

Second chance 82

Chapter 82:

"The center called. A black SUV from a private car service picked them up. Authorized by 'Uncle K,'" Ashely said. "The authorization code was a perfect digital forgery."

Cailin exhaled slowly. Kegan.

She called him. "Where are they?"

"They're safe. Preparing for the show," Kegan said.

"What show?"

"You'll see at the Gala. Wear the blue dress I sent you — it's in the closet at the safe house." He hung up.

Cailin was furious. Everyone was pulling her strings. But she had no choice now. She had to go to the Gala. She had to get her kids.

She drove to the safe house. The dress was hanging on the door — midnight blue, sparkling like a night sky. It was armor.

She put it on. She applied dark lipstick and studied herself in the mirror for a long moment.

“Fine,” she whispered. “I’ll crash the party.”

She grabbed her clutch and checked inside. Lip gloss. Phone. And a small, high-voltage taser.

Just in case.

The rooftop garden had been transformed into a wonderland of lights and ice sculptures. Waiters circulated with champagne towers while the elite of New York gathered in clusters, whispering about the imminent proposal.

Hilliard stood by the bar, looking bored. He checked his watch every thirty seconds. Charla clung to his arm like a barnacle.

“Smile, darling. The press is watching,” she murmured.

“Where is the fireworks crew?” Hilliard asked Gavin.

“Setting up on the barge. A new team — Pyre-Tech,” Gavin said, checking his list. He had no idea it was a shell company owned by Kegan.

A hush fell over the crowd.

Cailin entered.

The midnight blue dress caught every light on the rooftop. She moved through the space like a queen walking into her court — not like a victim, but like something far more dangerous.

Hilliard stopped breathing. He shook off Charla’s hand without so much as glancing at her and walked toward Cailin. The crowd parted around him.

“You came,” he said softly.

“Where are they?” Cailin hissed.

“Who?” Hilliard frowned.

“My... clients. I was told they would be here,” Cailin said, catching herself.

“Focus on me,” Hilliard said, stepping closer.

The lights flickered. The music cut out with a screech of feedback.

A voice came over the speakers — distorted, high-pitched, like a cartoon villain.

“Ladies and gentlemen! Prepare for the Truth!”

Hilliard spun around. “Security!”

Cailin recognized the cadence immediately. It was Davy.

She scanned the perimeter. A small shadow darted away from the DJ booth — a figure in a black hoodie, far too small to be an adult. The figure dropped something tiny and black behind a speaker before melting back into the crowd.

It was Elia.

Cailin started moving toward her.

Boom.

The first firework launched from the barge.

But it wasn't a heart shape. It wasn't gold or silver. It was a giant red X that exploded across the night sky.

The crowd gasped.

The Triplets' show had begun.