

## Broken 421

### Chapter 421 Puppet Game

CLARA

I met Elias after nightfall, where the streetlights thinned and the city learned how to keep secrets. He was already waiting, leaning against his car like he had all the time in the world. Dark coat. Calm face. That look he wore when he thought he was three steps ahead of everyone else. I hated how confident he was. I hated it more that he had earned it. "You're late," he said. "I came," I replied. "That should count for something." He smiled as he opened the passenger door for me. "You always come. That's why I trust you." I got in and closed the door harder than necessary. "Don't flatter yourself. I didn't come for you. I came for answers." He pulled onto the road without replying. The engine hummed low, steady. We passed out of the city, then past places that still pretended to be suburbs. The farther we went, the quieter it became. After twenty minutes, I spoke again. "You've been using me." "That's not true," he said. "I've been involving you." "You've been hiding things," I corrected. "And I don't keep men by my side when they do that." He glanced at me. "You think you're in a position to make demands?" "Yes," I said. "Because you need me more than I need you." He laughed softly. "Careful, Clara." "Tell me the plan," I said. "Not pieces. Not hints. All of it." Silence filled the car again. The road stretched on, long and dark. We drove for so long that I even started to lose track of where we were. That was intentional. I noted it. Filed it away. Finally, he turned off the main road. A large structure appeared ahead, flat and dull from the outside warehouse. Old. Unmarked. He parked and turned to me. "You want to know how deep this goes?" "Yes." "Then walk." We stepped out. Cold air hit my face. The building looked dead from the outside. No guards. No lights. Nothing that suggested life. everything changed. Music hit first, Loud, steady, deliberate. The kind that made your pulse adjust without asking permission. Lights cut through the dark in slow patterns. Red. Gold. Blue. It wasn't a warehouse. It was a club. Not the cheap kind. This place was polished. Expensive. Built with purpose. Wolves filled the space, seated in private sections, dressed in tailored suits, marked with territory symbols I recognized. North. South. East. Even packs that didn't usually mingle. Women moved among them. I watched one laugh on cue. Another leaned in when a hand lifted. None of it felt natural. My chest tightened. "What is this?" I asked. Elias walked beside me, relaxed. "Business." "No," I said sharply. "This is not business." He stopped near the edge of the floor. "Every woman here is bound by a contract." I stared at him. "What kind of contract?" "Debt," he said simply. "Debt they couldn't pay any other way." I looked again. Really looked this time. The stiffness in their shoulders. The way their smiles didn't reach their eyes. "They don't want to be here," I said. "They want freedom," Elias replied. "This is the price." I swallowed. I had done cruel things. Planned worse. But this—this was controlled suffering dressed as choice. "You run this?" I asked. He shook his head. "I manage it. I'm the front man." "For who?" I demanded. He turned to me. "That information isn't free."

I laughed once, sharp. "You bring me into this place and think I'll just accept the mystery?" "You should," he said. "It keeps you alive." I stepped closer to him. "You said you trusted me" "I trust your ambition," he replied. "Not your loyalty" "That can be earned." I said. "So can silence." He studied me. "You're disturbed." "I'm observant," I said. "And I know leverage when I see it." He gestured around us. "This is leverage. Wolves from every territory come here. Deals happen. Weakness is traded. Secrets are sold." "And the women?" I asked. "Collateral," he said without hesitation. That word settled heavy in my chest. I forced myself not to react. Emotion was a liability here. "You brought me here to scare me," I

said. “No,” he said. “I brought you here to educate you.” “Then educate me fully,” I said. “Who owns this place?” He leaned in close. “Earn it.” My jaw tightened. “How?” “Prove you’re useful beyond access,” he said. “Prove you can move pieces without being seen.” I smiled slowly. “You already know I can.” “I know you think you can,” he replied. “There’s a difference.” We walked deeper into the club. Conversations stopped when he passed. Respect. Fear. Both. A wolf from the East raised a glass to him. Elias nodded once. “You control more than I thought,” I said quietly. “And you control less,” he replied. We stopped near a private room. Inside, I saw contracts laid out on a table. Names. Numbers. Terms. “This is where debt becomes obedience,” Elias said. “And obedience becomes profit.” I turned to him. “If I walk away now?” “You won’t,” he said. “You’re already calculating how to use this.” He wasn’t wrong. That annoyed me. “You think you’re teaching me,” I said. “But you’re showing me where you’re exposed.” He smiled. “That’s the fun part.” I crossed my arms. “Your plan with Amy. With Daniel. Where does this fit?” His expression hardened. “That part isn’t yours yet.” “I won’t wait forever,” I warned. “You will,” he said calmly. “Because you want to beat me.” I met his gaze. “And you think I can’t.” “I think,” he said, “that when you try, you’ll reveal yourself.” We stood there, music pounding around us, wolves laughing, women moving like shadows. I had thought I understood wickedness. I had thought I was prepared. I wasn’t. But I adapted quickly. “Fine,” I said at last. “I’ll earn it.” Elias nodded. “Good.” As we turned to leave, I took one last look at the room. At the power disguised as pleasure.

## Chapter 422 Deliberate Delay

### CLARA

The drive back from the warehouse stayed quiet longer than it should have. Elias drove with one hand on the wheel, relaxed, like he hadn’t just peeled back a layer of the world that most wolves pretended didn’t exist. I watched the road instead of him, counting turns, memorizing time, doing what I always did when I felt unsettled. Control came from knowing details. “You’re thinking too loudly,” he said after a while. “I’m thinking efficiently,” I replied. He glanced at me. “Same thing, different intention.” I shifted in my seat. “You brought me there to intimidate me.” “I brought you there to correct your assumptions,” he said. “You believed you were dealing with politics. You’re dealing with strategy.” “And people,” I said. “You forgot that part.” “No,” he replied. “I priced it.” I let out a short breath. “You expect me to work with that.” “I expect you to understand it,” he said. “Whether you approve is irrelevant.” The city lights began to reappear in the distance. That meant we were close. That meant this conversation was ending whether I liked it or not. “You still haven’t told me what you plan to do next,” I said. “And you still haven’t earned that answer,” Elias replied calmly. I turned to him. “I walked into your den. I didn’t flinch. I didn’t threaten exposure. I didn’t run. What more do you want?” He slowed at a traffic light. “I want to see if you can sit on information without rushing to use it.” “That’s not a test,” I said. “That’s delay.” “It’s discipline,” he corrected. “Most wolves fail it.” I watched his face carefully. He wasn’t lying. Not fully. He believed in what he was doing. That belief made him dangerous. “You don’t trust me,” I said. “I trust your ambition,” he repeated. “I don’t trust your direction.” I smiled slightly. “That’s fair. I don’t trust yours either.” He laughed once, quiet. “Good. Mutual suspicion keeps things honest.” When we reached the drop-off point, he parked but didn’t get out. “You’ll hear from me,” he said. “When there’s something worth hearing.” “And if I decide I’m done waiting?” I asked. He met my eyes. “Then you’ll make a mistake.” I opened the door. “We’ll see.” I stepped out and shut it behind me, watching his car disappear down the road. Only when it was gone I allow my shoulders to relax. The warehouse stayed with me longer than I wanted it to. The contracts. The women. The way wolves from rival territories sat side by side because power made rules flexible. Elias wasn’t just playing politics. He was

