

Beyond the Divorce

Chapter 16

Chapter 16 A Scene to Watch

The footsteps sounded like someone was getting pulled. I was about to open the door and leave when I heard a man's voice, "Hey there, beautiful. I finally caught you. I've been missing you like crazy!"

I froze when I realized the voice belonged to Johnson and quickly withdrew my hand from the door handle. I never expected Johnson to be so audacious. He had a pretty wife, so I never imagined he would cheat.

It seemed there was no such thing as a good man anymore.

"Don't even say you missed me. Don't you have another lover?" a woman spoke bitterly, "Why were you so friendly to her at the door just now? You were never enthusiastic with me, and you say I'm important to you? Bullshit! Your words are empty!"

"You're spouting nonsense. You're the one who's always seducing others."

Immediately after, I heard a rustling sound.

"Good girl. Let me kiss you. I..." Johnson's words were daring, making my face blush, and my heart ache."

That man is my boss, so how could I not be polite toward him and his wife? He provides me with a job,

and I wouldn't have the money to support you without it."

"Your boss is better and much more handsome than you. Ah, why are you in such a hurry? Someone's

coming. Ah." The woman sounded coy, and I could tell they were doing something nasty.

I was annoyed and about to leave when I heard Johnson again, "Don't even think about him. He's not your

type, no matter how handsome he is. He has too many girls anyway, so just focus on me.”

My heart sank when I heard that even Johnson knew about it. He had called me madam just a while ago, but it seemed ironic now. He must’ve thought I was pathetic when he greeted me that way.

I tightened my grip around my phone as a sharp pain pierced my heart. On top of that, the sounds outside the bathroom stall made me blush. Suddenly, I had an idea and pulled out my phone before leaving.

However, I saw no one when I looked toward the source of the voices. Then I realized the sounds came from the janitor’s room. So, I tiptoed over, and they were unaware of my presence. Immediately after, I

recorded their illicit actions without their knowledge/

I checked the recording as I turned and left. The video was enough evidence for me, even though it was

disgusting. Still, it might come in handy.

My heart still raced when I returned to the private room. My breath was somewhat constrained, and I had

no idea what Matthew, Ava, and Melanie were discussing in the room.

+15 BONUS

Ava sat on Matthew’s lap, giggling as her legs dangled. Meanwhile, Melanie’s hair flowed down Matthew’s neck while she chuckled like a schoolgirl. I had grown accustomed to her attempts to charm her brother, and their sibling bond was unbreakable.

Matthew saw me and let go of his sister’s hand before calmly asking me, “What took you so long? The food’s getting cold.”

Melanie glanced at me as I sat down and said, “Chloe, can’t you eat a meal without disappearing? My brother can’t enjoy his meal in peace without you.”

I ignored her and looked at Matthew. I said backhandedly. “Some people are just beyond saving.”

Matthew looked at me intensely as the corner of his lips twitched. “What was that about? Why are you saying such things? What made you feel this way?”

He bombarded me with questions, but I responded with a bitter smile. It seemed I had hit a nerve. I

maintained my composure and looked at him, saying. The world is so cruel. Men these days seem to

prefer having flings. Is that because I’m old-fashioned?”

Matthew’s gaze faltered as his head lowered. Then he lifted his gaze and looked at me smilingly, “Honey,

you’ve become more sensitive lately. What’s causing it? What’s this about flings?”

Melanie muttered disdainfully, “Why are you speaking in riddles?”

I ignored her and kept my gaze on Matthew. “Don’t tell me you don’t understand what I’m talking about. It

has nothing to do with being sensitive, let alone emotions. Some men just can’t control their lust, even

when they have their needs met.”

I shot him a meaningful look. I sensed his anxiety, although his face remained calm.

I suppressed the pain in my heart and chuckled. “Honey, you don’t have a fling, do you? You’re playing it so cool. We haven’t even enjoyed our good days yet. Don’t tell me you’re lusting for something else?”

“Nonsense!” Matthew quickly retorted, his face slightly flushed. ‘Having you and Ava is more than enough for me. I don’t have the energy for anyone else! You better not bring me into this!’

Then he picked up a piece of newly served asparagus and tried feeding it to me. “Try this and stop overthinking. I’m not preoccupied with such things. Trust me.

