

The Day Sarah Ran Away

THE SISTERHOOD
PIE PACT
—•—
BOOK ONE

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Published by Scrivenings Press LLC

15 Lucky Lane

Morrilton, Arkansas 72110

<https://ScriveningsPress.com>

Printed in the United States of America

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Paperback ISBN 978-1-64917-492-5

eBook ISBN 978-1-64917-493-2

Editors: Suzie Waltner and Denica McCall

Cover design by Linda Fulkerson - www.bookmarketinggraphics.com

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Dedication—To my husband, Jimmy. You're my rock and my biggest fan. I couldn't do any of this without you. Thank you for loving me so well.

“When mothers talk about the depression of the empty nest, they’re not mourning the passing of all those wet towels on the floor, or the music that numbs your teeth, or even the bottle of capless shampoo dribbling down the shower drain. They’re upset because they’ve gone from supervisor of a child’s life to a spectator. It’s like being the vice president of the United States.”

~ Erma Bombeck

PROLOGUE



“What messes us up most in life is the picture in our head of how it’s supposed to be.”

~ Jeremy Binns

The grandfather clock in the hallway chimes twelve times. My husband’s cell phone dings on the kitchen table. Dave must have forgotten to grab it after our argument.

I dry my hands on a dish towel and cross over to the table where his phone rests face up. Emma’s picture fills the screen. Warning bells ring in my head. Why is she texting her dad so late? Is she okay? Has something happened? She needs me. Taking a few breaths to ramp down my habitual panic response, I click the passcode that opens his phone.

Dad, are you there?

My fingers tap over the phone’s keyboard with rapid speed.

This is your mom. Your dad forgot his phone. Is everything okay?

Three bubbles appear, then disappear. The moments waiting for her to respond have my imagination spinning images of Emma lying in a ditch somewhere.

After what seems an eternity but is probably less than a minute, she responds.

Yes, everything is fine, Mom.

I can hear her scolding tone on the word *Mom*, knowing she thinks I'm being overprotective as always.

After a beat, another text comes through.

I had a question for Dad. It can wait until he gets home from his trip.

The words sting, but I swallow them down. I text back a simple response.

Okay.

While waiting for her to text a goodbye, good night, love you, anything, I notice a long thread of texts between her and Dave. A mental debate ensues as I stare at the screen. Several minutes pass, making it clear Emma's done with our conversation.

I should put the phone down and head to bed, but instead, I continue to grip the cell. I shouldn't read their conversation. It's wrong. My head nods in agreement, but flashes of past hurts—feeling like the odd one out when Emma and Dave are together—have my right index finger scrolling to the beginning of their conversation.

Are you sure you have to tell your mom tonight?

Yes, I'm sure.

THE DAY SARAH RAN AWAY

I won't be home when you tell her. I should be there.

I know, Dad, but I need to tell her tonight.

She's going to be upset. You know that, right?

Mom will be okay. It will all work out. You'll see.

I don't know. You might just break her heart.