

Beyond the Divorce #Chapter 1 - Read Beyond the Divorce Chapter 1

Chapter 1

Chapter 1 Breadcrumbs of Clues

As night fell, I could finally relax after putting my daughter to bed. I grabbed my phone and mindlessly scrolled through TikTok when a street fashion live broadcast caught my eye.

I straightened up and focused on the screen, but the host had already switched the camera angle. My heart pounded, and my hands started to feel clammy as I held my phone. I checked the time and confirmed it was a live broadcast happening in the same city.

Then I hurriedly exited TikTok and video-called my husband, Matthew Murphy.

He was supposed to be on a three-day business trip in Canta, yet I just saw him on the live broadcast with another woman in his arms. The phone rang for a long while before he finally answered the call.

Matthew's camera shook slightly, and his handsome face appeared on my phone's screen. He greeted me warmly, "Hey, honey!"

"Where are you?" I asked urgently as my eyes scanned the footage from his end. He looked like he was in a corridor of a restaurant, and he was wearing a white shirt and tie. However, the figure I saw in the live broadcast wore a gray windbreaker.

"I'm having dinner with a client. I came out to answer your call. What's up? Is there something wrong? Is Ava asleep?" He asked.

"Are you in Canta?" I sidestepped his question and asked again.

"Of course I am. Why? Is something wrong?" He looked at me seriously through the camera, full of curiosity.

"Oh! It's...nothing!" I mumbled absent-mindedly, then asked, "When are you coming home?"

“Soon... I’ll be back once I wrap things up here. Do you miss me?” Matthew smiled affectionately at me, full of love. “I’ll try to come home as soon as possible. It’s getting late. Go to bed early, okay? I still have things to attend to. Bye!”

He blew a kiss to me and then hung up the call.

I held my phone, stunned and annoyed at myself for being suspicious. Matthew was an extraordinary, handsome, and doting husband, even though he was just a pauper when we first met.

Although he was from an ordinary family with a sickly younger sister from the city, I chose him among my many admirers because of his looks.

After graduation, I used my parents’ house as collateral to start a supply company with him and stayed by his side. Matthew was responsible for sourcing while I tirelessly dealt with clients to the point I almost suffered from gastric bleeding. Fortunately, the company grew and began thriving.

When I got pregnant, I decided to stop and entrusted the company to my husband while I focused on raising our child and managing our home.

Ava, our daughter, had turned four. We led a comfortable and well-off life as a family of three, which people were envious of.

Matthew felt so guilty that we didn’t have a wedding ceremony that he promised to provide for me and make up for any grievances I suffered.

How could such a husband cheat?

I pursed my lips and smiled, realizing I had watched too many TV shows that evoked such ridiculous thoughts. When I laid back in bed, I still thought about the fleeting figure on the TikTok live.

I must have been thinking about Matthew too much. Also, the windbreaker looked familiar as it was the one I had ironed for him before his business trip. That meant the man in the live stream wore the same one, which confused me.

Matthew returned early the following day and brought many delicious treats for Ava. He hugged us both affectionately, creating a heartwarming

atmosphere. I rushed to the kitchen happily to prepare several of his favorite dishes as a reward.

Matthew glanced at me as we sat to eat and casually said, "There's a strong smell of oil here. Why don't you go take a shower?"

I calmly sniffed, then smiled proudly, saying, "That's the smell of good food. Don't you like the smell of food?"

He chuckled as he lovingly ruffled my hair. Then he stuffed some food into my mouth and gave Ava a piece too. "All right, my sweethearts. Let's all eat!"

After dinner, I quickly put Ava to bed and then showered. I inched closer to Matthew and flirtatiously asked, "Do I still smell like oil?"

Matthew smiled and affectionately pinched me. "I've missed you so much, sweetheart!"

He pulled me toward the bed right away without giving me a chance to respond. Also, he seemed particularly enthusiastic today.

When we finished, I smiled and watched his tall figure approach the bathroom. As I was about to clean up, his phone on the bedside table flashed, indicating he had received a WhatsApp message.

I glanced at it and froze.

Chapter 2

Chapter 2 A Substantial Amount of Information

I was about to pick up the phone to see who the sender was when Matthew hurried into the room and took the phone. He glanced at it hastily, then looked back at me.

"It's Mel!"

"What's the matter? Are you afraid that I'll find something?" I looked at him suspiciously and felt uneasy as if something was wrong.

The message had only four words. "Did she find out?"

It was enough for me because it implied the other person feared I'd find out about something. The message also showed a hint of ambiguity, so I scrutinized Matthew. My gut feeling surged as my premonition grew heavier.

