

Two Can Play

Chapter 1

CELESTE

"Your husband is having an affair with my wife."

The water in my mouth splashed out before I could stop it.

I stared at Dominic Ford across the table, certain I had heard him wrong. I had to have heard him wrong. Because what he just said was impossible.

Julian would never cheat on me.

"Mr. Ford." I set my glass down carefully, the way you do when your hands are shaking and you don't want anyone to notice. "Is this a joke? Because it's not funny."

"Do I look like I'm joking?"

He didn't. Dominic Ford never looked like anything except serious. But that didn't mean he was right.

"Julian loves me," I said firmly. "He would never do something like this."

"I know." His voice was quiet and tired. "I said the same thing about Sera some months ago."

Sera.

Just her name made my chest do something strange. Seraphine Ford. My best friend since forever. The woman who cried at my wedding. The woman who called me every single day and told me how lucky I was to have a man like Julian.

We were practically sisters.

"This isn't possible," I said again, but my voice came out smaller this time.

Dominic looked at me the way people look at someone they feel sorry for. I hated it.

"Did you never see the signs?" he asked.

"There were no signs."

"Six months, Celeste."

I flinched at the number. "No."

"Six months and you never once suspected anything?"

"I said no." I got to my feet, my chair scraping back loudly. "I trust my husband completely. Whatever you think you know, you're wrong."

"Sit down."

"I'm leaving."

"Sit. Down."

Something in his voice stopped me. Not loud. Not aggressive. Just absolute.

I sat down.

He leaned forward, resting his arms on the table. "Six months ago, did anything change between you and Julian?"

I opened my mouth to speak, but closed it.

Six months.

The memories came without permission. The way Sera had suddenly started visiting more. Two, three, four times a week, always when Julian was home. I had been so happy about it. I thought our friendship was growing deeper. I thought she just missed me.

And Julian. Still loving. Still perfect. Still sending flowers every morning and texting me love notes throughout the day and kissing me like I was something precious each time he walked through the door.

But our sex life.

Three months since he had last touched me. Three long months of 'I'm exhausted baby' and 'once this project is done, I'll make it up to you' and 'just one more year and we'll have everything we've ever wanted.'

I had believed every word.

Stop it. I shook the thoughts away. You're doing exactly what he wants you to do.

"Even if things changed between me and Julian," I said carefully, "that doesn't prove anything."

Dominic pulled out his phone without a word.

He turned the screen toward me.

It took me three full seconds to understand what I was seeing. A luxury club. A private booth. Dark, expensive, intimate.

Julian and Sera.

Together.

My stomach dropped so fast I thought I was going to be sick right there at the table.

"That was taken last week," Dominic said flatly.

"No." I pushed the phone away. "No, that's not possible. Julian was out of the country last week. He was on a business trip. He video called me every single night until I fell asleep."

Dominic didn't argue. He just looked at me.

"He called me," I repeated, my voice cracking slightly. "Every night."

"I know." He took his phone back. "He's very thorough."

The word 'thorough' hit me somewhere tender. Like a bruise being pressed.

"You can see the truth for yourself if you still have doubts," he said.

I wiped the corner of my eye quickly, angry at myself. "What do you mean?"

"Julian probably told you this morning that he's traveling tomorrow. Four days. Business trip, right?"

I went very still. "How do you know that?"

"Because my wife already told me she's visiting her mother for four days." A dry smile crossed his face. It didn't reach his eyes. "They're not going anywhere, Celeste. He booked the entire East Wing of Rosewood Resort. Four days, just the two of them."

The room tilted slightly.

Julian had told me that morning. Before he left for work, still warm from sleep, kissing my forehead. 'I'll miss you every second, baby.' Those were his exact words.

"Come with me tomorrow evening," Dominic said. "If I'm wrong, you'll know. And if I'm right..." He didn't finish the sentence. He didn't need to.

I didn't remember agreeing. But somehow I nodded.

And somehow, I drove myself home.

I don't know how I managed it. The whole drive back, my chest felt like something was sitting on it. Heavy and immovable. I kept telling myself it wasn't real. The video was fabricated. Dominic was jealous of what Julian and I had. People did crazy things out of jealousy.

Julian loves me.

When he came home that evening, flowers in hand, eyes soft and warm the way they always were when he looked at me, something in my chest cracked.

See? Look at him. This man is not cheating on you.

He kissed me slow and deep in the kitchen and I kissed him back just as hard, searching for something. A lie. A tell. Anything that would make Dominic's words make sense.

I found nothing.

He asked about my day and I lied through my teeth, smiling up at him like my world hadn't shifted on its axis that afternoon.

That night, I tried again.

I pressed myself against him in bed, my fingers trailing across his chest, and he caught my hand gently.

"Baby." His voice sounded soft, exhausted and genuine. "I'm so tired. The moment this contract is done, every single night is yours. I promise."

"Okay," I whispered.

"I love you so much, baby."

"I know." I replied.

He kissed my forehead and rolled over.

I lay in the dark and listened to him breathe and wondered how a man could lie so beautifully.

Maybe he wasn't lying.

Maybe Dominic was.

I held onto that thought like a lifeline and waited for morning.

Julian kissed my cheek in the morning, while I pretended to sleep.

"I'll miss you every second. I love you."

I kept my eyes closed until the front door clicked shut behind him.

I didn't move until noon.