stomach tightened. I sat up slowly, rubbing my face. "Already?" Cole nodded. "They want it handled fast. You know how they get when it involves a Luna." My wolf growled inside me, tense and angry, but too hurt to roar the way he normally would. I pushed myself up, still in yesterday's clothes. My whole body felt drained. I didn't care. I left the room without fixing anything. The walk down the hall felt heavy. Every corner of the estate reminded me of Amy. Her scent clung to the place. My wolf pushed against me every time we caught it, not knowing if he wanted to go to her or run away from everything before he broke down again. I didn't try to find her. I didn't trust myself to look at her. Not yet. Not when every part of me still felt raw. Cole led the way to the Council chamber. The doors were already open, and most of the elders were seated. Their expressions made it clear they were ready to tear into someone. I stepped inside. They all turned to me. Some looked angry. Some looked like they were waiting for the show to start. Elder Rowan spoke first. "Alpha Daniel. Thank you for coming." He didn't sound thankful. I sat down, keeping my face straight even though my insides felt like they'd been scraped out. "We will get straight to the point," Rowan continued. "Your Luna violated pack law. A Luna's betrayal is a stain on the pack and on her Alpha. The Council must decide the consequences." The word "betrayal" stabbed deeper than anything else. My

wolf shifted painfully inside me. Another elder leaned forward. "Before we proceed, we need to know your stance, Alpha. Do you confirm her guilt?" I looked straight at him. "She kissed him. I saw it."

The elders murmured among themselves. My hands curled into fists under the table. "But," I said, shutting their whispers up immediately, "you will not speak about her like she is dirt." Rowan frowned. "Daniel, we understand loyalty, but—" "No," I cut in. "I know what she did. I know what I felt. But she is still my Luna. You will handle this with respect." The room went quiet. Cole stood to the side with his arms folded, trying not to react. Elder Mira cleared her throat. "No one is trying to disrespect her. We are simply discussing a violation of law." "Then discuss it without treating her like she's some disgrace," I said. "You want to question her choices? Fine. Don't question her dignity." Another elder raised a brow. "You defend her strongly for someone she hurt this badly." I felt that hit, but I kept my voice steady. "My feelings don't erase her worth." The elders exchanged looks again. Rowan tapped his fingers on the table. "Daniel, a Luna's infidelity—" "I know the law," I snapped. "If you're going to talk about penalties, talk about them properly. Don't talk like you want her dragged through the mud." Rowan's expression tightened. "We are only looking at possibilities. Restrictions. Public acknowledgment. Temporary removal of rank—" "That won't happen," I said. "Daniel—" "She remains Luna," I said firmly. "Punish her if you must, but you won't strip her title." My wolf pushed forward, ready to tear at anything that threatened her position. It confused me, because I still felt sick whenever I thought of what I saw. But the instinct was stronger than the pain. Elder Mira sighed. "Your loyalty is noted. But our job is to balance law and fairness." "Then be fair," I said. "Judge the action, not her value." They continued the debate for a while. Some pushed hard, trying to make Amy sound reckless, irresponsible, or unfit. I shut them down every time they crossed a line. "She didn't plan it," I told them. "How do you know?" one elder asked. "Because I know her," I said. "And because she came home. If she wanted to betray me, she wouldn't." Rowan leaned back. "We will continue this after hearing from her directly." I stiffened. "She is not facing you alone." Rowan sighed. "You may stand with her. But this must be addressed today." The meeting ended with more tension than when it started. As soon as they dismissed us, I left the room. Cole walked beside me quietly. "You handled that better than I expected," he said. "I'm tired," I muttered. "I don't have the strength for anyone's rubbish today." He nodded. We reached the hall outside my room. Amy's scent lingered there too. It twisted something sharp in my chest. Cole stopped. "Are you going in?" "No," I said.

Chapter 318 Losing Luna Right

AMY

I didn't sleep that night. Daniel didn't come back to the room, and every hour that passed made the silence heavier. I stayed on the couch, staring at the wall because doing anything else felt pointless. My mind kept replaying his face from earlier—the shock, the pain, the anger he tried so hard to control. It stuck to me like glue, refusing to fade no matter how long I sat there. My wolf stayed quiet. Like she didn't know what to feel anymore. I couldn't blame her. I didn't even understand myself. I spent the morning walking in circles around the room. I tried to mind-link Daniel a few times, but he didn't answer. I thought about going downstairs to look for him, but the memory of how he pushed me the night before held me back. I didn't want to trigger him again. I didn't want to make things worse. When his mind-link finally came through, I froze on the spot. "Amy. Come to the garden." I answered with a simple "okay" and left the room before I changed my mind. The house was unusually quiet. Even the guards looked away slightly, like they didn't want to meet my eyes. I wasn't sure if it was judgment, pity,