building a network that fed on silence and debt. And he thought I was a piece inside it. Back at the house, Mark was already asleep. I moved quietly, slipping out of my coat, washing my hands longer than necessary. When I caught my reflection in the mirror, I barely recognized the calm on my face. I wasn't disturbed because Elias shocked me. I was disturbed because I understood him. The next few days passed carefully. I adjusted nothing outwardly. Same routines. Same timing. Same polite engagement. Amy remained distant but observant. Daniel stayed busy. Wolves moved around them like gravity still held. I paid attention. At Carter Holdings, I stayed visible but harmless. I asked questions that sounded supportive. I followed up on minor tasks quickly. I thanked people too often. Gratitude disarmed suspicion. Mark noticed. He mentioned it one evening while we ate. "You've been busy," he said. "I like to be useful," I replied. He nodded. "It suits you." That approval mattered. Not emotionally. Structurally. Mark trusted what he saw, not what he suspected. Later that night, my phone vibrated. Unknown number. E: Did you learn anything? I typed back slowly. C: Enough to know you're holding back. The reply came almost instantly. E: Smart wolves don't rush. C: Smart wolves don't get used. There was a pause this time. E: Careful, I smiled at the screen. C: I am. The next meeting came a week later. This time, he didn't drive. He sent coordinates. I arrived alone. It wasn't the warehouse. It was smaller. Cleaner. A private office above a closed storefront. No music. No witnesses. Elias stood by the window when I entered. "You came," he said. "I always do," I replied. "That's why you called." He turned. "You wanted more truth." "I wanted the rest of it." He gestured to a chair. "Sit." I didn't. He watched me for a moment, then nodded slightly. "You're wondering how all of this connects to Amy." "Yes," I said. "And to Daniel." "And to the North," he added. "Stop circling," I said. "Say it." He folded his arms. "What's happening to them isn't about destruction. It's about repositioning."

"Whose?" I asked. "Everyone's," he replied. "The North sits too comfortably. Too confident. Too united." "And you want to fracture that," I said. "I want to remind them they're not untouchable," he replied. "And me?" I asked. "Where do I fit?" He studied me carefully. "You're proximity. You're access. You're timing." I let that settle. "That's all?" "For now," he said. I stepped closer. "You keep saying that. It's starting to sound like avoidance." "You think I owe you everything," he said. "I think you can't afford to underestimate me," I replied. Silence filled the room. Finally, he spoke. "There's a shipment coming." I stayed still. "What kind?" "One that will force Daniel into a position he can't control quietly," he said. "And Amy?" I asked. His jaw tightened slightly. "Amy is a variable." That answer told me more than he intended. "You're going to use her," I said. "I'm going to let the system use her," he replied. "She's in the way." I laughed softly. "You don't understand her." "And you do?" he challenged. "I understand survival," I said. "And she's better at it than you think." He looked amused. "Then why are you here?" Because I needed to know how far you'd go, I thought.

## Chapter 423 Weakness Of A Wolf

### AMY

I woke to the sound of movement that wasn't my own. For a few seconds, I stayed still, eyes closed, listening. The room was quiet but not empty. There was a soft rustle near the window, the faint clink of metal against porcelain. Someone was there. I opened my eyes. The room was larger than the last place they kept me. Clean. White walls, low lighting, thick curtains pulled back just enough to let in morning light. A bed that didn't feel temporary. No restraints. No guards. in sight. A woman stood near a small table, arranging a tray. She turned when she noticed me watching her. "You're awake," she said calmly. I sat up slowly, my body tense but steady. "Who are you?" She gave a small bow, respectful but not

submissive. "My name is Mara. I'll be attending to you while you're here." The words landed heavier than they should have. "Attending to me," I repeated. "Yes," she said. "Your meals, your comfort, anything you need within the rules I've been given." I looked around again. "How long am I here?" She paused, choosing her words carefully. "I wasn't told a timeline." That answer told me more than a direct one would have. I swung my legs over the side of the bed. "Am I allowed to leave this room?" "You can move around this floor," she replied. "There are limits beyond that." "And if I refuse to cooperate?" I asked. Her face stayed neutral. "You're not being punished. You're being kept." I let out a slow breath. This wasn't a cell. It was containment. Mara placed the tray on the table and stepped back. "You should eat." I glanced at the food. It was warm. Real. Thoughtfully prepared. "You're not afraid of poisoning me?" I asked. She met my gaze. "That's not the goal." "What is the goal?" I pressed. She hesitated, then shook her head. "I don't know. I only know my role." That made her either honest or well-trained. I took a bite anyway. Hunger won. The food tasted normal, which somehow made everything worse. "So," I said between bites, "you work for the man who brought me here." "Yes." "My father," I said flatly. Her eyes flickered, just slightly. "That's not how he refers to himself." I stopped eating. "Does he plan to see me?" I asked. "Yes," she said. "When the time is right." "And until then?" "Until then, you rest." I laughed quietly. "That's generous." She didn't react. After she left, I stood up and walked the room slowly, testing the edges. The door opened. The hallway outside was empty but monitored. No visible cameras, but I could feel them. Wolves noticed patterns. So

