

Second chance 58

Chapter 58

Text scrolled across the bottom in jagged red letters: THE BLIND KING PROTECTS THE WICKED.

Passersby stopped. Phones came out. A collective gasp rippled through the crowd.

Inside the Estate, Hilliard's phone erupted with alerts.

"Sir!" Gavin burst into the living room, holding a tablet. "We've been hacked. The Times Square screens, the website, the internal servers — everything is down."

Hilliard grabbed the remote and switched on the television. The animation was already playing on the news channel.

He saw the Blind King. He saw the bear.

He looked at Elia, who sat clutching Mr. Paws.

This wasn't corporate espionage. This wasn't a competitor. This was personal.

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“Who did this?” Jeraldine gasped, clutching her pearls.

Cailin stared at the screen. She recognized the art style immediately — the pixelated flames, the specific shade of green used for the witch.

Aron. Aron, you brilliant, reckless fool. He had left a signature in the artwork. Was it carelessness, or a deliberate message?

“Find them! I want the hackers found and arrested!” Hilliard roared. “This is a PR catastrophe!”

“They are mocking us! Mocking this family!” Amerigo banged his cane on the floor.

Hilliard looked at Cailin. He saw the terror in her eyes — not for herself, but for someone else.

“You know who did this,” he accused, stepping toward her.

“I don’t know what you’re talking about,” Cailin said, her mind scrambling for a plausible lie.

“Trace the signal!” Hilliard barked at his security team leader on speakerphone.

“Tracing now, sir,” the technician’s voice crackled through the line. “They’re good — bouncing through a dozen proxies. But they got arrogant. They left a digital signature, a fragment of code that reads almost like a taunt. We used it to triangulate a sector in Brooklyn.”

Cailin’s heart stopped.

The safe house.

“Prepare the helicopter,” Hilliard said, buttoning his jacket. “I’m going personally.”

He strode toward the door.

Cailin seized her phone. She had to warn Ashely. She had to tell them to run.

Hilliard snatched the phone from her hand.

“No calls,” he said coldly. He pocketed it. “You stay here.”

He walked out. The distant thrum of helicopter rotors grew steadily louder.

Cailin sank to the floor, her face a mask of despair. But as the sound of the rotors faded into the grey sky, her expression hardened. Her trembling hand moved with quiet purpose, slipping beneath the thick gauze of her burn dressing. Her fingers found it — the tiny, paper-thin satellite communicator Kegan had insisted she carry for absolute emergencies.

Her sons were about to be raided by their father. And he was furious.

The wind from the helicopter rotors whipped Hilliard's trench coat around his legs as he stepped onto the gravel roof of the converted warehouse in Brooklyn. The noise was deafening — a rhythmic thumping that matched the adrenaline surging through his veins. He didn't wait for the blades to slow. He moved toward the roof access door, his security team flanking him, weapons drawn but pointed low.

"Breach," Gavin said into his headset.