

Second chance 72

Chapter 72:

He walked straight past Jeraldine, throwing his keys onto the side table with enough force to chip the wood.

“Hilliard?” Jeraldine straightened her spine, trying to reclaim control of the room. “What is going on?”

Hilliard ignored her. He paced the length of the living room, one hand raking through his hair. “They are bypassing the firewall. It’s a mirrored attack. Do not let the transfer complete!”

He lowered the phone and ended the call with a jab of his thumb, then looked at the room as if seeing it for the first time. His eyes landed on Ashely and Elia. “Get the kid out of here,” he barked. “I need this room — it has the only hardline connection that isn’t routed through the main switch.”

“Hilliard, talk to me,” Jeraldine demanded, stepping into his path.

“We are being hacked, Mother,” Hilliard said, his voice low and dangerous. “A massive data breach. Ten million dollars in liquid assets are being siphoned off as we speak.”

Jeraldine’s hand flew to her throat. “Ten million?”

“Get out,” Hilliard said to Ashely, his eyes dark.

Ashely nodded and clutched Elia tighter. This was a reprieve — a ten-million-dollar miracle. She rushed toward the stairs, carrying the evidence away before anyone could remember the swab lying on the floor.

A moment later, the heavy oak door opened again.

Cailin walked in. She was breathless, her cheeks flushed, her heels striking sharp staccato rhythms on the marble floor. She had taken an Uber from the auction house the second the news alert hit her phone.

She read the chaos at a glance. Hilliard was pacing, his tie loosened, his sleeves rolled up to reveal the taut muscles of his forearms.

“I heard it on the radio,” Cailin said, leaning against the doorframe to steady herself. “The stock is plummeting. They’re calling it a security failure.”

Hilliard spun around and pinned her with a glare so intense it felt like a physical weight. “Blue Bear again,” he said. “Is this you?”

A small, dangerous smile touched Cailin’s lips. “Me? I’ve been cataloging eighteenth-century antiques all day, Hilliard. Check the cameras at Obsidian — I’ve been under your surveillance from morning to evening. It seems your security is lacking elsewhere.”

“Then who?” Hilliard grabbed a crystal vase from the mantel and hurled it at the fireplace.

The sound of shattering glass rang out like a gunshot, shards scattering across the hearth.

“Who hates me this much?” he whispered, the rage still vibrating in his chest.

Cailin moved carefully into the room, stepping around the broken glass. She needed to deflect — to point the weapon in a different direction. “Maybe the people you stepped on to get here,” she said softly. “Or perhaps it’s closer to home. Charla’s competitors? Or Charla herself?”

Hilliard paused and looked at her. “Charla?”

“She was desperate for attention yesterday,” Cailin said, shrugging one shoulder. “She plays the victim well. Maybe she staged a hack to blame someone else — to rally sympathy when the stock drops?”