

Second chance 32

Chapter 32:

Charla laughed, a cruel, sharp sound. "Looks like your friend can't control her brat. Probably inherited the bad genes."

Hilliard spun on her. The umbrella in his hand trembled with his rage.

"One more word," he said, his voice low and dangerous, "and you walk home in the rain."

Charla's mouth snapped shut, her eyes going wide. Hilliard had never spoken to her like that. Not in public.

He turned back to Ashely. "Get her dry clothes. Now. Get her out of the cold."

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Ashely nodded and retreated quickly toward the other convoy of cars waiting near Kegan's jet.

Hilliard watched them go, his eyes tracking the small yellow raincoat until it disappeared inside a car.

He walked back to Cailin.

"That child," he began.

"Is Ashely's. We established that," Cailin cut him off, her voice unsteady.

"She has your eyes, Cailin," Hilliard said softly. He reached out and brushed a wet strand of hair from her cheek. "Exactly your eyes."

"Lots of people have green eyes," she said, pulling away from his touch.

Hilliard wiped the rain from his face and studied her, searching for a crack in the armor. Then his expression hardened back into the mask of the CEO.

"Get in. Mother is waiting."

They climbed into the SUV. As the convoy pulled away, Aron and Davy watched from the window of their car.

"He made Elia cry," Davy said, clenching his small fist.

“He’s going to pay,” Aron vowed, pulling out his tablet. “To the Bat-cave.”

The Holloway Estate loomed out of the mist like a mausoleum — a massive stone structure of gargoyles and ivy, radiating old money and cold judgment.

The SUV crunched over the gravel driveway. Servants rushed out with umbrellas to open the doors.

Cailin stepped out and looked up at the house she had fled five years ago. Nothing had changed. It still felt like a prison.

Jeraldine Holloway stood at the top of the stone stairs in a Chanel suit and a single strand of pearls that probably cost more than Cailin’s entire art gallery. Her face was set in a permanent scowl.

Hilliard walked up the stairs, guiding Cailin by the elbow.

Charla ran ahead and threw herself at Jeraldine. “Mother Holloway! It was awful! He treated me like a stranger!”

Jeraldine patted Charla’s hand absently, her eyes fixed on Cailin like lasers. “Hush, dear.”

“So,” Jeraldine said, her voice dripping with disdain. “The prodigal wife returns.”

“Hello, Jeraldine,” Cailin replied coolly.

“Don’t call me that. You lost the right to address me when you killed my grandchild,” Jeraldine spat.

The air went out of the foyer. The servants found something interesting to study on the floor.

Cailin flinched. The abortion lie was her shield, her ultimate defense — but hearing it weaponized like that still tore at her soul.

“I did what was necessary,” Cailin said stiffly. The words tasted like ash in her mouth, a necessary poison she had to swallow every time to protect them.

“Necessary? To murder an heir?” Jeraldine stepped closer, her voice rising. “You are a selfish, barren creature.”