

Chapter 10

CELESTE

I woke up slowly.

For a moment I did not know where I was.

Then I remembered.

The resort. Dominic. The bathroom. The bed after the bathroom.

I turned my head on the pillow.

He was still asleep beside me. On his back. One arm thrown across his stomach. The sheet had slipped to his hip.

I looked at him. 1

I had not looked at him properly before. I had been too busy being undone by him. Now, I let myself. 4

The shoulders. The chest. The flat plane of his stomach and the cut lines below it. I knew what that body felt like now. I knew what it could do. Looking at it asleep felt like looking at a weapon someone had laid down on the bed next to me. 2

His phone buzzed on the nightstand and he came awake the way men like him came awake. All at once. No yawn. No stretch. Eyes open, hand already reaching. 2

He took the call quietly. Said three words. Hung up.

He looked at me.



"You hungry?"

"No." 3

"I have a meeting. Can I drop you home?"

"Yes."

That was the whole conversation. 1

He dressed without performance. I watched him do it. He caught me watching once and the corner of his mouth moved. He did not say anything. I liked that he did not say anything.

--- 2

The drive back was quiet.

I watched the city go by through the window and did not think about anything. Or I thought about everything and could not name any of it. 4

He pulled up outside the gates. Did not get out. Did not lean over. Just looked at me.

"I will call you." 2

"Okay."

I got out.

The gate closed behind me and I walked through my own compound and it looked smaller than I remembered it. 1

--- 2



I made it to the bedroom before my legs gave out.

I threw myself face down on the bed and the exhaustion hit me like a second body landing on top of mine. Every muscle. The backs of my thighs. My jaw. Places I did not know could be sore.

My phone rang.

I rolled onto my side and looked at the screen.

Julian.

I watched it ring.

I watched the name pulse on the screen and I did not move my hand toward it. Not once.

The call ended.

I unlocked the phone and saw the missed calls stacked up like accusations. Six. Eight. I stopped counting.

Twenty four hours ago, I would have called him back before the phone stopped ringing. I would have apologized for missing him. I would have made my voice soft to take the edge off whatever mood he was in.

I set the phone face down on the sheet.

Nothing.

No guilt. No pull. No instinct to fix.

Just a body that had been pleased for hours by a man who was not my husband, and a phone full of missed calls from a husband who was somewhere with my best friend.



I closed my eyes.

--- 2

The first time I saw Dominic was at a club. 1

I had been out with Sera and Pat. The three of us. Single, all of us, though Sera was only ever single between men. She collected them. Cycled through them. Always had one more in the wings.

I had seen him from across the room. 3

That was all it took. 1

The shoulders. The way he held a drink. The way he was not looking at anyone but somehow held the room. My type, top to bottom, drawn from whatever sketch lived in the back of my head. 3

He looked up. He looked at me.

My stomach dropped. 1

"I caught one," I said to the girls. I was grinning. I felt sixteen. "Look."

Pat looked. Pat whistled.

Sera looked.

Sera said, "I call dibs. Sit this one out, Celeste. He is my spec and I saw him first." 6

I turned to her.

I do not remember what my face did. I remember that I did not have time to make it do anything before she was already off her chair, already



walking, already arranging her hair on the way over. 1

I watched her stand in front of him.

I watched him smile.

"You know how Sera is," Pat said next to me. Sympathetic. Tired. The voice of the older friend who had watched Sera flirt many times with men. 2

I got up.

I walked out of the club.

I told myself I was not the kind of woman who fought another woman over a man. I told myself there would be others. 1

I had not known then that the man I let walk away that night was going to walk back into my life through my husband's bed. 2

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