

Never again

Julian froze as he saw someone who looked like Claire disappear into the corridor with a man. His heart skipped a beat.

Was it her? he wondered to himself. No, it couldn't be. But that laugh was definitely hers. And the figure? No doubt about it.

But what was she doing with that man she was with, walking hand in hand, like two people in love?

Curious, Julian's feet moved before his mind could catch up, and he started moving towards the corridor, ignoring Gabe and everyone

He walked through the corridor, hesitating as he wondered if perhaps he was mistaken and it was not Claire and his boss. The last thing he needed was to make a fool of himself, by badging in on people having a private moment.

Deciding to confirm he followed the way they went. After walking on the opulent corridor, he turned a corner, and there it was the bathroom door. The door was slightly opened, and he could hear voices coming from inside.

As Julian got closer, the voices became clearer. He recognized Claire's laugh, and the other voice, wastoo familiar. Was that... Brandon? His stomach churned. Brandon, his boss. What was he doing in there with Claire?

The thought of Claire cheating on him sent a surge of rage through Julian, but it wasn't just anger. A wave of dread followed, pulling at him. He was torn between the need to know the truth and the fear of what it might do to his heart. His hand trembled as he nudged the door open just enough to peer inside.

What he saw inside shattered him. Julian froze on his spot.

In the dimly lit bathroom, Claire was pressed against Brandon, her arms around him as he kissed her. His hand slid down her body, too intimate for Julian's mind to process. Claire giggled, stopping him. "Not here," she whispered.

"Don't worry, babe," Brandon's voice was smug, full of confidence, as he drew her in again, kissing her neck. "No one would dare interrupt us here." His arrogance was infuriating, the self-assured smirk in his tone nearly sending Julian's fist through the wall, or better yet, he wanted to run inside and punch him.

Julian's world came crashing down before jus own eyes. His girlfriend. With his boss. He could hardly believe it. How could she do this to him? Julian was shocked, frozen to his spot.

Brandon pulled back and casually brushed a strand of hair from Claire's face. "Why are you still with that loser, Julian?" he smirked. "You deserve someone better. Someone who's on your level."

Claire's eyes glinted with amusement as she shrugged, her voice dismissive, almost bored. "I only got with him for his looks," she said, eyeing Brandon. "But you... you're more than him."

Brandon grinned, squeezing Claire's chin and kissing her. "And don't forget, richer too." He said arrogantly.

The two of them laughed together, Brandon pulling her close and kissing her with an intensity Julian had never seen in her before. Brandon's hand slid possessively down her side, as if to claim her completely. Julian's hands clenched in anger, his nails digging into his palms until he felt the sting of skin breaking.

It was like one of his worst nightmares had come to life. He wanted to look away, to leave, leave not just the bathroom, but the entire party, and never speak to Claire again. It was over.

But he wanted to confront Claire first before leaving.

Without thinking too much about the consequences, he pushed the door entirely open and burst in. Claire and Brandon were still in each other's embrace, their lips locked together and getting intense when the door suddenly opened, catching them off guard.

They both pulled away from the kiss and stared at the door in surprise.

Brandon's expression shifted from shock to anger as he took a step back from Claire, his brows furrowing in anger. "What the hell is this?" he barked, his voice low and tense.

Who dared to walk on and interrupt him at a time like this? The thought that someone at this party would intrude on such a private moment ignited a surge of anger within Brandon.

Brandon hadn't anticipated anyone interrupting them, and the surprise left him momentarily speechless. He glared at Julian, his anger visible on his face.

However his angry facial expression quickly disappeared when he recognized that the person who had intruded was none other than Julian, Claire's boyfriend. A smug smirk emerged on his lips, as if he found some twisted amusement in Julian's hurt. It was a moment of satisfaction, relishing the betrayal he knew Julian must be feeling after catching his girlfriend being romantic with another man.

Brandon casually pulled Claire close to him, as if he wanted to make it clear that she was with him now, "Oh, Julian. What a surprise."

Claire was in shock too at the sight of Julian; she hadn't expected to be caught like this. Realizing she was caught red-handed, she struggled to compose herself, feeling slightly nervous. "Ju... Julian? What are you doing here?" she stammered, her voice laced with panic.

"What am I doing here?" he replied. "Maybe I should be asking you that, Claire. What are you doing here..." He turned and pointed at Brandon, his boss, "with him? Are you serious?.... You have been sleeping with my boss!?"

Brandon, crossed his arms with a smirk on his face. "And what exactly do you think you're doing, barging in here?" he demanded from Julian. "This is private. You have no business here."

The look of panic that had appeared across Claire's face moments before vanished, now replaced by a confident smirk as she leaned into Brandon, her body language entirely dismissive of Julian, it was like she didn't care about the fact that she was caught

Well of course she didn't care, why would she care about someone like him? A loser? He embarrassed her, and she couldn't believe she was in a relationship with him. What was she thinking when she agreed to date someone like him?

She had grown tired of him. And she was glad that he caught her, now she could easily end things between them. She glanced at him and said coolly, "He's right, you have no business here. Get out!"

Seeing the look in her eyes, the smirk, the way she clung to Brandon as if she wanted to rub salt in his wounds, made it painfully clear to Julian that she felt no regret about being caught or cheating. The realization hurt him deeper than any words could. "Wow! Are you serious??" His voice lowered, barely able to contain the hurt that rose in his throat. "After everything I've done for you... this is what you do to me, Claire!"

Claire was still leaning into Brandon. She barely seemed to hear him. She was focused on Brandon, her eyes cold as she met Julian's gaze. "What, Julian?" she asked, her tone condescending. "What have you really done? You scrape by, taking me to cheap dinners, wear the same old clothes, live like you're stuck in some broke college life. It's embarrassing. You're embarrassing." Saying that, Brandon took her hand and they walked past him. "We're over. Take your cheap gift and leave my party." She called back from a distance as they rejoined the others.

Julian stared at her as she walked away, hand in hand with Brandon. Julian's mind struggled to make sense of the person standing before him. This couldn't be Claire, the Claire he knew would never look at him with such coldness, wouldn't treat him like that.

A mix of emotions swirled within him, anger, sadness, a betrayal so raw it felt like a wound that would never heal. The realization that Claire, of all people, could be this cruel left him feeling empty. This wasn't just betrayal; it was a betrayal by the one person he'd trusted most.

Meanwhile, back in the ballroom, where the party continued without pause, the guests were already gossiping about the breakup.

"Finally, she dumped that guy," someone snickered. "Honestly, I thought she'd lost her mind. How could you date a guy like that? Sure, he's cute, but he's broke."

"I know, right?" another chimed in, voice smug. "And she and Brandon look perfect together. Both from rich families? It's like a match made in heaven."

As Julian passed by, he could hear them talking about how glad they were Claire had dumped him. He didn't react to any of it, as he didn't care. However as soon as they spotted him making his way out, eyes shifted toward him, the whispers and mockery following him.

"Oh, look at him, just leaving," someone sneered. "Guess he's not man enough to stand up to Brandon after he stole his girlfriend."

Julian didn't respond, his face impassive. Why would he do anything about Brandon? As much as he despised him, it was Claire who had broken his trust. She was the one who chose to betray him. But that didn't mean he had any respect left for Brandon, either.

"Man, that's just sad," another voice chimed in with open disdain. "Weak. Can't even stand up for himself."

The comments were cold, a bitter echo as he passed through the room. Julian clenched his fists but didn't let them see a single crack in his composure.

Reaching the door, he didn't stop or look back, leaving the laughter and whispers behind him. He wouldn't be the punchline of their jokes any longer. This was the last time anyone would have the power to tear him down like this.