

Second chance 16

Chapter 16:

"I don't care about her résumé," Hilliard snapped. "I want her address."

Amerigo sighed. He took a deliberate sip of scotch, letting the silence stretch, making Hilliard wait. This wasn't a confession; it was a lesson.

"You think this is about you — about your wounded pride. It is not. This is about what is best for the Holloway legacy." He reached into his desk drawer and pulled out a single key card and a slip of paper, sliding them across the desk.

"She's not in your old apartment. She is smarter than that. This is a temporary safe house — a sterile penthouse she acquired through three shell corporations last week. A location you would never have found without me."

Hilliard grabbed the paper and the key, his fingers crushing the slip. "Why tell me now?"

"Because she's stopped running," Amerigo said. "And because it is time for you to clean up the mess you made five years ago. This chaos is bad for business." He took another sip of scotch. "Bring her back, Hilliard. Bring my granddaughter-in-law home. But if you hurt her again — if you let that English tramp near her — I will not hesitate to cut you from the will. I will leave everything to Cailin and the potential she represents."

Hilliard scoffed. "I don't need your money."

"It's not about money," Amerigo said. "It's about legacy."

Hilliard turned toward the door. He paused, his hand on the brass knob.

"Did she ever mention the child?" he asked. His voice cracked — the grief still there, a raw wound beneath the anger.

Amerigo looked at the fire. He lied smoothly. "The child was lost, Hilliard. You saw the records."

Hilliard's shoulders slumped. The pain washed over him, fresh and agonizing.

"I'll bring her home," he vowed. "Forcefully, if I have to."

He walked out, dialing Gavin as he went. "Release Ashley Trevino. She's a distraction. I know where the real target is."

Back at the hotel, Gavin received the call and stepped aside. "You're free to go, Ms. Trevino."

Ashley didn't ask questions. She grabbed Elia and ran for the exit. As she went, she pulled out her phone and typed a text to Cailin.

HE KNOWS. RUN.

Cailin was in the sterile, minimalist living room of the safe house penthouse. She wasn't packing a go-bag — that was already waiting by the service exit. She stood before a small hidden wall safe, her fingers flying across the keypad. Inside was a single hard drive containing the encrypted birth certificates of her children and the master keys to her entire offshore financial network. It was the one thing she could not leave behind.

Her phone buzzed. She looked at the screen.

Panic spiked in her chest. Too late.

She grabbed the drive, slammed the safe shut, and ran for the front door — the service exit would take too long.

She unlocked the door and pulled it open.

Hilliard was standing there, his hand raised to knock.

Cailin tried to slam the door.