did I. They weren't hurting me. They were waiting. That realization settled in my chest like weight. I wasn't in danger right now, but I also wasn't free. Every kindness had a purpose. Every comfort was leverage. Later that day, my father came. No warning. No announcement. He walked in like he belonged there, like this was his house and I was a guest who had overstayed her welcome. "You look well," he said. I stood straight. "You look unchanged." He smiled. "Careful." "Why am I here?" I asked. He circled the room slowly. "Because you're valuable." "To you?" I asked. "Or to what you're planning?" He stopped in front of me. "Both." "You could have killed me," I said. "Yes." "But you didn't." "No." "Why?" He studied my face. "Because you're more useful alive." I nodded. "At least you're honest." He leaned closer. "Don't confuse honesty with mercy." "I won't," I replied. "I learned that early." His expression hardened for a moment, then smoothed. "You were weak then." "And you were wrong," I said. Silence stretched between us. "You're not being harmed," he said finally. "As long as you stay where you are." "And if I don't?" I asked. "That would complicate things." "For me," I said. "For everyone," he corrected. After he left, I sat back on the bed and stared at the wall. I thought of Daniel. Of the North. Of Clara. The idea hit me suddenly, sharp and unwelcome. The silence here was deliberate. No shouting. No fear-driven chaos. Just space to think, which was far more dangerous. My father wanted my mind active, not broken. He wanted calculation, not resistance. I replayed every recent decision I had made. Letting Clara close. Trusting access over distance. Believing I could control the board just by watching it. The mistake wasn't kindness. It was underestimating how many people were willing to trade morality for advantage. I wondered what Daniel was doing now. Whether he was tearing the North apart looking for me or holding it together by force of will alone. I knew him well enough to guess the answer was both.

Chapter 424 Another Pup For The Alpha

AMY

I pressed my palm to my chest, grounding myself. Fear was there, but it wasn't winning. If my father thought keeping me comfortable would make me compliant, he was wrong. Comfort only gave me time.

Time to observe routines. Time to study people like Mara. Time to understand the structure of this place. And time, I had learned, was the most dangerous weapon of all. I woke to a heat that felt like it had settled into my bones. My forehead burned against the pillow, and each movement made my limbs ache. "Mara..." My voice was hoarse, weak. She appeared instantly, her hands steadying me. "Amy, you're burning up. Don't try to move too fast." "I feel... awful," I whispered, shivering despite the heat. "Something's wrong." She pressed a cool hand to my forehead. "I know. Stay with me. I've already called the doctor. He's on his way." I tried to sit up, but the room tilted. "Where...?" I croaked. "You're in the penthouse suite. Skyscraper's top floor. You need to rest. Trust me." "I... I feel sick... my wolf..." I faltered. My wolf's presence, normally coiled around my senses, trembled alongside my fever. Mara's fingers brushed my cheek. "I can feel her. She's as restless as you are. It's okay. Just breathe." Minutes later, a knock sounded, and a calm voice called, "Amy? I'm here to check you." The doctor stepped in, small black bag in hand. His eyes scanned me. "High fever," he said. "We'll take blood and run tests. I need you to be calm." I tried to steady myself. "Will... will it hurt?" "Just a little prick," he said, crouching beside me. "I'll guide you. Mara, hold her hand." Mara squeezed mine, murmuring, "We're right here, Amy. You can do this." The doctor took my blood, running through instructions calmly. "You've been under stress. Fever is a reaction, but we need to check for other causes. Stay hydrated, rest, and have no sudden movements." I nodded weakly, closing my eyes. Every memory of my previous pregnancy, every ache of loss, returned in a wave. My wolf growled low in concern, echoing my own unease. When he, he stepped back. "Results will take a short while. I'll be back." I sank into the pillows, Mara's presence anchoring me, but my mind raced. The skyscraper felt enormous, each glass wall reflecting my panic back at me. I had survived trauma before, but now, isolated and feverish, I felt vulnerable in a way I hadn't anticipated. Mara stroked my hair. "Amy, you're not alone. We'll handle this. Just rest." Hours passed slowly. Then, the doctor returned, and Mara was at my side, tension etched in her face. He spoke softly, clearly aware of my state. "Amy, you're pregnant." The words hit me like a weight. I froze, my wolf stiffening with alertness. "Pregnant...?" I whispered, barely believing it.

"Yes," he confirmed gently. "Your body shows early signs. I ran additional tests to be certain. You're pregnant." My mind spun. Fear, shock, disbelief, even a faint spark of hope—every emotion collided. "I... I don't know what to feel," I admitted. "After... after losing my last child..." Mara squeezed my hand. "It's okay. You're safe here. We'll make sure you're protected." My wolf bristled at the reminder of danger, and I felt a physical tension in my chest. "Safe... but for how long?" I murmured. "I don't even know where Elias or whoever... who's behind my kidnapping is. How can I protect..." "Right now, you rest," the doctor interrupted, calm and firm. "You cannot think about danger. Your body needs time to adjust. Stress could affect the pregnancy." I swallowed, trying to steady my racing heart. "I... I thought I could handle this... but..." My voice broke. "You can," Mara said softly. "And your wolf can too. Focus on small steps. Rest. Hydrate. Let your body settle." I leaned back, closing my eyes again. The fever still burned, but knowing that I carried life inside me made everything sharper, heavier. The skyscraper, the city outside, Mara's voice—it all felt distant, filtered through pain and anticipation. "I... I feel scared," I admitted, whispering more to myself than anyone. "I don't know if I can do this... not after losing..." "You can," the doctor said again, softly, but with authority. "Your body has endured. Your mind has endured. Now focus on the present. The rest we will manage together." Mara placed her hand over mine, still warm and steady. "We're not leaving you alone, Amy. You're not alone in this." I exhaled shakily, trying to absorb her words. My wolf, still alert, relaxed fractionally, curling alongside me in tentative acceptance. The tension ebbed slightly, replaced by cautious awareness. "You'll need to stay hydrated," the doctor added. "I'll return daily for tests, monitoring, and any adjustments. For now, rest.