or discomfort. Maybe it didn't matter. The garden was the same as always—trimmed hedges, clean stone paths, soft morning light. But standing there felt different. I found Daniel near the far end, his back turned to me. His posture told me everything. Straight shoulders, stiff stance, hands in his pockets. He looked like someone trying to get a grip on something slipping out of his hands. He didn't turn around when he spoke. "Thanks for coming." His voice was calm, but it wasn't warm. It wasn't even cold. It was controlled. Too controlled. I stepped closer. "Daniel, can we talk about—" "Not now," he said. "I already had a Council meeting this morning. We'll have another one later, but there's something I need to tell you before that happens." My throat tightened. "Okay." He finally turned to face me. His eyes were tired and red, like he hadn't slept at all either. The hurt was still there, deep and sharp, but he wasn't showing it the way he did yesterday. This version of him hurt more to look at—quiet, distant, holding everything in so tightly he looked like he might crack. "I need you to stay away from Carter Holdings for a while," he said. The words hit me harder than I expected. "What? Why?" "It's better for now," he said. "With everything going on....the Council, the rumors, the tabloids pushing stories about us...it's safer if you stay off public grounds connected to the pack." "But I work there," I said. "It's my life. My routine." "I know," he said softly. "But it's temporary." "Temporary how?" I asked. "A day? A week? Months?" He didn't answer right away. That silence said enough. I felt my stomach twist. "Daniel, that's—" He raised his hand gently. "I'm not punishing you. This isn't about punishing you. I'm trying to keep things from blowing up while we figure this out." I nodded slowly, even though it didn't make the weight in my chest lighter. I understood the logic. I understood the politics behind it. But understanding it didn't stop it from hurting like hell. Then he took a slow breath, and I knew something worse was coming. "There's something else," he said. I braced myself. He looked straight into my eyes. No anger. No shouting. Just a hard truth he clearly didn't want to say but had decided to anyway. "I need you to return the family heirloom I gave you."

Everything inside me turned cold. I stared at him. "The bracelet?" He nodded once. My fingers curled slightly. I wore it every day. It wasn't a piece of jewelry to me. It meant something deeper—trust. A Carter heirloom wasn't some random object. Once given, it symbolized unity. Permanence. Even before a formal marking. And now he was asking for it back. "Why?" My voice shook. I hated that it did. "It's tradition," he said, keeping his tone steady. "When there's conflict between mates, the item is held by the Alpha Council until things are settled. It prevents outside assumptions." "That's not true," I whispered. "The Council doesn't even handle heirlooms. They've never done that." He didn't deny it. So this wasn't about tradition. He just wanted it back. The truth hit me in the chest so sharply that I lost my breath for a moment. I swallowed hard and looked away, trying not to fall apart right in front of him. My throat burned. My hands shook. "Daniel..." I tried to speak, but the words stuck. He took a small step back—not away from me, more like he was giving himself distance so he wouldn't reach out. That hurt the most. He had always reached for me. Even in our worst arguments, he reached. "I'm not rejecting you," he said quietly. "I need you to know that." The words should have been a relief. They weren't. Because he wasn't rejecting me. He was pulling away. That was worse.. "I'm trying to breathe through all of this," he continued. "I'm trying not to take out my anger on you. But I can't pretend everything is normal. And I can't keep something on you that symbolizes clarity when my head is anything but clear." My vision blurred for a second. He looked away, jaw tight. "Amy, give me the bracelet." "I can't, Daniel." My world was shattering right in front of me. He walked past me, leaving me alone in the garden with nothing but the empty space where the bracelet used to sit on my wrist. I stood there for a long time, trying to process what had just happened. My wolf whimpered softly, lost and confused, reflecting

exactly how I felt. The silence around me felt too big. Too loud. For the first time since I became Luna, I wondered if I had already lost the one thing I fought the hardest to protect.

