

Second chance 61

Chapter 61:

“You expect me to believe you did this alone?” he asked, his voice dropping to a cold, dangerous register. He already knew she was Cali, the broker of secrets. Her capability didn’t surprise him. Being on the receiving end of it did.

“I have had five years to learn a great many things, Hilliard. You don’t know me,” she said, lifting her chin.

Hilliard laughed — a dark, dry sound. “Corporate espionage. Cyber-terrorism. You could go to prison for twenty years.”

“Call the FBI, then,” Cailin said. She stepped forward and offered her wrists. “Arrest me.”

She prayed he wouldn’t. But if he did, the boys would stay hidden with Ashely. Kegan would get them out of the country.

Hilliard stared at her wrists. He saw the faint scar from the burn on her arm. He saw the fire blazing in her green eyes. It triggered something primal — she was no longer a victim. She was a worthy adversary.

“No police,” he decided.

Cailin blinked. "What?"

"You are my wife," Hilliard said, his arrogance settling back around him like armor. "I don't send my wife to prison. It would destroy the stock price. I handle her myself." He pointed a finger at her face. "You are confined to this estate. Indefinitely."

He walked to the door and opened it, gesturing to the guard in the hallway. "No one goes in or out without my authorization. Remove all electronics from this room." He turned back one final time. "You want to play games? We play by my rules now. No internet. No devices. You are cut off."

He walked out. The door slammed with a finality that rattled the windows.

Cailin sank onto the bed, her heart hammering against her ribs. She reached under the pillow and grabbed the burner phone. She had seconds before the guards came to sweep the room.

She typed fast: He thinks it was me. Stay hidden.

Heavy footsteps approached down the hallway. She shoved the phone into the waistband of her underwear and prayed they wouldn't search her.

Out in the hallway, Hilliard leaned against the wall and drew a slow breath, working to steady his own pulse. He didn't believe for a second she had acted alone. The drawing — A and D — was proof. But her confession was a gift. It gave him cause to lock her down, to contain the threat while he hunted for the truth. She was shielding someone. He would use that instinct against her.

“Get me the full dossier on Cailin’s years in Europe,” he told Gavin, who was waiting by the stairs. “Every detail. Every contact. I want to know who taught her to bite back. Run a deep search on any associates and any shell corporations linked to the initials A or D. Quietly.” He paused. “And Gavin — freeze every known asset and account in her name. If she’s a prisoner here, she’ll be a poor one.”

The boardroom of the Holloway Group was a fortress of glass and steel, suspended fifty floors above Manhattan. The air conditioning was set to a crisp sixty-eight degrees, but the atmosphere in the room was suffocating.