Hmph! I scoffed internally.

Unexpectedly, my words rubbed Melanie the wrong way. She pursed her lips and looked at me, wanting to

say something.

Chapter 17

Chapter 17 Teaching My Sister-in-law a Lesson

+15 BONUS

Melanie didn't take kindly to what I said. Her displeasure was evident as she retorted, "Chloe, don't be unappreciative of what you have. You know how my brother treats you, right? He's the one out there working hard, and you dare to be choosy? Don't be so overbearing."

I glared at her, saying, "Oh? Do you feel bad for your brother? When did I ever need your two cents in

conversations with him?"

Melanie rolled her eyes, "—"

I didn't let her continue and interrupted, "What's wrong with being a full-time housewife? It seems like you've got a bone to pick with that. No wonder you were desperate to experience a housewife's life at Galar Tower. You enjoyed that, didn't you?"

My gaze was intense as I stared at Melanie. My past submissive behavior made her think I was an easy

target.

"You think your brother is the only one hard at work? Ask your brother if he dares to say that to me," I

didn't give Melanie a chance to speak and continued, "Don't you or your family remember me looking for

clients all over the city that I even suffered from stomach ulcers?

I

“Matthew doesn’t even dare to say he built the company alone. Yet, you have the nerve to tell me I don’t

have the right to say what I said?!”

Melanie looked at Matthew angrily. However, I didn’t let up. “You’re enjoying the fruits of my labor, spending our money without contributing anything. Do you think you deserve that?”

My gaze turned icier than ever as I stared her down.

“Melanie, you should know your place if you want to keep freeloading off us. Don’t bring up such bullshit in front of me again. Your brother might indulge you, but I won’t.”

“Why, you!” Melanie exclaimed.

I sneered at the infuriated Melanie, saying, “You said I’m overbearing? You can tell me about it again when

you find someone you love.”

Then I turned to Matthew and said, “You should teach your sister a lesson and stop spoiling her. Please

teach her to be more respectful.*

“Chloe, you...” Melanie slammed the table, startling Ava, who pouted and burst into tears.

Matthew roared in frustration, “That’s enough! Let’s eat! Stop causing a scene!”

+15 BONUS

He aimed his frustration at Melanie, which relieved me somewhat. Meanwhile, I comforted Ava and

reassured her everything was okay.

Things finally quieted down afterward, and we finished our meal. When we headed out to pay the bill, the

waiter said Johnson had already handled it.

Melanie sulked outside the restaurant and didn't get into our car. I glanced at Matthew to ask, "Aren't you

going to call her in?"

Matthew's face remained stern, "Leave her alone. We need to teach her a lesson."

I didn't say much, either. Although I didn't have a favorable impression of my sister-in-law, saying too

much was inappropriate, as I had already said enough today.

On the way home, I used Melanie's topic as a starting point, "I'm considering returning to work once Ava

returns to preschool. I don't want to feel like a freeloader anymore because I've become quite unpopular

within my own company."

"Honey, what are you saying? I just don't want you to overwork yourself. You've suffered a lot for this company in the past. It's not wrong to enjoy yourself a bit now. Melanie is still young and naive, so don't

blame her.

"Besides, the company is more organized now, and management positions are tightly arranged. Having you back might be challenging since we'll have to rearrange several things," Matthew explained as he

drove.

I said nothing but found it quite amusing. After all, Tanum Corporation was a company I had founded from scratch. It was like my child, yet I couldn't find a way to fit in now, and I found it ironic.

Matthew noticed my silence and held my hand. "Don't be upset. If you want to return to work, you can. The company has come this far thanks to your unimaginable contributions. You're the key figure, and your

merits are irreplaceable.”

I almost rolled my eyes at my smooth–talking husband. I guessed he only said those things to appease me, so I decided not to comment and looked out the window. As the cityscape passed by, I felt a sense

of loneliness and wondered where my refuge was.

Matthew’s betrayal had thrown me into a bottomless pit, and i instinctively held my aching heart while I

became teary–eyed.

At that moment, I decided to return to work once Ava returned to preschool.

Chapter 18

Chapter 18 An Unnecessary Casualty

+15 BONUS

Ava had fallen asleep before we could reach home. After parking the car, Matthew went to pick her up

and carry her to the room. Once he tucked her in, I got ready to bathe.