Matthew chuckled casually and threw the phone back on the bedside table. Then he pulled me into his arms and kissed my lips, saying, "You're overthinking! It's not about you, but my sister, Mel. She's using me as a cover to scam Mom for money."

Mel was Matthew's younger sister, Melanie Murphy. She had been weak and sickly since childhood, so her family always pampered and spoiled her. She also behaved like a rich brat.

Melanie was in her twenties but never took anything seriously. She didn't even go to school and only traveled, ate, and had fun.

"You're trying to scam your mother for money? Where do you think her money comes from?" I snapped.

Matthew smiled, bent down, and lifted me in his arms. Then he nibbled on my earlobe as he approached the bathroom. "Yeah, yeah, it's all your money. That's what happens when I marry an amazing and understanding woman like you."

I appreciated his words.

Throughout the years, I had never been stingy regarding his family because I believed a harmonious family led to success in all endeavors. I also believed in treating others with the same kindness I received.

Our second round in the shower washed away my doubts and grievances. It made me happy and content as I lay in Matthew's arms.

That night, I brought up buying a house in a good school district again, which had become a pressing matter for me. We had lived in this small 500-square-foot apartment since we got married. The size didn't bother me, but I didn't want Ava to have a disadvantaged start.

She was about to start school, but the neighborhood had no good ones nearby. Although we had saved money for a new house over the years, Matthew always said there was no rush.

He wanted to find the best location in the fast-developing city so we wouldn't need to keep moving.

This time, he didn't argue when I brought it up again. Instead, he patted my shoulder, kissed my forehead, and said, "Okay, I'll look for a suitable place for you to see, and then you can decide."

His response pleased me, and I fell asleep sweetly, daydreaming about a beautiful big house.

Just after dropping Ava off at the kindergarten the following day, I received a call from my best friend, Irvanna, saying she wanted to meet at our usual spot.

Of course, I immediately responded and took a cab to the location.

Ivanna and I were close, just like sisters. We could talk about anything, but it was rare for her to call me. After all, she was a busy woman who worked as a talent manager in a media company.

When I entered our favorite dessert shop, I saw her sitting in the corner, typing away on her laptop. The morning sun cast a peaceful glow on her, making her look even more beautiful.

She waved at me as I approached, and I sat down before playfully asking, "Why are you so free today? You even had time to ask me out so early in the morning."

Ivanna rolled her eyes at me and replied, "Can't I be concerned about you?"

"Haha, sure you can!" I sat down and sipped the coffee she had ordered for me. "But aren't you always busy while I'm always free?"

"Ha! Aren't you ashamed of that? Now, all I see is Matthew spoiling you. Don't say I didn't warn you, but don't get too comfortable. It's easy to become a fool!" Ivanna said, looking at me intently.

For some reason, her words made my heart pound. I looked at her and casually asked, "What do you mean? There's more to your words, isn't there?"

She lowered her gaze, looking at the computer screen, seemingly trying to hide something. "Oh, nothing! I'm just teasing you a little."

After some thought, she looked at me and said, "I saw Matthew the day before yesterday."

Chapter 3

Chapter 3 Anxiety

"Two days ago? Where?" I asked, feeling a little anxious.

Ivanna noticed my reaction and retorted, "What's with that look?"

"Where did you see him?" I couldn't care less about bantering with her and continued pressing for answers.

However, Ivanna's phone started ringing. She glanced at the screen and hushed me before leaning into her chair and answering the call. After a few sentences, she straightened up, glanced at me, and said, "What?! I'll be right there!"

Immediately after, she closed her laptop and stuffed it into her bag. "I have to go. Let's meet up again another time!"

"Wait... You..." I had more questions, but she ignored me and left.

She said she saw Matthew two days ago, but he was supposed to be on his business trip in Canta then. Where did she see him? Was she at Canta for a trip as well?

I shrunk back into the seat silently. I was helpless, but a strange sense of fear filled my heart. The TikTok video kept playing in my mind, but I wasn't sure if it was Matthew.

Was he lying to me? Did he not go to Canta at all? Is he having an affair?

I sat alone in the cafe with my mind in turmoil. Despite the warm sunlight shining on me, I couldn't stop shivering. I wondered what I should do if Matthew had an affair and what would happen to Ava.

I was so absent-minded the whole day that I forgot to pick Ava up. Fortunately, Matthew returned early today. Seeing that I had forgotten to pick Ava up, he quickly comforted me and left for kindergarten.

Once he left, I forced myself to get up and started cooking. Before Matthew returned with our daughter, Melanie walked in unexpectedly. She had a key to our place and treated it as her own home.

Although I disliked this, Matthew indulged her. When she saw me in the kitchen, she put down her bag and came over. She leaned against the door and asked, "Why are you cooking? Where's my brother?"