Let your wolf and your body recover.” I nodded, weakly. “I... okay... I’ll try.” Mara kissed my forehead lightly. “Good. You’re strong. Amy. You’ve survived worse. We’ll face the rest together.” I lay back, the skyscraper looming outside like a silent guardian. The glass walls reflected nothing but my fevered face, my worried eyes, my trembling wolf coiled beside me, The morning light felt distant, but for the first time in hours, I felt a fragile anchor in the certainty of being protected. Yet the thought of the pregnancy, the danger still surrounding me, and the trauma of the past pressed in relentlessly. I didn’t know what the future held, but I understood one thing: I had to survive. For myself, for my wolf, for the life inside me, and for the hope that one day, I would return to the people I loved. I closed my eyes and exhaled, focusing on each small breath. Each heartbeat was a reminder of life, of resilience. And though fear hovered over me like a storm cloud, I held onto that fragile certainty. I had endured trauma before. I would endure this. And for the first time, the life growing inside me made survival feel both heavier and more urgent.

Chapter 425 She Is Gone Forever

DANIEL

I woke up before dawn, the weight of Amy’s disappearance pressing on me like it never had before. Days had passed without a single word from her, and Cole hadn’t reported in for days. That in itself was alarming. He had always been reliable. If even Cole had gone dark, I knew this was no ordinary situation. I called in my senior team—PAC operatives, rank coders, anyone I could trust. “Morning,” I said, trying to sound composed. “We’ve lost contact with Cole. That’s critical. I want updates on every lead we’ve had over the last week. Go over every location she could have been taken. I want details, not summaries.” One of the operatives, Lydia, spoke first. “Sir, all locations we tracked show no recent activity. Any surveillance of potential warehouses or safe houses came up clean. No movements linked to her or any known associates.” I pinched the bridge of my nose. “So we’re starting over. Every route she might have taken. Every known contact. Check hotels, transport, private docks, any place she could have been moved.” Another operative, Marlon, chimed in. “Sir, we can’t rule out internal networks. Whoever has her may have insider access. Digital channels show nothing, so it could be someone using secure physical routes.” “Exactly,” I said, pacing. “We’re looking for someone organized. Someone who knows how we operate and can avoid leaving a trace. That means she isn’t just kidnapped—she’s being controlled, and whoever’s behind this knows exactly what they’re doing.” I spent hours reviewing camera logs, street patrols, and warehouse inspections. Every potential lead seemed to vanish before I could act. I checked the drones again, sending them to the outskirts of the city, scanning abandoned districts and industrial areas. Nothing. “Sir,” Lydia said, hesitating. “We did pick up a movement on one route near the north docks. Nothing confirmed, but it’s unusual. Could be a transport route.” I leaned over the map. “Details?” She tapped the screen. “Small vehicles moving at odd hours, unregistered plates. Could be unrelated. Could be her.” I frowned. “We’ll check it. Gather a team, move in discreetly. But stay alert. Whoever has her won’t leave her unguarded.” We were divided into teams. I took the north perimeter, coordinating via earpiece with the others. Every step I took, I imagined Amy somewhere out there, scared and alone. My instincts screamed at me, but I had to stay methodical. Hours later, I reached the northern docks. The streets were empty, shadows stretching across the warehouses. I saw a faint light in one of the units. Carefully, I approached, scanning for any sign of life. The building looked abandoned, but there was activity inside. I whispered into my carpiece. “Team, any visuals?”

“Negative, sir,” Lydia replied. “Infrared shows movement, but nothing identifiable.” I took a deep breath. Every instinct told me Amy was near, but I didn’t know for sure. I moved closer, checking doors and windows. Inside, crates were stacked high, casting long shadows. I could hear muffled noises, but nothing I could identify. I motioned for the team to split. “Sweep quietly. Look for any sign of her. We cannot risk a confrontation if she’s here.” Minutes stretched on. Each hallway, each room, each shadow was empty. The faint noises I had heard turned out to be rodents or settling metal.

“Sir,” Marlon said over comms, “we’ve got nothing. No one here.” I ran my hand through my hair. “Then this is another dead end. Whoever has her is staying one step ahead. We can’t force them. Not without putting her at risk.” I stepped outside for a moment, trying to gather my thoughts. Cole missing, Amy still unaccounted for, and every lead evaporating before it became actionable. The frustration and fear were heavy. I had to remain calm, for her and for everyone else relying on me. “We need to map every potential hideout within a fifty-mile radius,” I said into my comms. “Check old warehouses, abandoned corporate buildings, and private residences. Every place she could be hidden without digital surveillance. Start compiling everything. I want schedules, security logs, anyone with access, and anyone unusually spotted around these areas.” “Yes, sir,” Lydia replied. Hours passed in tense silence. Every piece of intel was cross-checked, every possible lead investigated. My frustration built with every dead end, every trace that led nowhere. Amy’s absence wasn’t just a personal torment—it was a test of my capacity to act decisively under pressure. Finally, I gathered the team. “We’ve reached a standstill for now. No direct sightings, no confirmed locations. We keep our eyes on every possible escape route. Anyone moving suspiciously, we track. We wait for a mistake from the captors, or for her to leave a clue. That’s how we’ll find her.” Marlon looked grim. “Sir, that could take time. Hours, days.” “I know,” I said. “But we have no other choice. I won’t gamble with her life. We wait, but we stay sharp. No misstep. No false assumptions. She’s out there, and we will find her.” As night fell, I monitored the city from the operations center. Every streetlight, every alley, every rooftop was under scrutiny. The drones flew silently above, the cameras feeding me a constant stream of images. The city stretched beneath me like a map of shadows and lights, but I saw nothing. Not her. Not a sign. I slumped in my chair briefly. “We can’t give up. Not now. She needs us.” “Sir.” Lydia said gently, “we’ll keep going. Every lead, every corner. We won’t stop until we have her.” I nodded. “Good. Keep me updated. Every anomaly, every unknown vehicle, every unusual pattern. We pick up anything, and we move immediately.” Hours passed. The screens were alive with data, but each lead ended in nothing. Each potential trace evaporated. My team worked tirelessly, but Amy remained invisible to every effort we made. I leaned back in my chair, exhausted but focused. Dead ends weren’t defeat—they were just part of the process. Somewhere out there, Amy was waiting, and I had to find her. No matter how long it took, no matter how many wrong turns we encountered, I would bring her back. Because she was everything.

