

Chapter 38

Chapter 38 When Grayson climbed up to the attic , he was surprised to find a room that had been transformed into an art studio .

Paintings were everywhere -on the walls , the floor , even studded into cabinets .

The sheer beauty of the artwork left him stunned and rooted to the spot as he took it all in .

What are you doing here ? Serenas voice snapped him out of his daze .

I le turned to see the tiny figure with crossed arms looking suspiciously at him from behind .

Who painted these ? Grayson asked , gesturing at the paintings .

Serena gave him a look , her tone sharp .

My mom did .

Why ? Grayson froze for a second , his expression shifting to one of disbelief .

Then he frowned and scooped her up , She ? Seriously ? He couldnt wrap his head around it .

No way thats true , he thought .

Ive never seen her pick up a paintbrush .

Of course she does , Serena shot back , her chin tilting up in defiance . She pointed around the room with a small sweep of her arm and explained , All of them are my moms work .

Shes amazing .

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Loads of people want to buy her pieces .

But Paisley never sold her paintings .

She only gave them away .

Graysons mind was spinning with thoughts .

Could all this really be that womans work ? Shes just a housewife , someone who cooked and nagged me .

Even Grandma and Auntie Kayla paint her as some clueless small town nobody .

How could she be capable of this ? Though Grayson was overwhelmed by the scene in front of him , he still refused to admit what he saw .

I dont buy it , he said , his tone defiant .

He had never seen Paisley paint , and he only believed what he had seen .

Serenas face flushed with anger .

She was desperate to prove him wrong .

Why dont you believe me ? Im telling the truth .

All of these are Moms work ! She pointed toward a corner of the room and added , Look , those are all portraits of me .

Grayson followed her gesture and saw a section full of paintings of a little girl at different ages : a newborn with closed eyes , a candles .

baby learning to crawl , a toddler with a toothy grin , and a child laughing , crying , and blowing out birthday Each painting captured Serena at a different moment , preserving her life in vivid , loving detail .

See ? These are all me , Serena said , her voice rising as she tried to make him understand .

If my mom didnt paint them , how else would there be so many of my portraits ? Grayson stared at the paintings , stunned into silence .

Without thinking , he blurted out , What about mine ? Serena shook her head and replied , You have nothing left .

Stella tore them up ! The thought of her moms hard work being destroyed made Serenas chest tighten with sadness .

Just one ? Grayson asked , his voice quieter now .

Yeah , just the one , Serena replied with a nod Paisley had placed Graysons portrait in the best spot , where it could be seen upon entering the room .

That was why Serena recognized Grayson the second she saw him .

But sadly , it was gone now

21:57 Mon , Jan 27 Chapter 38 Grayson searched the room to look through the paintings , but there wasnt a single trace of him anywhere .

Suddenly , his emotions boiled over , and he yelled , Who cares about some stupid painting ? I dont even want it ! Theyre ugly ! All of them are ugly ! Then he bolted down the stairs with red eyes .

Serena ran after him and cut him off in the living room .

Take that back ! My moms paintings are not ugly ! Her face was flushed with anger now , and her hands balled into fists .

She thought , Grayson is the worst ! How could he keep trash talking my mom like this ? Mom even said he was my big brother .

I dont want a brother like him They are ugly ! They just are ! Shes ugly , and her paintings are even uglier ! Grayson yelled , his voice rising to drown out the storm of feelings he couldnt control .

Tears prickled his eyes as he stood there , and his fists clenched tightly .

Thats not true ! My moms the most beautiful woman in the world ! Serena screamed back .

She didnt care if she was yelling -she needed him to hear it .

From the kitchen , Paisley appeared with a plate of food in hand , and she frowned as their shouting hit its peak .

Enough she barked , her voice firm and final .

If she still didnt stop them , she was afraid the neighbors might have opinions .

Paisley placed the dish on the dining table and turned to Serena What did I tell you about yelling ? Serena scuffed her shoe against the floor and pouted , her voice small now .

Not to do it Were you wrong ? Though feeling wronged , Serena nodded with tears in her eyes .

I was wrong , Mom .

Good .

Then go wash your hands and get ready for dinner , Paisley said , gently tapping Serenas head .

Serena bit her lip , still fuming but knowing better than to argue With an angry pout , she stomped off toward the bathroom to wash her hands .

Paisley set the dishes on the table and turned to Grayson , who was still stubbornly standing there like a statue .

She let out a soft sigh and said , Go wash your hands .

Dinners ready .

Grayson stared at Paisley , his hands twisting nervously together .

ts were racing .

Did she hear me earlier ? She mustve heard me call her ugly , right ? But why isnt she mad ? His thoughts Why doesnt she scold me ? I was yelling too , and she shouldve asked me if I was wrong , like she used to .

She didnt hold back on Serena , so why not me ? 21:57 Mon , Jan 27