I was washing the vegetables as I replied, "He went to pick Ava up."

"It's already late, and he's only going to pick her up now?" Melanie's tone carried a hint of reproach. She always acted pampered and arrogant, as if she was the boss of the house.

Her attitude toward me, her sister-in-law, was also unpredictable. However, I had grown accustomed to her behavior over the years. After all, she was Matthew's sister, and I had no choice but to accept the good and bad of marrying him.

"Do we have squid at home? I want some calamari!" She asked casually.

I gestured toward the fridge. "Look in there. Your brother probably bought some."

Just then, Ava's tender voice echoed from the doorway. "Mommy, I'm back! Why did you forget to pick me up today?" She ran up to me, looking at me with her head tilted.

Although I felt guilty, I smiled and pinched her nose with my wet hands. "I was busy. I promise I won't forget my baby next time."

Matthew came in with our daughter's little backpack and looked at us dotingly. Meanwhile, Melanie approached the doorway and greeted him, "Matt!"

"Why are you here?" Matthew asked as he put down his things and removed his coat. Then he entered the kitchen and wrapped his arms around me. The next second, he removed my apron and put it on himself. "I got this, honey. You can go play with Ava."

Melanie stared at her brother and sarcastically remarked, "My brother is such a good husband. I want to find someone like him in the future!"

Matthew snapped, "Leave the kitchen and stop causing trouble. Just wait for the meal to be ready."

"I don't want to. I'll help you!" Melanie spoke playfully, then squeezed into the kitchen. "I want to experience being a supportive wife!"

I sighed at her words and thought she was shameless. How could she dream about finding someone like her brother when she was just a good-for-nothing who lazed around all day? It'd be a curse for whoever married her.

I was already annoyed, but seeing Melanie amplified it. She was a grown woman who constantly pestered her brother. I knew she was only sucking up to Matthew to ask for money again.

The Murphys had lived in poor conditions in their earlier years. Matthew's parents worked odd jobs everywhere, while Melanie often fell sick and needed tentative care. Life was challenging for them back then, and Matthew felt helpless.

However, Matthew and his family's lives changed drastically when my company kicked off. In a way, Matthew and I supported a big family, especially Melanie.

She always asked for money as if we were supposed to give it to her. She was practically a parasite yet unapologetic and still dared to be carefree. I was genuinely speechless.

I took my daughter's hand and left the kitchen. If Melanie was out of sight, she was out of mind. Just then, my phone rang, and when I looked, it was Ivanna.

Chapter 4

Chapter 4 The Truth Hurts

I hurried back to the bedroom and answered the call to complain, "You're something else, huh? You left me hanging!"

"Something came up at work, so I was in a rush." Ivanna sounded tired. "I just finished settling it. That's why I'm calling you now. Why are you complaining? Do you think my life is as easy as yours?"

I hesitated to reply but couldn't hold back and asked her, "Um, you mentioned seeing Matthew two days ago. Where was he? What time was it?"

This question had been bugging me all day.

Ivanna paused on the other end before she answered calmly, "Honestly, I forgot the exact location. It was just a fleeting glimpse while I was driving."

"Oh." For some reason, her answer left me a bit disappointed. Although my heart dropped, I unclenched my fists and realized my palms were cold and sweaty. I chuckled and wondered whether or not I wanted to prove Matthew was having an affair.

I must admit he was my everything, and I feared losing him.

"I realize how obsessed you are with your husband. You seem to light up whenever I mention Matthew. Can't you prioritize yourself more? Since Ava is already in kindergarten, you should do something for yourself.

"Don't tell me you plan on being Matthew's accessory for the rest of your life. I think you're becoming a fool. You seem completely disconnected from the outside world because Matthew is the only person in yours," Ivanna mocked me.

I smiled awkwardly and sighed. "Matthew said..."

"See?! Matthew said this, Matthew said that. Was I wrong to say you're obsessed with him? Your life revolves around him, and whatever he says goes. Will you jump off a cliff if he says so? Will you count the money for him if he sells you off?" Ivanna didn't hold back.

"Ugh, you're such a jinx! Matthew will never sell me!" I retorted.

"Yeah, you're right. Your beloved Matthew will never sell you, but I will!" Ivanna sneered disdainfully. "The truth hurts sometimes, but you must have values. Your life shouldn't revolve around being a housewife and doing chores. That's not love. That's being a fool!

"It's only love if he cares about you. How can you keep his interest if all you do is stay home and do chores? Let me ask you something. Besides your child and husband, do you even know who you are anymore?"

Ivana babbled, and I had no time to refute.

