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- Chapter 4
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- I spent two hours on a crucial phone call in Callum's study. When I emerged, they still hadn't
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- returned.
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- Once, I would have been worried sick. Now, I only felt bitter irony.
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- In the living room, my phone buzzed with a message from an unknown number. The attached photo showed Mila and Sophie hand in hand, running toward Callum on the beach. Their faces glowed with joy beneath the sparklers' light – the perfect family portrait. Without me.
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- The next message confirmed my suspicions: “Seven years of deception must make you furious. I hope you'll make the right choice.”
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- Sophie's words were carefully crafted, but her meaning was clear: step aside gracefully.
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- Before I could respond, the front door opened. Callum and Mila entered, guilt flickering briefly across their matching faces before Mila thrust a portrait into my hands.
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- “Mommy, Daddy drew this for you!”
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- I studied the portrait of myself, unchanged from years ago. The artist's care was evident in every stroke. Once, it would have moved me to tears.
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- “Don't you like it, Aria?” Callum asked softly.
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- I looked up at him, catching the faint trace of Sophie's signature perfume. “Callum, why do you smell like perfume?”
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- If he'd been honest then, perhaps we could have ended things amicably.
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- Instead, he glanced at Mila, who gave an almost imperceptible nod.
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- “See, Mommy's upset because she's overthinking again,” he said smoothly. “The framing shop lady was wearing perfume – it rubbed off when we were paying. Isn't that perfectly normal?”
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- “Mommy, you're being paranoid!” Mila planted her hands on her hips, face scrunched in rehearsed indignation.
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- 66.7%
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- Chapter 4
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- “Aria, I had our daughter with me,” Callum added. “Even if you don't trust me, surely you trust your
- 
- own child?”
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- He nudged Mila forward. My daughter, with eyes so like my own, met my gaze without flinching. Like father, like daughter – natural-born liars.
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- When I remained silent, Mila tugged Callum toward her room, muttering, “Poor Daddy, Mommy's so jealous even after we explained everything!”
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- Another message arrived: “If you doubt me, I can prove it. Within three minutes, your beloved husband and daughter will make up an excuse to come see me.”
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Right on cue, they emerged from Mila's room, nearly colliding with me at the door.

“Aria! Mila's a bit upset about her birthday. I'm taking her out for the night to cheer her up. Get some rest, okay?”

“Since Mommy doesn't like my drawing, I'll draw for someone else instead!” Mila declared as they

left.

It sounded like a child's tantrum, but I knew the truth – she'd probably drawn countless portraits for Sophie already.

I watched them leave, and a final message arrived:

“Still unconvinced? Tomorrow, 8 AM, Starlight Park. See for yourself.”

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