

## Second chance 68

### Chapter 68:

Halfway down, her foot slipped on a wet leaf. She swung out and struck the wall with a dull thud, then pressed herself flat against the stones and went completely still.

Below, a flashlight beam swept across the grass.

“Did you hear that?” Guard A asked.

“Probably a raccoon. Trash pandas are everywhere this time of year,” Guard B laughed, lighting a cigarette.

Cailin held her breath until their footsteps rounded the corner and faded.

She dropped the last five feet to the grass and rolled to absorb the impact, then stayed low and sprinted toward the perimeter wall. There was a blind spot near the old oak tree — she had remembered it from five years ago, and Aron’s drone had made it real again, the sensor grid cycling through a peaceful, repeating loop of an empty lawn.

She climbed the tree, scraping her palms on the bark, and dropped over the wall onto the sidewalk.

A black town car waited down the block, lights off but engine humming softly. Not an Uber — she had booked it through the burner.

“Manhattan. Obsidian Auctions,” she told the driver as she pulled the door shut.

The car sped away into the dark, leaving the gilded cage behind.

Forty minutes later, she stood before Obsidian Auctions on the Upper East Side. The building was a limestone townhouse — elegant, imposing, and blazing with light despite the hour. Prep for the morning auction was in full swing.

Cailin entered through the service door. She had already slipped on the intricate black filigree mask she wore as Cali, completely obscuring the upper half of her face.

Chloe Morton was in the hallway, directing movers with a clipboard. She looked up and saw the masked woman.

Cailin’s stomach tightened. Chloe. Her maternal cousin. The one whose social-climbing family had publicly sided with the Holloways after the scandal, calling Cailin a disgrace in order to secure their own invitations to the right parties. Seeing her here, in a position of authority, felt like a cruel joke.

Chloe’s jaw dropped. “Excuse me? Who are you?” She stepped directly into Cailin’s path. “This is a restricted area. We don’t allow people wandering in off the street.”

"I work here. Move," Cailin said coldly, brushing past her, her voice dropped to the deeper register she used as Cali.

"Work here? Dressed like that?" Chloe sneered, giving chase. "You're out of your mind." She spun toward the end of the hall. "Security! Remove this trespasser!"

Two burly guards stepped forward and blocked Cailin's path.

Cailin stood her ground. "Call Silas."

"Silas is asleep. Get out." Chloe shoved Cailin's shoulder.

Cailin caught Chloe's wrist. She didn't strike her — she applied precise pressure to a specific point, a technique she had learned from Kegan's bodyguards.

Chloe yelped and dropped the clipboard.

"I said call Silas," Cailin said, her voice low and absolute.

The double doors at the end of the hall swung open. Silas walked in — tall, silver-haired, dressed in an immaculate tuxedo even at this hour.

“Release her, Ms. Morton,” Silas said pleasantly. “You are touching the boss.”