She noticed my silence and softened her tone. “Chloe, I want to see your confident and radiant self again. You used to be a top student, my superstar! I just think it’s a shame to see you wasting your time, slaving away at home like this.”

“Enough. This is like giving me a pat on the back after slapping me. I don’t know who got on your nerves, but you’ve decided to vent it on me.”

We both laughed when I said that.

Still, I knew Ivanna always spoke her mind. Although she had mentioned similar things before, hearing them again today felt different. I didn’t know why I felt flustered and wondered if Ivanna was trying to imply something.

Just then, Matthew knocked on the door and walked in with a gentle smile. “Honey, it’s time to eat!”

Ivanna heard his voice from the other end of the call and said, “All right, go have your dinner.” Then she lowered her voice and advised, “Consider what I said. Take my words to heart, and don’t get blinded by the shining things before you!”

With that, she hung up.

Matthew pulled me into his arms and kissed me. “Who was it?”

“Ivanna.”

“What did she say? Was she nagging again?” Matthew smiled tenderly, seemingly casual. He knew how close Ivanna and I were because three of us were former classmates. “I haven’t seen her in a long while.”

My mind began to spin. Matthew said he hadn’t seen her in a while, so Ivanna was far away when she saw him. I felt relieved and knew I was overthinking.

“What’s wrong?” Matthew noticed my absent-mindedness and leaned down to look at me. He pinched my cheeks playfully with both hands and leaned in for a kiss, showing utmost concern.

Then he asked, “What’s distracting you? What are you thinking about?”

His gaze was careful, and I snapped out of my thoughts. I smiled and said, "Nothing. Let's eat!"

Matthew pulled me close and kissed me again before we walked outside together. Even so, my doubts somehow grew heavier.

Chapter 5

Chapter 5 Strong Evidence

Melanie didn't stay long after dinner. She pouted at Matthew and asked, "Matt, can you give me a ride?"

I rolled my eyes at her and glanced her way, but she feigned ignorance as she clung to Matthew's arm, acting like a spoiled brat.

Matthew looked at me with a helpless smile, but since I didn't respond, he awkwardly said, "Wait a while. I'll help Chloe with the dishes and then take you out."

I was honestly sick of Melanie's behavior and didn't want to see her for another minute, so I waved Matthew away. "You go ahead and take her where she wants to go. I can handle the dishes myself."

"Daddy, where are you going? I want to go too!" Ava called out, standing up from her chair as she extended her little hands for Matthew to pick her up.

Matthew lifted Ava and pecked her cheek, saying, "Daddy will be home soon! Be good and play with Mommy, okay?"

"What's the point of you coming along, kid?" Melanie questioned. She had no patience for Ava.

I took Ava from Matthew. "Sweetheart, Daddy is sending your aunt off and will be home soon. Can you stay here with Mommy?"

Ava looked at me with her big, watery eyes before nodding. Then she hugged my neck and turned to look at Matthew. "Okay! Come home quickly, Daddy!"

Matthew leaned in to kiss Ava again and nodded. "Okay!"

He then took the car keys and left to drop Melanie off.

Melanie held onto her brother's arm, glancing back at me with a smug and mysterious smile, but I couldn't be bothered.

Matthew returned late that night, but I didn't ask much. Since he was a dutiful son, I assumed he chatted with his parents before coming home.

He woke up early the following day and said he had an important meeting at nine in the morning. He also took Ava with him and dropped her off at kindergarten to save me the trouble.

Matthew was always considerate about every detail, leaving me nothing to complain about. It was just as Ivanna said. He had spoiled me so much that I grew accustomed to it. He was the ideal husband, even to others.

I looked at the clothes he had changed out of and tidied them up since the laundry was piling up. I checked the pockets before taking them downstairs to send them off to the dry cleaner. Still, I didn't expect to find something in one of the pockets.

I was shocked and horrified by what I held. It provided undeniable evidence for all my doubts and worries. It was a packaged condom.

After giving birth to Ava, I had an IUD inserted, so we had no reason to have such a thing. I threw the disgusting thing away, and my heart shattered. I knew he was cheating on me! After years of hard work and struggles, he betrayed my trust.

Just as we finally enjoyed some good days, he dared to lie to me. I felt helpless as I knelt on the floor and held my head. Images of him and another woman swirled in my mind, adding to my heartache.

I had given him all my youth and love. I had given everything to him and this family, yet he treated me like dirt. After my initial shock, I mumbled to myself repeatedly, "Chloe, calm down. You can't afford to lose everything you've worked so hard for."

I needed to give myself a clear and definitive answer. Once I recollected my emotions, I clenched my fists and told myself not to give up. After taking a deep breath, I washed up and took a cab to the company building.