

Two Can Play

Chapter 2

CELESTE Dominic picked me up at five. We didn't talk much in the car. What was there to say? We were either about to prove he was wrong, or we were about to have our entire lives rearranged. Rosewood Resort sat at the edge of the city, all glass and warm light and the kind of quiet money that didn't need to announce itself. According to Dominic's words, Julian had rented the entire East wing and so it wasn't open to other people. But Dominic had already arranged everything. Two employees met us at the back entrance and for a folded stack of bills, led us through a service corridor and out into the resort's private garden in the East wing. The sky had been rumbling for the past hour. Dark clouds rolling in fast. I could smell the rain coming. "We have to be quick," Dominic said quietly. We moved along the tree line and I told myself for the hundredth time that we were going to find nothing. An empty garden. A misunderstanding. Something I could take home and hold up like proof that I hadn't been a fool. Then I saw him. Julian. My husband stood between two palm trees in the resort garden, dressed casually in a way I had never seen him dress for a business trip. Linen shirt, sleeves rolled up, a drink in one hand. And Sera tucked under his other arm like she belonged there. They were laughing. Laughing like the world was a beautiful private joke that only the two of them understood. I stopped walking. I couldn't feel my legs. No. My mind was screaming it. No, no, no. Dominic stopped beside me. But I felt him look at me, just once, quickly, the way you look at someone when you think they can't see you. Like he was checking if I was still standing. I was. Barely. My hands were shaking when I pulled out my phone and called Julian's number. Across the garden, Julian glanced at his screen. He said something to Sera. I saw her roll her eyes. Then he answered. "Baby." His voice was warm. Happy. Completely normal. "I was just thinking about you. I miss you so much already." My throat had closed, but I forced the words out. "Where are you right now?" "At my desk." He lied so easily and effortlessly. "Swamped with work but I can't stop thinking about you. Did you sleep okay? You were so deep asleep when I left, you looked so beautiful. Do you miss me?" "I do," I said. "I miss you more." He laughed softly. "I'll call you before bed, okay? Don't stay up too late." Then the call ended. Across the garden, Julian slipped his phone back into his pocket and turned back to Sera. She reached up and pulled his face down to hers and he kissed her. He kissed her the way he used to kiss me. The sky broke open. Rain came down hard and fast, soaking through my clothes in seconds. I just stood there and let it. I stood in the rain and watched them in each other's arms while tears ran down my face and mixed with the rainwater, and I couldn't even tell the difference anymore. Then Sera laughed at something he said and turned, leaning back against a tree. And Julian didn't hesitate. His hands found her like they knew exactly where to go. Like they had done this a hundred times before. Because they had. My breath left my body. He lifted her thigh like she weighed nothing. Like I had never existed. What happened next broke something in me that I already knew would never heal. I watched my husband take my best friend in the rain and I couldn't look away. I couldn't move. I couldn't breathe. I couldn't do anything except stand there completely hollow and feel my entire world burn

down around me. Suddenly, Dominic's hand closed around my arm. "Come on," he said quietly. "You've seen enough." I let him pull me away from the rain, away from Julian and Sera and the ruins of everything I thought was mine. He was right. I had seen enough. Enough to know that every flower he ever sent me meant nothing. Every phone call, every whispered I love you, every morning kiss and every promise of forever meant absolutely nothing. Two years of my life. Gone. I didn't scream or fall to my knees, the way they do in movies, I just walked through the rain beside a man I barely knew, soaking wet, completely hollow, with one question running over and over through my mind like a broken record. What was wrong with me? What did I do wrong?