

Second chance 70

Chapter 70:

The offices of Obsidian Auctions were sleek and modern, suffused with the faint scent of expensive leather. Cailin sat behind her desk, working through a stack of contracts.

The door opened without a knock.

Hilliard walked in, flanked by two bodyguards, looking like a storm cloud that had descended onto Fifth Avenue.

Silas stepped forward. "Mr. Holloway. Do you have an appointment?"

Hilliard ignored him. He crossed the room and placed both hands flat on Cailin's desk.

"You climbed out a window," he said, his voice tight with suppressed rage. "Like a teenager."

"I had an interview," Cailin replied, without looking up from the contract. "You wouldn't let me leave."

"You are under house arrest," Hilliard reminded her.

“Not anymore.” Cailin looked up. “I have a contract. My employer is aware of my domestic situation.” She was bluffing, but the implication of legal oversight was what mattered.

“I can buy this place and fire you,” Hilliard threatened.

“It’s owned by a European trust with ties to a sovereign entity,” Cailin said, her voice cool and steady. “Their legal protections are formidable. You’d be starting a diplomatic incident, not a hostile takeover.”

Hilliard leaned over the desk, invading her space. His cologne filled her senses — sandalwood and rain.

“You are playing a dangerous game, Cailin. Who is watching Elia?”

“Your mother. And the guards. She is safe,” Cailin said, though her heart squeezed at the mention of her daughter.

“Come home. Now,” Hilliard ordered.

“I finish at five PM. Like a normal person.” Cailin checked her watch.

Hilliard stared at her. She was defiant, beautiful, and employed — nothing like the broken woman he had carried out of the hospital. She was a force entirely her own.

And he hated that he admired it.

“Fine,” he said, straightening up. “Five PM. I will pick you up. If you are not at the curb, I call the FBI about the hack.” He played his trump card.

“I’ll be there,” Cailin agreed.

Hilliard turned and left. As he walked out, he gave a subtle nod to one of his guards, who peeled off and remained in the lobby. She was on a longer leash — not off it.

Cailin exhaled slowly, her hands trembling as she reached for her water glass. She texted Ashely on the burner phone: Status?

All good. Elia is playing with the maid, Ashely replied.

But at the Estate, it was not all good.

Elia was bored. She slipped into Cailin’s room to search for the “Radio” her mother had been playing with. Instead, she found the open window — and the rope still hanging from the sill.

She climbed up and peered over the edge. "Mommy?"

Jeraldine entered the room. "Elia! Get down!"

Elia slipped. Jeraldine lunged forward and caught her by the ankle.

"You wild child! Just like your mother!" Jeraldine yelled, hauling her back inside.

"My mother is good! You are a witch!" Elia screamed, and bit down hard on Jeraldine's hand.

Jeraldine released her. Elia tumbled onto the soft rug, frightened but unhurt.