Chapter 426 He Will Not Allow That

AMY

I woke up in pain. It wasn’t sharp. It was tense and spreading, like my body had decided to shut things down one piece at a time. My head throbbed. My chest felt tight. My skin burned, then went cold, then burned again. I tried to sit up and failed. My arms shook under my own weight. “Amy,” Mara called out quickly. Mara was at my side before I could turn my head. Her hands were steady, but her eyes were not. She pressed her palm against my forehead and hissed under her breath. “You’re burning again,” she said. “Don’t move.” “I didn’t plan to,” I said, but my voice came out weak. It annoyed me more than the

pain. She reached for a glass of water, slid her arm behind my shoulders, and helped me drink. I swallowed twice before nausea pushed back. "Slow," she said. "Please." I closed my eyes and breathed through it. My wolf stirred under my skin, restless and off-balance. She wasn't pushing to heal. She felt sick too. That scared me more than the fever. "This is worse," I said quietly. Mara didn't argue. She stood and moved toward the door. "I'm calling the doctor," she said. "Now." He arrived faster than before. Two guards came with him this time. They stayed near the door, eyes on everything, hands loose but ready. I noticed that detail even through the haze. The doctor checked my vitals without wasting time. He listened to my heart, checked my eyes, pressed along my abdomen. His jaw tightened. "How long has it been like this?" he asked Mara. "She spiked again during the night," she said. "She didn't sleep." He nodded once and turned to me. "Amy," he said, "I need you to answer clearly. Are you dizzy?" "Yes." "Nausea?" "Yes." "Pain?" "Everywhere." He exhaled slowly. "That's not an answer I like," he said. "Then ask better questions," I replied. Mara shot me a look. The doctor didn't react. He stepped back and folded his arms. "You are not stabilizing," he said. "Your body is fighting something it can't handle in this environment." "Say it plainly," I said. "I don't need comfort." He hesitated, then nodded. "If you stay here, you will get worse," he said. "Your wolf is suppressed. Your recovery is compromised. You need proper treatment." I stared at him. "You mean a hospital." "Yes." I let out a short breath. "They won't allow that." "They will," he said. "They've already approved a transfer." That got my attention. "Approved?" I asked. "Since when do I get approvals?" "Since your condition became a liability," he said evenly. Mara looked away. "Where," I asked. "Another facility," he said. "Controlled. Secure. Medical-grade." "Still a cage," I said. "Yes," he replied. "But one that would get you healed." I pushed myself up despite the dizziness. Mara moved to stop me, then froze when I raised my hand. "Who decided this?" I asked. "The same person who decided you couldn't leave in the first place," he said. "I don't speak to them directly. Orders come down." He Will Not Allow That I nodded slowly. My head swam, but my thoughts sharpened.

"When," I asked. "Today," he said. "As soon as you're cleared for transport." "And if I refuse?" He met my eyes. "You don't have that option." Mara's hands clenched at her sides. I leaned back against the pillows. My chest hurts. My wolf shifted again, uneasy, weak. I hated the feeling. I hated being moved like an object. But I also knew the truth. I was losing ground. "Prepare me," I said. The doctor nodded once. "I'll need more bloodwork before we go." "Do it," I said. He turned to Mara. "Stay with her." "I will," she said immediately. The needle went into my arm. I watched the vial fill. My vision blurred halfway through. "You're fading," Mara said softly. "I'm still here," I replied. "Barely," she said. After the doctor left, the room went quiet again. Too quiet. I focused on my breathing, counting each one to keep my mind anchored. "They're moving you because they're afraid," Mara said after a while. "Of me?" I asked. "Of what happens if you die on their watch," she said. I closed my eyes. "That won't save them," I said. "No," she agreed. "It won't." Time passed in fragments. Someone changed my clothes. Someone adjusted the IV. The guards rotated. The room felt smaller with every hour. When the doctor returned, his face was more serious than before. "We're moving you now," he said. "Your temperature is unstable." "Am I in danger?" I asked. "Yes," he said. "Not immediately. But close enough." Mara helped me sit up. The world tilted. My wolf whimpered, low and weak. "I don't like this," I whispered. "I know," Mara said. "I'm here." They put me on a stretcher. The straps were firm but not cruel. I noted that too. Everything about this was controlled, measured. They didn't want marks. They didn't want witnesses. As they rolled me toward the elevator, I stared at the ceiling. I tried to picture Daniel. I couldn't feel him. The bond was there, faint and stretched thin, like a signal breaking apart. He didn't know I was sick. That thought hurt more than the fever. The elevator doors opened. Cold air hit my face. The building

hummed around us. High above the ground, sealed away from the city. The doctor leaned over me as we waited. "You're strong," he said. "But strength won't fix this alone." "I'm aware," I said. He hesitated, then lowered his voice. "There's something else," he said. I turned my head slightly. "Say it." "Your condition complicates everything," he said. "What they're doing. How long they can keep you. The risk." "Stop circling," I snapped. He held my gaze. "You are pregnant." The words landed and stayed there. I didn't speak. I didn't move. My wolf went completely still. "No," I said finally. "Check again." "We did," he said. "Twice. Like it or not, you have to accept that you are pregnant."