Meanwhile, Matthew’s phone kept buzzing, and he would glance at it before hanging up. He seemed

uneasy, I knew it was because he wouldn’t dare answer it when I was around.

I took a change of clothes and my phone to the bathroom. After placing my things aside, I turned on the

water and left the door slightly ajar to listen for any movement outside. As expected, I heard Matthew

speaking into the phone hushedly.

Since that was the case, I called Ivanna and only heard the busy tone. It confirmed my suspicion that

Matthew was talking to her on the phone.

My hands trembled with anger as I showered hastily and left the bathroom. Matthew heard my footsteps

and quickly disconnected the call. He entered the room from the balcony and feigned ignorance, saying.

Hey, honey, are you done?"

He faked a smile and took the towel from my hand. Then he stood behind me to dry my hair with it. I

knew his mind was elsewhere and asked casually, "Who just called you?"

"It was my mom," Matthew replied before I could barely finish my sentence.

Suddenly, Ava cried out and caused Matthew to panic. He shoved the towel in my hand and rushed to her

room to avoid my probing questions.

Meanwhile, I stood rooted with the towel and pondered momentarily. I knew Matthew had lied again since the call couldn't have been from his mother, as I had dialed her number to confirm that she hadn't

made any calls.

I leaned against the bathroom wall and felt utterly helpless. Just then, Matthew walked in while still carrying Ava. She had woken up because she needed to pee, so he took her to the toilet.

Ava was still half-asleep, not even opening her eyes as she peed. It seemed she must've had too much to

drink during dinner.

Suddenly, Matthew's phone rang again. The ringtone was jarring in the small bathroom. Matthew flinched

and forgot he was holding Ava in his haste to reach for his phone.

Ava slipped and fell, hitting the toilet before landing on the wet floor, I watched in horror, unable to catch

her in time. She had fallen from the toilet seat to the damp ground and was now bawling in agony.

I rushed over, leaving Matthew stunned. I picked up our daughter and noticed her lips bleeding as they

+15 BONUS

“Matthew Murphy, you idiot!” I yelled at him as he stood frozen, then left the bathroom with Ava in my

arms.

Ava cried as her swollen lip trembled. I sat on the couch to wipe the blood off her lips with some tissues,

with a heart aching so intensely that I struggled to breathe. Meanwhile, the phone kept ringing, and

Matthew was still shocked over what had just happened.

It was either that or guilt had consumed him over his carelessness. Nonetheless, he followed me out and

watched Ava’s bloodied lips with a panicked expression, trying to console her.

1

I trembled as I carefully pressed the tissues to Ava’s lips, comforting her by kissing her forehead

repeatedly.

An inexplicable pain surged through my body. I never expected the man I had always considered a

perfect husband and great father to become so infatuated with another woman that he would forget his

daughter

Ava was so young, yet she became a casualty of our failing marriage. I couldn’t take it anymore and

shouted, “Answer the damn phone! I want to see who’s calling you so persistently! Answer!”

Matthew hurriedly silenced the phone while I held Ava tightly. My dear daughter had just woken up from her peaceful sleep just to endure such pain. Then, she was horrified before she could recover from the fall.

My regret for letting Matthew care for Ava overwhelmed me. Ultimately, I remained seated on the couch, frantically wiping Ava’s blood with tissues. I said sobbingly, “D–Don’t cry, baby. Mommy’s sorry!” 1

I couldn’t hold back my tears while cradling her.

“Honey, I’m so sorry. H-...” Matthew was frantic and lost.

I glared at him, my voice hoarse from shouting, “Are you even a human being?! Are you? Look at me and tell me if you are. Can you even face your daughter? Tell me who called you now! Why didn’t you answer?”

Matthew looked flustered as he gulped. His eyes were shifty, and his lips twitched while avoiding my gaze. “I–It was...Ivanna. She wanted me to cover for her because she’s seeing someone else and thought you might find out. S–So, she called to ask me for advice.

1

“I didn’t want you to think poorly of me, so I hid it from you. I know you hate these things,” Matthew’s voice trembled, but his explanation was sincere. He even revealed an air of earnestness and vulnerability.

