

Chapter 14 No.14

The silence that followed was heavy, suffocating. The ticking of the grandfather clock in the corner seemed to grow louder with every second.

What do you mean? Heather laughed nervously, a high-pitched titter. "Did you have a fight? Buy him a watch, he'll get over it."

We divorced this morning Aurora stated flatly.

Tiffany dropped her phone. It hit the hardwood floor with a loud crack.

Dennis turned a shade of violet that looked medically concerning. "Divorced? You let him go?"

He wanted it. I signed, Aurora explained, picking up her water glass.

Did you get the alimony? The shares? Dennis leaned over the table, his greed overriding his shock. "Tell me you got the stock options."

I took nothing Aurora lied. Technically, she had refused his money because she didn't need it, but to them, it was the same thing.

Nothing?! Heather stood up so fast her chair tipped over. "You stupid, useless girl! You had the golden ticket and you threw it away!"

Enough Arthur slammed his hand on the table. The plates rattled.

Dennis ignored his father. He was hyperventilating. "We needed that connection! My business.. the loans are due next week! I told the bank Sterling Thorne was my son-in-law!"

That sounds like fraud, Uncle, Aurora said coldly. "And since I am no longer Mrs. Thorne, I imagine the bank will be calling you very soon."

Get out! Heather screamed, pointing a manicured finger at the door. "If you aren't Mrs. Thorne, you're nothing to us! You're just a leech!"

Gladly. Aurora stood up. She smoothed her skirt.

Arthur stood too. He was shaking not with age, but with rage.

If she goes, I go, Arthur declared. His voice was stronger than it had been in years.

Fine, old man! Go rot in your tenement! Dennis spat. "Take your trash granddaughter with you!"

Aurora walked around the table to Arthur. She offered him her arm. He took it, his grip surprisingly firm.

Remember this moment, Dennis, Aurora said softly.

Get out before I call the police! Tiffany yelled from the floor, checking her cracked screen.

Aurora led Arthur to the door. As they passed the hallway table, she stopped. She looked at the expensive blue-and-white vase Dennis was so proud of.

By the way, she said, her voice carrying back to the dining room. "That Ming vase is a fake. The glaze is too glossy for the period. It's a reproduction from the nineties."

She opened the door.

You overpaid, she added.

They stepped out into the night air. The heavy oak doors slammed behind them, vibrating the frame.

Arthur was trembling as they walked to the car. "I'm sorry, Aurora. They are monsters. I should have protected you."

Aurora stopped at the car door. She hugged him, burying her face in his shoulder.

No, Grandpa. You did protect me. You taught me what real family is.

She opened the passenger door for him. Before she got into the driver's side, she pulled out her phone.

She texted her lawyer.

Execute Plan B on Dennis Vance's outstanding liabilities. Alert the bank to the fraudulent guarantor status.

She hit send.

Dennis Vance was about to learn that while Sterling Thorne was dangerous, Aurora Vance was fatal.

