

Second chance 91

Chapter 91:

“To wake you up,” Cailin said, straightening the strap of her dress. “Open the door.”

Hilliard stared at the blood on his fingertips. Then, slowly, he smiled — a dark, twisted expression that made something in Cailin’s chest tighten.

“Fine.”

He walked to the door and unlocked it.

Charla burst in, two security guards at her back. She stopped dead. She took in Cailin — disheveled, hair loose, lips swollen. She took in Hilliard, leaning against the doorframe with blood on his lip.

“You... you animal!” Charla screamed at Cailin. “You attacked him!”

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“He kissed me, Charla. Ask him,” Cailin said, walking past her without a backward glance.

Charla turned to Hilliard, her eyes desperate for a denial. "Tell me she's lying. Tell me she forced herself on you."

Hilliard slowly licked the blood from his lip. He met Charla's gaze with absolute steadiness.

"What happens between us," he said, his voice dangerously quiet, "is no longer your concern."

Charla gasped. The color drained from her face. It was the ultimate dismissal.

Cailin walked to the elevator without looking back.

"Take me home, Gavin," she told Hilliard's driver, who was waiting by the lift.

Gavin glanced toward Hilliard. Hilliard gave a single nod.

Inside the car, Cailin finally allowed herself to tremble. She wrapped her arms around herself and leaned back against the seat. That had been too close.

Her phone buzzed. A text from Kegan.

Kids are safe. Sleeping. Did you like the show?

Cailin typed back, her fingers still unsteady: You are all grounded. Including you.

Back in the lounge, Hilliard poured himself a drink. He didn't offer one to Charla.

Charla was crying on the velvet sofa, ruining it with tears and glitter. "How could you? In front of everyone?"

"Go home, Charla. The party is over," Hilliard said coldly.

"I will make her pay," Charla hissed, rising to her feet. "I will destroy her business. I will ruin her reputation."

Hilliard slammed his glass down on the mahogany table. The sound cracked like a whip.

"Touch her, and I destroy you," he said.

Charla flinched. She had never seen him like this — protective of someone in a way he had never once been with her. She understood then, with a cold clarity, that Cailin was no ghost. She was a threat. A real, breathing, dangerous threat.

She left without another word, her mind already turning over possibilities. Everyone had a weakness. She would find Cailin's.

Alone, Hilliard touched his lip again. The sting was still sharp.

He missed her already.

Cailin walked into her office at Obsidian Auctions the next morning feeling as though she had gone twelve rounds in a boxing ring.

Chloe was perched on the edge of her desk, reading a tabloid.

"You're famous," Chloe grinned, holding up the paper.

The headline screamed: HOLLOWAY LOVE TRIANGLE EXPLODES IN FIREWORKS!

Below it was a grainy photo of Hilliard dragging Cailin toward the elevator.

"I am tired," Cailin said, dropping her bag. "Burn it."

Her computer pinged. A video call request. Secure Line: Kegan.