I looked at him and felt utterly defeated because he refused to tell the truth. I shook with anger, and his

phone started ringing again.

Chapter 19

Chapter 19 Smooth–Talker

The phone call shocked Matthew and me. His eyes narrowed, while mine grew sharper as I looked at him

and demanded, "Answer it!"

Matthew froze again.

"You will answer this call in front of me if you have any conscience left. I'll give you one last chance!" I

stared at him, holding my still-crying daughter close.

After a while, I straightened up and continued, "I used to believe my husband would never betray me, even

in a world full of lies. You've let me down."

I finally uttered the words I never wanted to face. I never expected the concept of betrayal to affect us

too. I cried as the words left my mouth. My cries mixed with Ava's in a symphony of heartache and

brokenness.

Matthew slowly took his phone, and the ringtone was even more jarring in the tense atmosphere. I looked

motionless husband staring at me. Gradually, his fingers clenched into a fist as I growled through

at my

gritted teeth, "Answer it!"

Matthew glanced at the phone and said, "I—It's Melanie."

"Answer it!" Regardless of who it was, I wouldn't give him another chance to reject the call.

Although he hesitated, he saw my determination and reluctantly answered, "Mel, I'm in the middle of

something with Chloe right now. Can we talk later?"

“Oh, sure. I’ll call you tomorrow then!” It was indeed Melanie’s voice on the other end.

After hanging up the phone, Matthew looked at me innocently.

I felt lost in the face of this unexpected turn. Ava’s cries for me made it impossible to continue

confronting him, so I stood up and carried her to our room before slamming the door. 1

“C—Chlo... Chlo!”

I couldn’t hold back my tears as the door closed. I was so close to exposing Matthew, yet he twisted the situation. I suspected Melanie must be covering for her brother. I would expect such things from his sister, especially since Melanie and I never liked each other.

At that moment, Matthew seemed like a stranger to me. He was cunning and a convincing liar, making me shudder just thinking about it. I had shared my bed with that man for many years, but he led a double life while I clung to my fantasies.

+15 BONUS

Matthew stood outside and called for me continuously, but I didn’t acknowledge him. I held my daughter

close that night, and the scene of her falling haunted me. My heart ached with regret, and I couldn’t sleep

a wink.

The following morning, Matthew prepared breakfast and innocently stood outside Ava’s room as he woke

us up.

Once I got Ava dressed and carried her out of the room, Matthew guiltily hugged us. “Chlo, please don’t be mad. I was wrong. Please forgive me.” 3)

He pressed his face against Ava’s cheek and continued, “I feel even worse for you, little one. I’m so sorry.”

Matthew looked at Ava's lips and gently touched them while his eyes reddened. After all, his deception caused Ava's injury.

"Chlo, please believe me. I would never betray you. Please stop overthinking things. It hurts me when you're like this, so I've been reflecting on myself all night. Maybe I've been neglecting you lately, and I'm sorry.

"How about we go on a vacation to Tarantino this weekend, just the three of us? We can visit the amusement park and then go to the spa."

I felt conflicted, seeing him beg like this. However, I reminded myself not to believe his lies and to fight for Ava's justice. I collected my emotions before saying. "All right. Hurry and eat your food before you

go to work. I think what Melanie said to me last night got to me. Well... Forget it!"

I purposely brought up Melanie.

However, Matthew didn't react to it and cheered as if I had forgiven him. Immediately after, he hugged and kissed me nonstop.

"I knew my reasonable wife would understand! Don't lower yourself to her level! Honey, I can't live without you. I couldn't sleep last night. You can't let your thoughts wander, okay? I love you more than anything."

Ha! I'm so reasonable that I let him cheat on me. 2

suppressed my laugh and said, "Okay, let's eat."

Although Ava was young, she was preceptive. She noticed our expressions and babbled on while hugging us. Soon after, we enjoyed our breakfast together, which was almost harmonious.

However, Ava's swollen lips still bugged me. It was a constant reminder that the man before me had inflicted irreparable wounds on me and my daughter. Despite that, I was already thinking of ways to uncover the other woman's identity.

Chapter 20

Chapter 20 An Excellent Opportunity

I glanced at the incessantly ringing phone, unsure how to describe my emotions. The timing was

impeccable because she called just as Matthew left. I knew he must've called her and reported the

situation as soon as he left.

