

Second chance 33

Chapter 33:

Hilliard moved between them, his broad back blocking Jeraldine's view of Cailin.

"That's enough, Mother."

"Don't defend her! She is poison to this family!" Jeraldine screamed.

"She is my wife," Hilliard said. His voice was low, vibrating with a warning that even his mother couldn't ignore.

"Only on paper! Charla is your future! Charla would never throw away a Holloway baby!" Jeraldine argued.

Cailin laughed — a dry, humorless sound that echoed off the stone walls.

"If you want Charla so much, keep her. I want a divorce," Cailin said.

"Divorce?"

The word came back as a boom from the library to the right.

Amerigo Holloway wheeled himself out. The patriarch. His face was a map of deep wrinkles, but his eyes were sharp as flint.

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“Grandfather,” Hilliard said, with a respectful nod.

Amerigo looked at Cailin. There was a twinkle in his eye — a hint of respect that hadn’t been there five years ago.

“Welcome home, Cailin. We have business to discuss.” He turned his wheelchair toward the corridor.
“Come to the study. All of you.”

Jeraldine fell silent instantly. Amerigo was the true power in this house. When the lion spoke, the jackals obeyed.

They marched to the study like condemned prisoners.

Amerigo sat behind his massive mahogany desk, the fireplace crackling at his back and casting long shadows across the room.

He gestured for Cailin to take the leather wingback chair, then ignored Charla entirely, leaving her to stand by the door like a servant.

“You want a divorce, Cailin?” Amerigo asked, steepling his fingers.

“Yes. Immediately,” Cailin said firmly. “I want my life back.”

Hilliard clenched his jaw from his position by the window. “I don’t agree.”

Amerigo raised a hand to silence him. “I have prepared the papers. Updated ones.”

He slid a blue leather folder across the desk.

Hilliard looked betrayed. “Grandfather — you’re helping her leave again?”

“Read it,” Amerigo said.

Cailin opened the folder and scanned the pages quickly. Asset division. Alimony. Fifty million dollars. She skipped past the money. She didn't want their money.

She turned to the final page. Clause 14.

Her blood ran cold. The room seemed to tilt.

Clause 14: All matters pertaining to the Holloway Family Trust, including but not limited to any potential claims, liabilities, or obligations arising from undisclosed circumstances during the period of legal separation, will be adjudicated exclusively by the Trust, with the paternal line granted presumptive priority in all related custodial considerations.

Cailin looked up at Amerigo. His face was impassive, a stone mask.

He knows, she realized with a jolt of terror. He's trapping me.

"Is there a problem?" Amerigo asked pleasantly.

"I don't have any children," Cailin said. Her throat felt dry as dust.

"Then the clause is irrelevant. Just a formality." Amerigo smiled — a shark's smile. "Sign it, and you get your freedom. And the money."

