

Second chance 64

Chapter 64:

Hilliard looked at the child. The resemblance was haunting — the curve of her jaw, the shape of her eyes. It was like looking at a ghost of his own past.

“Do you like music?” he asked, shifting tone to lower her guard.

“Mommy sings to me,” Elia said, relaxing slightly. “She sings ‘The Moon Song.’”

Hilliard went still.

“The Moon Song” wasn’t a radio hit. It wasn’t a nursery rhyme. It was a lullaby his mother had written. Hilliard had sung it to Cailin once, on their honeymoon, when she couldn’t sleep.

Only Cailin would know that song.

This was it — the final, emotional piece of evidence. The birthmark was biology. The song was intimacy. Proof that Cailin had raised this child not just with his features, but with his family’s history. He no longer had any doubt. What he needed now was not belief. He needed a weapon — legal, irrefutable proof that would silence any challenge to his claim.

“Would you like me to sing it?” Hilliard offered. His voice felt rusty. He hadn’t sung in years.

Elia studied him with open skepticism. “You know it?”

“I might,” he said, and cleared his throat.

He began to hum — low, baritone, surprisingly gentle.

Moon on the water, sleep on the shore...

Elia’s eyes went wide. She recognized the melody.

Drift on the starlight, dream evermore...

The tension left her small shoulders. She leaned back against the headboard and clutched the pillow.

“You sing okay,” she murmured, her eyelids growing heavy. “For a Bad Man.”

Hilliard kept humming until her breathing evened out and deepened into sleep. He watched her for a long moment. The anger that had been consuming him all day faded quietly, replaced by a fierce and terrifying protectiveness.

She was his. The song proved it. The birthmark proved it.

Now he just needed the science to silence the rest of the world.

Elia was deeply asleep, her chest rising and falling in a peaceful rhythm. Hilliard stopped humming and sat there for a moment, just watching her.

He reached out and gently touched her hair. It was soft and fine.

He carefully drew a single strand from her pillow — a tiny white root bulb attached to the end. He placed it into a small sterile plastic bag he had brought in his pocket, sealed it, and stood.

Gavin was waiting in the hallway, looking tired.

“Take this to a different lab. A private one,” Hilliard said, keeping his voice low. “I want results in twenty-four hours. Pay whatever it takes.”

“Yes, sir,” Gavin said, pocketing the sample. “And Cailin?”

“Is she quiet?” Hilliard asked, glancing toward the East Wing.

“She requested a sewing kit. Said she was bored,” Gavin reported.

Hilliard frowned. A sewing kit. Cailin didn’t sew. But she was under lock and key — there was little damage she could do with a needle and thread. “Give it to her. Check for anything sharp first. If mending clothes keeps her calm, let her.”