## Chapter 427 Take The Pup Away

AMY

My chest tightened. My hands shook against the straps. "That's not possible," I said. "Not after" He didn't interrupt. That made it worse. I closed my eyes. Images surfaced without permission. Blood. Pain. The hospital room. The way my body had failed me before. "I can't," I whispered. "I can't do this again. Somehow I had hoped that the pregnancy result would be a mistake but clearly, it isn't." Mara grabbed my hand. "Amy." "I almost died," I said. "You know that." "I know," she said, voice breaking. "But you're alive now." "That didn't save the child," I said. The doctor straightened. "This is exactly why you're being Immediate monitoring." I laughed once, short and empty. moved," he said. "You need specialized care. "So now I'm valuable," I said. "Not because I'm Amy. Because of what I'm carrying." He didn't deny it. The elevator doors opened. They rolled me inside. As the doors closed, I stared at the ceiling again, my body shaking, my mind racing. I didn't know who was behind this. I didn't know where they were taking me. I didn't know how long I would survive this place. But I knew one thing clearly. They weren't letting me go. And now, they had even more reason to keep me. I woke up to voices I didn't recognize. They were low and careful, like people trying not to wake someone who was already fragile. My body felt heavy, slow to respond. My head hurt, but not as badly as before. The fever had eased, leaving behind a dull weakness that made even breathing feel like work. Away "She's waking," one of them said. I opened my eyes. White ceiling. Bright lights. Different from the room I had been in before. Cleaner Wider. Machines lined one wall, quiet but active. I was still trapped. Just relocated. Mara was there again. She was sitting close, her posture alert. "You're awake," she said quickly. "Good. That's good." "How long?" I asked. "Almost a day," she said. "You were moved safely." Safely. I swallowed. "Where am I?" I asked. "A medical wing," she said. "Still under the same control." Figures. I tried to sit up. My stomach tightened sharply, enough to make me gasp. "Don't," Mara said, reaching for me. "Please." I lay back down, my heart racing. "That's new," I muttered. "Yes," she said quietly. "That's why the doctor is coming back." As if summoned, the door opened. The same doctor from before stepped in, joined by another man I didn't know. This one looked older, calmer, with the kind of expression that didn't soften bad news. "How do you feel?" the first doctor asked. "Tired," I said. "Sick. Angry." He nodded. "The last two are expected." The older man stepped closer. "Amy, I'm Dr. Kessler," he said. "I specialize in high-risk cases." I didn't like the sound of that. "Say what you need to say," I told him. "I don't have patience for buildup." He studied me for a moment, then nodded. "Your pregnancy is progressing faster than it should," he said. I stared at him. "That's not possible," I said. "That doesn't happen." "It does," he replied calmly. "In werewolves, especially under stress." "How fast," I asked.

"Enough that your body is struggling to keep up," he said. "That explains the fever, the weakness, the instability in your wolf." Mara's hand tightened around mine. "Is the baby-" I stopped myself. My throat closed. "The fetus is viable," he said. "Strong, actually. That's part of the problem." I laughed softly,

without humor. "So my body is failing again," I scoffed. "No," he said firmly. "But there are risks." "What kind of risks?" I asked. He didn't dodge it. "Preterm labor. Organ stress. Hemorrhage. If unmanaged, yes, death is a possibility." Mara sucked in a breath. I felt numb. "And you're telling me this, why?" I asked. "So I can panic?" "So you can understand why you're being monitored so closely," he said. "And why your captors are suddenly invested in keeping you alive." That landed. "They need me to be functional," I said. "Not free. Just alive." "Yes," he said. I turned my head away, blinking hard. "Daniel doesn't know," I said quietly. Mara didn't answer. That was answer enough. The doctor adjusted something on the machine beside me. "We're doing everything we can to stabilize you," he said. "Medication. Rest. Controlled environment." "And if that's not enough?" I asked. "Then we adapt," he said. "But you need to cooperate." Away I looked back at him. "You mean behave." He didn't deny it. After they left, the room felt too quiet again. I stared at the wall, listening to the steady sound of the machines. My wolf shifted weakly. She was restless, confused, protective in a way that hurt. "This is wrong." I whispered. Mara leaned closer. "I know." "They're watching me," I said. "Waiting to see if I break." "Yes," she said. "Especially now." The Southern Alpha. I didn't have proof, but I felt his presence in every careful decision, every delay. He didn't need to touch me to cause damage. All he had to do was wait. "I miss him," I said suddenly. Mara didn't pretend not to know who I meant. "He's looking for you," she said. "You don't know that," I replied. "I do," she said firmly. "Men like alpha Daniel don't stop." I closed my eyes. "I hope he's okay," I said. "I hope this isn't destroying him." Mara didn't speak. Her silence scared me more than reassurance would have. Hours passed. Nurses came and went. They checked my vitals, asked questions, and adjusted drips. No one was cruel. That almost made it worse. Later, the doctor returned alone. "You should know," he said, pulling a chair closer, "your pregnancy advancing this way may not be natural." I opened my eyes slowly. "Meaning?" "Stress accelerates development," he said. "So does certain genetic pairing. And sometimes external influence." I stared at him. "You think this is being pushed." "I think someone benefits if your condition becomes urgent," he said carefully. "And if I don't survive," I said. He held my gaze. "That would destabilize more than one power structure." I laughed bitterly. "So I'm just a leverage." "Yes," he said.

## Chapter 428 Names Don't Matter

### CLARA

I kept my head down as I walked through the side entrance of the club. No one called me Clara here. Names didn't matter in this place anyway. I was just a random person tonight. That was the name Elias had given me when he first brought me in, said it fit the way I looked at people, like I was always measuring something. He laughed when he said it, like it was a joke. I didn't laugh back. The club was already alive. Music pulsed through the floor, low enough to feel but not loud enough to draw attention from outside. Men sat in private booths and shadowed corners, their voices controlled. their movements deliberate. Wolves from different territories, just like I had seen before. Expensive clothes. Expensive watches. Too much confidence. I moved like I belonged. That was the trick. Not standing out. Not hesitating. Acting like this place was routine, boring even. Elias had taught me that much. Fear drew attention. Curiosity did too. Indifference was safer. A woman brushed past me, her eyes lowered. She didn't look injured. None of them did. That was the point. Clean faces. Controlled bodies. Obedience without visible force. I watched her disappear behind a curtain and forced myself not to follow with my eyes. Debt, Elias had said. D-E-B-T. That was the word they used here. Not chains. Not cages. Just debt. I stopped near the bar and leaned my elbows against the counter. The bartender glanced at me. "Working or watching?" he asked quietly. "Waiting," I said. He nodded once and slid me a glass of water

without asking. I took a sip and let my gaze drift, slow and careless. Two women stood near the back wall, pretending to laugh at something a man said. I watched their hands. One of them fidgeted with the seam of her dress. The other kept glancing toward the exit. Small things. Easy to miss if you weren't looking. "How long have you been here?" I asked the bartender. He shrugged. "Long enough." "Ever see anyone leave?" I asked. He gave me a look, "Everyone leaves eventually." "Paid off?" I asked. "Or transferred," he replied. That wasn't an answer. It told me enough. Elias wasn't in the main room. He never was. He liked control from a distance. I felt him before I saw him, the way wolves always did. His presence pressed in from the upper level, steady and confident. I didn't look up. A hand touched my arm. Light. Careful. "You're early," a woman said, I turned. She was one of the attendants, dressed like the others but standing straighter. Older too. Smarter eyes. "I like to observe," I said. She smiled faintly. "That can be dangerous." "I've been told," I replied. She studied me for a moment, then leaned closer. "If you're looking for something specific, don't." "Why?" I asked. "Because questions cost more than money here," she said quietly. "And you don't look like someone who enjoys paying." Before I could respond, she stepped away, already disappearing into the crowd. I exhaled slowly. So they watched each other. Not just the women. Everyone. I drifted toward the hallway leading deeper into the building. Two guards stood there. Wolves. Big. Still. "I need to check the schedule," I said casually. "Elias asked." One of them tilted his head. "Which Elias?" I met his gaze without blinking. "The one who signs your pay." That did it. They stepped aside. The back rooms were quieter. Offices. Storage. Locked doors with keypads and biometric scanners. This was where the real control lived. I walked slowly, pretending to scroll through my phone, memorizing layouts, counting cameras. A door opened ahead of me. "Power."