Chapter 319 Timestamp Difference

AMY

I felt the weight in my chest even before I stepped into the Council hall. The low murmur of the pack elders made the hair on my arms bristle. Daniel walked beside me, I wanted to cling to him, to lean into that familiar warmth, but the gaping chasm from last night's events made it impossible. The Council chamber was more intimidating than I remembered. High-backed chairs lined the room, each occupied by elders whose eyes could cut through bone. They didn't speak yet, just studied me as though I were a puzzle they were eager to dismantle. "Amy Carter," Elder Halvard's voice finally rang out. His tone was sharp, precise, like a wolf sizing up prey. "You are called to explain your actions regarding the events that took place last night. The video in question has caused concern among the Council." I swallowed hard, my throat dry. "I-I don't know what you're referring to," I said carefully. A ripple of murmurs ran across the chamber. I knew Daniel's jaw tightened beside me, his wolf shifting just beneath the surface. I didn't need to look at him to feel the tension radiating from him. "Do not play coy, Luna," another elder said. "This Council does not take lightly the conduct of a Luna when it affects both pack order and the stability of Carter Holdings." I clenched my fists at my sides. Every muscle in me wanted to scream that I hadn't done anything wrong. That night was blank—my mind offered nothing—but it didn't stop their accusations from hitting like blows. Daniel leaned close, his voice low but firm. "Amy doesn't deserve this. None of you have proof she acted willingly." I felt a flicker of relief, but it was tempered by the sharp glares from the Council. Halvard raised an eyebrow at Daniel. "And you would defend her, Northern Alpha? Even with the evidence presented?" Daniel didn't waver. "Yes. I stand by her. She is my Luna, and she has not betrayed this pack or its trust." I could see the tension in his body. His wolf was simmering, like a coiled spring, ready to lash out if anyone crossed the line. I hated seeing him like this, restrained yet sharp, and I hated even more that it was happening because of me. The questioning continued, each elder taking a turn. They asked the same questions in different ways: where I had been, why I was alone, why I had interacted with Mark. I answered as best I could, sticking to the truth: I didn't remember, I couldn't explain. "Your inability to recall the events of the night is convenient," one elder said. "We have a recording showing behavior inconsistent with the integrity expected of a Luna." I flinched. "I-I don't remember doing anything like that. I don't know what happened," I admitted, my voice shaking. Daniel's hand brushed my back, just a touch, grounding me. "Convenient or not, it doesn't change the fact she had no control over her actions. You're blaming the victim here." Another elder leaned forward. "The video has an odd timestamp. That anomaly could suggest tampering. Perhaps it's not as clear as it seems."

My heart skipped. I had hoped someone would notice. Even if it wasn't enough to exonerate me completely, it was a start. Daniel's eyes met mine briefly. He nodded slightly, giving me a fraction of reassurance. I tried to return it with a small, grateful glance. The elders debated among themselves, voices low but tense. I could hear the undercurrent of suspicion, the weight of tradition pressing down on every word. Even with Daniel defending me, their wariness didn't fully disappear. "Until further investigation," Elder Halvard finally said, "you will remain under supervised pack monitoring. Any independent action will be reported directly to this Council." I nodded, swallowing the frustration and fear that threatened to overwhelm me. I had been careful, cautious, and now it felt like I was being

punished for something I hadn't done. Daniel's hand left my back. He straightened, his wolf pulling taut as if to warn the Council not to test him further. Without a word, he turned and walked out, leaving me standing alone in the chamber. The silence that followed felt heavier than any accusation. I wanted to call after him, to follow, but my legs felt rooted to the floor. Instead, I stayed there for a moment, letting the sting of abandonment and frustration wash over me. Even though I knew he was protecting me, it didn't feel like enough. Finally, I forced myself to move, following behind at a distance. His strides were long, the kind that made it clear he had already decided how to handle this outside the Council's walls. We exited into the courtyard. The sun was beginning to drop behind the northern ridge, casting long shadows across the stone path. Daniel didn't look back at me, didn't speak. He simply walked, his presence still magnetic, though unreachable. I lagged behind, each step heavy. My mind kept replaying the meeting, the questions, the accusations, the video. How could someone orchestrate this against me? And why? The Council had their doubts, and so did I—but at least Daniel's faith was unwavering. When we reached the packhouse gates, he paused. Finally, he spoke, his voice low, calm, but carrying an edge I had never heard before. "Stay close. Don't leave my sight." I nodded, but the tension between us remained unresolved. I wanted to speak, to explain, to beg him to trust me, but the words lodged in my throat. He didn't ask me anything further. Without another word, he went inside, leaving me on the steps with a mix of anger, relief, and fear. I watched his figure disappear into the house, feeling both abandoned and protected at the same time. My mind spun with questions. The video, the missing memories, the Council's scrutiny—it all felt like a trap I couldn't navigate. I exhaled slowly, letting the cool evening air clear some of the tension. I knew I needed to prepare for what came next. If the Council was already watching, and the video's timestamp was suspicious, someone was orchestrating more than just a scandal.