I calmly answered the call, "Yes, Ivanna?"

real mood.

"What are you up to? is Ava okay?" Ivanna sounded like she was in a great

Of course, she would be in a great mood. She must be taking advantage of last night's argument between.

Matthew and me.

"It seems like you're free today to call me so early in the morning. There was a hint of sarcasm in my

tone.

"Well, I'm not a robot. Even I need to recharge and maintain myself!" Ivanna laughed. "Let's go out."

"Ava isn't at school yet, so I'm just playing with her at home," I replied.

"Oh? That's great. Bring her along so I can spoil her a little. Since you weren't in a good mood last time, I

didn't dare to talk to her for long." Ivanna teased me.

After some thought, I figured the opportunity was too good to pass up. Since she had initiated it, it

wouldn't be fair if I didn't use this chance to meet with her.

“Sure! I don’t care where we go as long as I can relax and have some quiet time. Can I come to your place? I’ve never been there because you’ve been hiding it from me. What if something happened to you? I won’t be able to find you if I don’t know where you live.” I

I spoke as if it were our usual banter.

Ivanna seemed hesitant as I tightened the grip on my phone. I sensed her reluctance and probed, “Is this

a bad time?”

“What do you mean? Even if I had a man over, I’d kick him out so you can come over,” Ivanna replied, “All right, then. You stay there, and I’ll pick you and Ava up later. I’ll be there soon!”

After ending the call, I held my daughter and felt a heavy weight on my chest. How nice would it be if none of this had happened? Then I could treat it all as a nightmare. At least Ava wouldn’t have gotten hurt.

I looked at her still–swollen lips and asked, “Do they still hurt?”

Ava shook her head and consoled me, saying, “It doesn’t hurt anymore, and Daddy said he didn’t mean it..

+15 BONUS

I choked up and wondered how lovely it would be to be as Innocent as my daughter.

Ivanna’s car arrived two hours later, and I went downstairs to meet her. I hid the two keys I had duplicated in my bag to confirm whether they belonged to her place. However, I was surprised that her apartment was in one of the most well–known upscale neighborhoods in Foswood, Amethyst Apartments.

I was familiar with this area as it had the best schools. That included Sunnydale, which provided education from kindergarten to high school. The school’s quality of education was supposedly the best in the province.

I had mentioned this area to Matthew before since I wanted to buy a house here for Ava to attend Sunnydale Institute. z

“Ivanna, I didn’t expect you to live in Amethyst Apartments. I’ve been eyeing this place for a while,” I spoke sincerely, forgetting my resentment toward her.

“You’ve set your sights on Sunnydale, haven’t you?” Ivanna spoke rapidly. “That’s not an easy feat. When Ava starts school, you can let her stay with me if you trust me. We’ll go to Sunnydale together.” z

I froze in place as my heart raced. I wondered if Ivanna was preparing to snatch my daughter from me.

Just then, she reached out to take Ava and noticed the bruise on her hips. “Hey, how did this happen? I

don’t remember seeing that injury on her lips either!”

Ivanna feigned surprise as if she was trying to strike a nerve with me.

However, I hugged Ava and said coldly, “It was an accident.”

Ivanna sensed my alienation and stiffened.

Previously, I deliberately checked her keys when she opened the door, but she quickly tossed them into

her bag. Ultimately, I didn’t get a chance to see them clearly.

After entering Ivanna’s apartment on the twelfth floor, she dropped her bag onto the cabinet near the

door and reached for Ava, saying, “Come here. Let Aunty Ivanna show you around, kiddo.”

The elegantly furnished and gorgeous apartment was large, almost too extravagant for one person. Fresh

flowers were on the coffee table, showing a single woman’s sophisticated taste. The place was beautiful

compared to my shabby 450–square–foot apartment.

It seemed Ivanna had been living a pretty luxurious life while I only had the bare necessities. On top of

that, I was not in a battle of wits with my cheating husband.

Ava squealed excitedly, calling for me childishly, “Wow, Mommy, Aunt Ivanna’s place is so pretty!”

+15 BONUS

I almost felt bitter at the sound of my daughter’s joyful cries. Soon after, I followed them inside, carefully

observing every apartment detail for clues.