I looked up. Elias stood there, jacket off, sleeves rolled up. "You're roaming," he said. Not a question. "Learning." I replied. "You said I should." "I said you should blend," he corrected. "I am," I said calmly. "No one's stopped me yet." His eyes searched my face. I kept my expression neutral. "You look comfortable," he said. "I adapt," I replied. He smiled faintly. "Good. Comfort keeps people alive here." "Does it?" I asked. He stepped closer. "As long as they remember their place and as long as you keep up with your fake name." I nodded, like that made sense. He gestured for me to follow him into the office. The door closed behind us. "You're curious," he said, pouring himself a drink. "I like to understand systems," I replied. "Systems are built on leverage," he said. "Not understanding." "And debt," I added lightly. His eyes flicked to mine. "Yes. Debt." "Who manages it?" I asked. "Accountants," he said. "Lawyers. Enforcers." "And you," I said. "I manage people," he corrected. I nodded again, filing it away. "What happens when someone can't pay?" I asked. "They renegotiate," he said. "And if they refuse?" I pressed. His smile vanished. "Then they're not here anymore." "Transferred," I said, remembering the bartender's words. "Exactly," he replied. I leaned back in the chair, crossing my legs. "You run a tight operation." "I have to," he said. "Everyone wants a piece." "Even the owner?" I asked, That got a reaction. Subtle. His jaw tightened. "You're not ready for that," he said. "I'm learning fast," I replied. He studied me for a long moment, then laughed softly. "Careful, Power. Ambition burns people here. "I'm not ambitious," I said. "I'm cautious." He raised his glass. "Those are often the same thing." When I left the office, my pulse was steady. That mattered. Panic made mistakes. I replayed everything in my head as I walked back through the club. The warnings. The silence. The way the women moved like they were always listening. This place wasn't just about debt. It was about containment. Breaking people down until compliance felt like relief. I caught sight of the woman who had warned me earlier. Our eyes met briefly. She looked away first. That confirmed it. By the time I stepped back into the night air, I had answers and more questions than before.

## Chapter 429 Betrayal

### MARK

I didn't wake up that morning thinking I was about to betray anyone. That mattered to me, even if it shouldn't have. Intent always mattered more than outcome in my head. If I could convince myself that what I was doing made sense, then the rest would follow. That was how I'd survived this long—by turning doubt into planning and planning into purpose. The North had been unstable for weeks. Anyone with eyes could see it. Daniel was still standing, still leading, but the cracks were there. Missed meetings. Delayed responses. Wolves whispering instead of asking. Amy's absence had done more damage than anyone wanted to admit. A pack could endure violence. It could endure loss. What it struggled with was uncertainty. That was the opening. I didn't meet the wolves at any official location. No pack hall. No offices. I chose a quiet lodge on the outskirts of Northern land, one used mostly by traveling sentinels and traders. Neutral ground. No records. No attention. I arrived early. I always did. The room smelled of wood polish and old leather. A round table sat at the center, already set with drinks. No one trusted shared food in meetings like this. Drinks were safer. Slower. They arrived one by one. Ronan first. Older. Scarred. A wolf who had seen three leadership cycles and survived all of them. Then Kael, younger, sharper, too ambitious to hide it well. Two others followed—pack adjacent, not alphas, but influential enough to matter. RK wolves. Rank keepers. The kind who didn't lead openly but decided who could. "Mark," Ronan said, nodding as he sat. "You asked for discretion." "I did," I replied. "And I appreciate you coming." Kael leaned back in his chair. "You don't call meetings like this unless you think something is about to fall." "I think something already has," I said calmly. They watched me closely. Wolves always did. They listened for confidence, not truth. "I'm not here to undermine Daniel," I continued. "Not directly." Ronan's mouth twitched. "There's no indirect version of that." "There is," I said. "There's preparation." I let that settle. "The pack is uneasy," I said. "You all feel it. Amy's gone. Leadership is stretched. Daniel is holding the line, but he's doing it alone." "He chose that," Kael said. "Yes," I replied. "And that's the problem." Silence followed. Not disagreement. Consideration. "I'm not suggesting rebellion," I said. "I'm suggesting readiness. If Daniel stumbles, the pack can't afford chaos." "And you think you're the solution?" one of the others asked. I didn't bristle. That would have been a mistake. "I think I'm an option," I said. "One the pack already knows. One that doesn't threaten the structure but strengthens it." Ronan studied me. "You want the pack." "I want to protect it," I corrected. "From tearing itself apart." Kael snorted. "By taking it." "By fusing it," I said. "By making it whole again." That got their attention.

"The North doesn't need purity right now," I continued. "It needs stability. Adaptation. Strength that can absorb pressure without cracking." "And Daniel can't do that?" Ronan asked. I paused just long enough. "Not alone." That was the truth, as far as I saw it. "He's reacting," I said. "Every move he makes now is defensive. Investigations. Restrictions. Surveillance. That keeps wolves in line, but it doesn't inspire them." Kael leaned forward. "And you would?" "I would listen," I said. "I already do." That was the part I believed most. I listened. I paid attention. I remembered names. I showed up. Daniel ruled. I connected. One of them asked, "What about Amy?" The room tightened. "She's not gone forever," I said. "But until she returns, the pack needs balance." Ronan frowned. "And if she comes back?" "Then the pack will already be steady," I replied. "No damage done? That sounded reasonable. Too reasonable. I could hear it even as I said it, but I ignored the discomfort. Kael tilted his head. "You're assuming Daniel will step aside." "I'm assuming the pack will choose continuity," I said. "If the alternative is fracture. They exchanged looks. Wolves always did that when they were weighing risk.

