

Second chance 29

Chapter 29:

Hilliard stared at it. It was the same brand the girl from the lobby — the one with the startlingly familiar green eyes — had been eating the day before.

Cailin's heart stopped. Of course. Elia's pockets were always a chaotic treasure trove of sugar: lollipops, gummies, and her favorite sour lemon drops.

He said nothing. He didn't look at Cailin. He simply slipped the wrapper into his pocket. His face was a mask of cold control, but Cailin caught the flicker in his eyes. It was no longer mere suspicion. It was the dawning of a terrible certainty. Checkmate, the look said. But not here. On my terms.

"Get dressed," he said, his voice dropping to a temperature that seemed to freeze the air. "The jet is waiting."

Cailin felt the shift in him.

She dressed quickly in the clothes he had provided — a sleek, cream-colored pantsuit that fit perfectly. Of course it did. He remembered her measurements.

"We're going back to New York," she said, trying to sound resigned.

“Yes,” Hilliard said, opening the door for her. He didn’t touch her. “And then we’re going to have a long talk about your ‘Godson.’”

They left the suite.

In Suite 402, Ashely was already on the phone with Kegan.

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“We’re racing them to NYC,” she told the triplets, who were raiding the mini-bar for juice. “Buckle up, kids. We’re going to war.”

The ride to the private airfield was suffocating. The silence in the back of the limousine sat heavy, thick with unasked questions and unsaid accusations.

Hilliard typed furiously on his laptop, ignoring her. Cailin watched the city slide past the tinted windows, feeling like a prisoner being transferred between facilities.

They arrived at the tarmac. The wind had picked up, grey clouds swirling overhead.

The Holloway corporate jet — a Gulfstream G700 — sat like a sleek predator on the runway, its engines already whining. Gavin opened the car door.

“Ms. Morton. Sir.”

Cailin stepped out onto the tarmac. The wind whipped her hair across her face. She scanned the other hangars, her eyes searching desperately.

There.

Parked at a discreet distance, two spots down, was a black Bombardier Global 7500. It was being refueled, but the ground crew was already prepping for departure. The tail number ended in “KA.”

Aguirre.

A small hand pressed against one of the oval windows. A wave.

Relief washed over her so intensely she nearly stumbled. They are right behind me.

“Move,” Hilliard said, his hand settling on the small of her back — not a caress, but a steer — and nudging her forward.

She boarded the jet. The interior was pure luxury: cream leather, walnut trim, the smell of money. A stewardess appeared with champagne.

“Welcome back, Mrs. Holloway.”

“It’s Ms. Morton,” Cailin corrected, her voice quiet but firm.

Hilliard settled into the seat opposite her in the club section. “For now.”

The plane taxied and climbed, punching through the cloud layer.

Once they reached cruising altitude, Hilliard closed his laptop and swiveled his chair to face her.

“Why did you really come to the hotel last night, Cailin?” he asked.