Chapter 320 The Wrong Direction

AMY

I didn't even make it past the front hall before I dropped to my knees. My hands gripped the edge of the staircase railing, and for a long moment, I just let it all out—the confusion, the fear, the anger. The taste of tears was sharp, and my chest ached as if I'd been holding this weight for instead of just one night. "Daniel..." I whispered, my voice breaking. "I don't understand..." years He appeared at the top of the stairs, his frame tense, and I could feel the shift in his energy. His wolf was restless, circling close beneath the surface, warning him of the hurt in the air. But he didn't move toward me. He just watched, his eyes narrowed, as if he could see right through the mess I had become. "I can't..." I tried again, looking up at him, but he shook his head, stepping back. His jaw was tight. "Not now, Amy," he said quietly. "I need... I need time." He was giving me space, yes, but it felt like a wall had risen between us—a wall I couldn't climb. My chest tightened even more, and I realized I'd been holding my breath all this time. I forced myself upright and moved to the living room, trying to calm down. My phone buzzed. Bella. "Hey," I answered, voice still shaky. "I... I need to talk."

"I know," Bella said immediately. Her voice had that calm clarity she always carried. "Walk me through it. Everything you remember." I sank onto the couch. "I don't understand it. I—I felt something, pulling me toward him." I hesitated, then added, "Not emotionally. Something... different. I don't know how else to explain it." "Different how?" Bella asked, cautious. "Like... a force," I admitted, lowering my voice. "I couldn't resist it. It just... happened. I kissed him." There was silence on the line. "Amy..." Bella finally said, "you're telling me this wasn't your choice?" I shook my head even though she couldn't see

me. "I don't know. That's the thing. I can't remember making decisions. And Daniel..." My throat tightened. "He's hurting. I can feel him through the link, but I can't reach him." I could sense him then, like a faint pulse through our connection. His wolf shifted under the surface, low and tense, and I knew he was listening without responding. Every instinct in me screamed at me to reach for him, to tell him I wasn't lying. But the moment felt impossible to bridge. I hung up with Bella, feeling hollow, and tried to sit with my thoughts. Every step I retraced in my mind led me to the same conclusion: that night, something had compelled me beyond reason, and I had no control over it. Meanwhile, Daniel was in his office, alone except for the glow of his screens and the low hum of his security systems. I could feel the tension radiating from him through our link, though he was careful not to show it. He replayed the video over and over, analyzing it with that methodical precision he always had when tracking threats.

That's when he noticed it. The reflection in the window behind me and Mark. It was faint, almost imperceptible, but the silhouette... it wasn't Mark. It moved differently, carried itself differently. He froze, scanning frame by frame. There was it Clara? Or someone with similar height and build? The hairline, the posture—it matched, but he couldn't be certain. He leaned back in his chair, jaw tight. His wolf growled low in his mind, though he kept it under control. His mind raced through every scenario. If that was Clara... or someone else posing as her... it meant the night had been manipulated far more than he realized. Through our link, he felt my confusion, my fear, my anger. And just as I started to spiral, he caught another message—a ping from an anonymous sender. "You're looking in the wrong direction," the text read. I felt the message resonate in my mind. Daniel felt it too, and I could sense his pulse spike as he considered its implications. Someone was pulling strings beyond both of us. Someone who wanted to make me appear guilty. Someone else had orchestrated that night's events. I ran my hands through my hair, frustration spilling out in low growls. "Bella, I can't figure this out. I'm... I don't even know if I kissed him because I wanted to or because..." My voice trailed off. "Because someone made it happen," she said for me. "Yes," I said softly. "And Daniel... he doesn't know." "I think he's starting to," Bella said. "But he's an Alpha. He wants to be sure before he acts." I nodded, even though she couldn't see me. "I hate feeling this powerless." Hours passed. I tried to focus on Carter Holdings, on the work we had to rebuild after the chaos with Mark and Elias. But every file I opened, every ledger I reviewed, was a reminder of how exposed I was that night. And Daniel's silence made the weight heavier. Finally, I couldn't stay still. I moved through the house, checking the perimeter, scanning every corridor, feeling the tension in every corner. The pack's security systems were online, but that didn't stop my mind from racing. Daniel emerged from his office finally, though he didn't approach me. He walked past the common areas, barely acknowledging me. I tried to speak, but the words got caught. "I... Daniel..." I started. He stopped, but didn't look at me. "Amy," he said, voice low. "I know you're confused. I know something happened. But right now, I need facts." "I—I have no facts," I admitted. "I don't even know why I was... I can't remember..." His wolf stirred again, restless and coiled, but he stayed composed. "Then we find them. Together. You and me. No one else gets to tell the story for us." I swallowed, letting the words sink in. It was a promise, but it also reminded me of the distance that still stretched between us.