Ronan finally said, "You're asking us to watch, Not act." "For now," I agreed. "To be ready." "And if Daniel doesn't crumble?" Kael asked. "Then nothing changes," I said. "And no one gets hurt." That was the lie I told myself. The meeting ended without promises. That was fine. Promises were dangerous. What I needed was attention. Awareness. The sense that there were eyes on Daniel other than mine. As they left, Ronan stopped beside me. "You think you're being sensible." "I am," I said. He looked at me for a long moment. "Just make sure you're not confusing patience with entitlement." After they were gone, I sat alone for a while. I replayed every word. Every reaction. No outright rejection. No alarms raised. That meant progress. I told myself I wasn't greedy. That this wasn't about power. It was worth. About proving I wasn't just a shadow in someone else's story. Daniel had strength. Amy had a presence. I had endurance. That counted for something. When I finally left the lodge, the sky was already darkening. I felt calm. Focused. Certain that I was doing what had to be done before things got worse. I didn't see delusion. I saw inevitability. And that, I told myself, was the difference between ambition and responsibility. I returned to my car and sat there longer than necessary, hands resting on the steering wheel, engine still

#### Chapter 430 You Are Not Forgotten

AMY

I woke up to a soothing silence. It wasn't the sharp, alarming silence I had grown used to since I was brought here. This one felt monitored. The soft hum of machines blended with the faint sound of wind brushing against glass far above the ground. My eyes opened slowly, and for the first time in days, my head didn't feel like it was splitting apart. I breathed in carefully. No burning in my chest. No spinning. That alone told me something had changed. "You're awake." Mara's voice came from my left. I turned my head slightly and saw her sitting beside the bed, a tablet resting on her lap. She looked tired, but relieved. When she noticed my eyes were fully open, she stood immediately. "How do you feel?" she asked. I took a moment before answering. I scanned my body the way I'd learned to do—checking for pain, weakness, panic. My throat was dry. My limbs felt heavy, but not useless. "Better," I said honestly. "Not good. Just... better." She nodded like she'd expected that answer. "That's a good sign." I swallowed. "My wolf?" Mara hesitated, then gave a small smile. "Stable. Still weak, but no longer in distress." That word—stable—hit me harder than I expected. I closed my eyes briefly, letting out a breath I hadn't realized I was holding. "Thank you," I said quietly. She reached for a glass of water and helped me sit up enough to drink. I took small sips, careful not to rush it. "The doctor will be back soon," she said. "He wants to check your vitals again. They adjusted your treatment overnight." I frowned slightly. "Adjusted how?" She didn't avoid my eyes. "Your body wasn't responding the way it should have. The pregnancy is still progressing faster than normal." My hand tightened on the blanket. "You keep saying that like it's a separate issue. It's not "I know," she said softly. "But it's also not something we fully understand yet." "That's not comforting." "I know." The door opened before either of us could say more. The doctor walked in, dressed the same way he always was—clean, calm, distant. He checked the monitors first before looking at me. "You're improving," he said. "Both physically and internally." I watched his face closely. "That doesn't sound like a full reassurance." "It isn't meant to be," he replied evenly. "It's an update." I pushed myself to sit straighter. "Then give me the whole one." He glanced at Mara, then back at me. "Your fever has broken. Your wolf's internal responses are stabilizing. That means the immediate danger has passed." "Immediate," I repeated. "Yes." I exhaled slowly. "And the rest?" "The pregnancy is the variable we can't control yet," he said. "It's advancing more quickly than expected. Your body is adapting, but it's under strain." I looked down at my hands. They were still

shaking slightly. "Am I dying?" I asked. "No," he said firmly. "Not right now." That wasn't the answer I wanted, but it was honest.

"We're moving you to a better-equipped medical wing," he continued. "Still within the building. More monitoring. Less movement." "So I'm not getting better enough to leave." "No." I nodded once. "I figured." After he left, Mara stayed quiet for a while. She helped me change into clean clothes, adjusted my pillows, and made sure I was comfortable. When everything was settled, she sat again. "You've been asking about him in your sleep," she said carefully. I looked up. "Daniel?". She nodded. "You call his name sometimes. Not loudly. Just... like you're checking if he's still there" My chest tightened. I looked away. "I miss him," I said. "I don't even know if he's okay. Or if he thinks I'm alive." "He's looking for you," Mara said. I turned back sharply. "You don't know that." "I don't," she admitted. "But men like him don't stop." I let that sit between us. The move happened later that day. I was placed on a gurney and wheeled through long, quiet corridors. The skyscraper revealed itself in pieces—glass walls, distant city lights, elevators that moved so smoothly I barely felt them. The higher we went, the more isolated it felt. The new room was larger. Brighter. More machines. "This is temporary," Mara said as they settled me into the bed. "Until we're sure your body won't crash again." I nodded. "And if it does?" She didn't answer immediately. "Then we adjust again." Night came slowly. I watched the city from the window, lights flickering far below. It made me feel small. Untouchable. Trapped. My wolf stirred faintly inside me. Not in pain this time. Just tired. "You're still here," I whispered to myself. I rested my hand on my stomach without thinking. The reality of it hadn't settled yet—not fully. The fear, the memories of the last time, the blood, the weakness. It all sat just beneath the surface. "I don't know if I'm strong enough for this," I said quietly. Mara looked up from where she was charting something. "You don't get to decide that alone." I gave a weak smile. "I don't get to decide much of anything lately." She didn't argue. As the lights dimmed and the machines continued their steady rhythm, I closed my eyes again. My body was healing slowly. My wolf was no longer screaming. But my heart was still somewhere else. And all I could do was hope Daniel was still standing—because I didn't know how much longer I could hold on without him. I woke up again before dawn. My body ached, but the fever hadn't returned. Mara was already checking the monitors, her eyes tired but alert. "Vitals are stable," she said softly. I nodded, trying to focus on the words instead of the uncertainty gnawing at me. My wolf stirred lightly, uneasy but contained. "Any news from him?" I asked, my voice barely above a whisper. She shook her head. "Not yet. But they're looking. You're not forgotten."