

Second chance 79

Chapter 79:

He searched for the linea nigra. He looked for the traditional signs of motherhood. They were gone, hidden beneath the petals of the black roses.

“No stretch marks?” he asked. His voice sounded hollow.

“I told you. I lost the baby five years ago. There was nothing to stretch,” Cailin said, her tone deliberate and cold. She twisted the knife.

Hilliard stumbled back. The evidence supported her lie. Guilt crashed into him like a tidal wave — he had torn her dress to see her pain, had accused her of theft while she carried scars he had known nothing about.

“I... I didn’t know about the accident,” Hilliard stammered, looking down at his hands as though they belonged to someone else.

“You didn’t ask. You were too busy with Charla,” Cailin said. She bent down and picked up her ruined dress, pressing the silk to her chest.

“Are you satisfied? Can I leave now?” she asked, her voice ice-cold.

Hilliard felt like a monster. “Cailin—”

“Unlock the door, Hilliard,” she commanded.

He walked to the door and unlocked it without a word.

Cailin walked out with her head high. But the moment she reached the hallway, her knees buckled. Her hands were shaking violently.

She rushed to the guest room.

“Ashely. Get Elia. We are leaving. He won’t stop us,” Cailin said, gasping for breath.

“Did he hurt you?” Ashely’s eyes went immediately to the torn dress and the pale, exposed skin.

“He hurt himself. We have a window — let’s go.” Cailin grabbed a suitcase.

They rushed downstairs. Hilliard stood on the landing and watched them go. He didn’t move. He was paralyzed by the image of the black roses and the jagged vertical scar — the proof of a woman he had broken, who had rebuilt herself with ink and silence.

The elevator doors opened, and Cailin collapsed onto the white leather sofa. The penthouse safe house was quiet and modern — a stark contrast to the gothic oppression of the Holloway Estate.

Elia ran to her brothers. Aron and Davy were sitting on the floor, surrounded by tablets.

“The Bad Man was scary!” Elia cried, throwing her arms around Aron.

Aron patted her head awkwardly. “We saw. We hacked the cameras in the hallway.”

Davy held up a tablet, grinning. “We also taught him a lesson. We executed a series of anonymous, high-frequency short trades against his smallest tech subsidiary. Cost him about two million in market cap and will give his accountants migraines for a month. No direct trail.”

“No more.” Cailin sat up sharply. She winced, her skin still burning from Hilliard’s touch. “No more hacking, no more trading. We need to lay low. He is dangerous.”

“He tore your dress, Mom. He pays,” Aron said darkly. His young face was set in a scowl that looked too much like his father’s.

Cailin looked at her sons. They were brilliant — but they were becoming soldiers in a war they shouldn’t be fighting.

“I am handling him. With this.” She pulled a folder from her bag.

It contained the divorce papers.

“I’m serving him tomorrow. Publicly,” Cailin said.