

Second chance 25

Chapter 25:

He was coming back — moving toward the bedroom, his heavy footsteps echoing across the marble.

Cold, sharp panic flooded Cailin's veins. The living area was open plan. There was nowhere to hide three children.

"The closet," she whispered. "The walk-in. Go."

She pushed them toward the master bedroom. They scrambled across the dark room like little shadows. Cailin yanked open the massive double doors of the walk-in wardrobe.

"Under the suit racks. All the way to the back. Behind the winter coats," she commanded.

"It smells like Old Spice," Elia complained, wrinkling her nose.

"Shh!"

Weekly releases on ga/novels.com

Cailin guided them gently into the depths of the closet, behind rows of Hilliard's impeccable Italian suits, and arranged the long coats to cover their small forms.

"Don't breathe. Don't move. No matter what you hear," she pleaded.

She closed the heavy, cedar-lined doors just as they settled snugly into their frame. A moment later, the main bedroom door kicked open.

The beam of Hilliard's flashlight hit her squarely in the chest.

Cailin stood in the middle of the room, hands raised slightly, chest heaving. She had instinctively positioned herself to obscure the closet doors behind her. Disheveled, barefoot, wearing nothing but his shirt.

Hilliard stopped in the doorway. The light blinded her, but she could hear his heavy breathing.

"You're still here," he breathed. The relief in his voice was immediate — followed just as quickly by a wave of suspicion.

"I got lost in the dark," Cailin said, her voice trembling. It wasn't entirely a lie. She was lost in a nightmare.

Hilliard stepped into the room and lowered the light slightly so it was no longer burning her retinas, though he kept it trained on her.

“You were trying to leave through the service exit,” he said, walking closer. The beam swept past her, settling on the brass handles of the closet doors behind her.

Hilliard didn’t turn off the flashlight. The harsh LED beam cast long, dancing shadows that made the room feel like an interrogation cell.

“I panicked,” Cailin said, forcing her limbs to stay loose, fighting the urge to plant herself in front of the closet like a human shield. “The skull, the blackout — I thought we were under attack.”

“We are,” Hilliard said grimly. “A cyber attack.”

He walked toward her until he was standing inside her personal space, the heat radiating from his body almost tangible. He reached out and touched her arm, his fingers sliding down to her wrist to check her pulse.

“Your heart is racing,” he murmured.

“I told you. I was scared,” she said.

“You’re never scared, Cailin. You’re angry. You’re vindictive. But you don’t scare easily.” He released her wrist and swept the light around the room again. “Why are you standing right here? Why not by the window?”

“I was looking for my phone. I dropped it,” she improvised quickly.

Hilliard aimed the beam at the floor around her feet. The carpet was empty.

“It’s not here.”

He moved the light. It tracked slowly across the floor, drifting inexorably toward the closet.