

Beyond the Divorce #Chapter 21 - Read Beyond the Divorce Chapter 21

Chapter 21

Chapter 21 My Best Friend's Keys

After touring around her house, I felt a bit disappointed. There wasn't even a pair of men's slippers in her place.

I suspect she had tidied up since it took her two hours to come and pick us up to hide any evidence. I figured she had thought things through.

It was enough time for her

Ivanna prepared a few snacks for Ava, perhaps because she sensed how distracted I was. She then

turned on the TV, played a cartoon, and sat beside me. Soon after, she began to scrutinize me, making

me feel uncomfortable.

Then, she patted my hand, saying, "Let it out."

My heart raced, and I looked at her defensively while withdrawing my hand. "Let what out?"

"Share what's on your mind," Ivanna encouraged as if trying to coax me.

I sneered before saying. "What's on my mind? What do you mean?"

I saw her mouth twitch. After a moment of silence, she stood up abruptly. "You stay here and play with

Ava. I'll make something for you two to eat."

After removing her coat and changing clothes, she went into the kitchen.

I sat with my daughter absentmindedly and gazed at the large screen, pondering whether my thoughts

were headed in the right direction. Suddenly, her phone rang, and my senses heightened immediately. I

suspected it was Matthew calling.

I stood up and sat on the nearest sofa to the kitchen. I heard Ivanna's voice softly speaking on the phone,

her tone tender and different from when she was with me. Though I couldn't make out the content of her

conversation, it felt like a thousand needles pricking my heart.

I rose and headed to the kitchen, but as I approached, I noticed that Ivanna had already ended the call

and placed the phone in her apron pocket.

She looked surprised at my sudden appearance. "Go and keep Ava company. You're my guest, so I'll take

care of everything. Just wait for the food."

I smiled and didn't move, leaning against the kitchen door frame. "Did you buy this house yourself?"

"I don't have that much money. It's the company's," Ivanna chuckled while looking at me.

"Your company is something else, huh? Not many companies provide housing for employees these days,"

+15 BONUS

A terrible feeling crept over me, and I wanted to check the savings account I shared with Matthew.

"I'm just living like a celebrity," Ivanna replied while cleaning the crabs, "Several talents from my company live in this neighborhood, and the security and management here are top-notch. Random people won't be disturbing us. You know how celebrities value their privacy."

I countered bluntly. “The privacy of ordinary people is just as important, you know? Mistresses can be afraid of being exposed too.”

“You’re right. There are people like that here, too.” Ivanna remained remarkably composed. “However, it’s not necessarily the mistress who fears exposure sometimes. I guess it depends on how sophisticated they are.”

I snorted at the word ‘sophisticated and thought about how bold mistresses had become these days since they dared to flaunt their affairs openly. I didn’t want to argue or continue with this topic, so I turned and left the kitchen while glancing at the shoe cabinet at the entrance.

I saw her bag with the keys and walked toward mine before fumbling around for my keys. Then I looked

back at the kitchen and heard the bustling inside. Soon after, I got up, pretending to be calm, and

approached the door.

I glanced at the kitchen again and quickly reached into Ivanna’s bag to grab her keys. I then searched for

the one Ivanna had used to open the door. My hands trembled, not knowing if it was nerves or fear of

knowing the outcome.

I placed her key and my duplicate side by side for comparison, unable to believe what I saw. An inexplicable feeling crept over me, and I slowly turned around.

Chapter 22

Chapter 22 Who Was That Woman?

I was in disbelief because the two keys didn’t match. I doubted myself then and wondered if I had wrongly accused Ivanna. Was Matthew seeing someone else, or did he have another trick with those keys?

I didn’t expect this or know if I should feel relieved or frustrated. My mind went blank as a strange feeling crept into me. I suddenly felt the need to turn around and was startled as Ivanna calmly stood behind me.

“Did you find what you were looking for?” She sounded like she had planned this whole thing.

My lips trembled as I looked at Ivanna and felt I could no longer read her. Of course, I was embarrassed when she exposed me. Still, I stood tall and locked eyes with her, saying, “What are you trying to say, Ivanna? Why did you lie to me? What’s going on between you and Matthew?”

Her calm demeanor caught me off guard, provoking my anger and embarrassment.

“I’ve never lied to you. I know what you’re referring to. You want to talk about that day I saw Matthew at

the teahouse.” Ivanna remained composed. “I didn’t want you to get hurt. Although my words can be

harsh, I’ll never take what you love.”

After a pause, she stared at me and asked, “Is our friendship that fragile to you?”

Meanwhile, Ava must’ve sensed the tension in our voices and crawled to be. She hugged my leg as her

eyes showed panic. “M–Mommy!”

I quickly knelt and embraced Ava, reassuring her, “It’s okay, baby. Aunt Ivanna and I are discussing

something. We’re not fighting.”

Ivanna came over and knelt too. Then she gently patted Ava’s head and said, “Your mommy and I will

never fight, sweetheart. We’re best friends, after all. Don’t be afraid, okay?”

She looked at me and patted my shoulder before saying softly, “We’ll talk later. Just trust me.”

Ivanna calmed my daughter and me down, and I picked Ava up to return to the living room. I only wanted

to know what Ivanna knew and what she kept from me.

The lunch she made us was lavish, and we tried to create a harmonious atmosphere while eating. We made Ava laugh non-stop to dispel the earlier tension. Ava grew excited and ran around the house while I

kept tearing up.

Once Ava had eaten her fill and was exhausted from all the running, she was finally starting to feel

fatigued.

+15 BONUS

Ivanna hugged her and asked, "Would you like to nap here? You can sleep on my big bed."

Ava looked at me and cheered when I nodded with a smile.

Ivanna led us to the room, and I lay down with Ava as she hugged me. "Aunt Ivanna's big house is

awesome!"

I almost cried hearing my daughter's words. I hugged her tightly and firmly promised, "I will get you a big

house like this too!"

"Really?" She asked naively.

"Yes, of course!" I said firmly, clenching my teeth afterward.

Soon after, her eyes closed, and she fell asleep. Her sleeping face was so beautiful it made my heart melt,

but her lips were still slightly swollen.

I covered her up, gently kissed her, and quietly got up. Then I left the room and saw Ivanna sipping red

wine in the living room. Her eyes followed my every move from her.

move until I sat-

She poured me a glass, and we clinked glasses in a silent understanding, both downing the wine in one

1. go.

“You start.”

“You start.”

We spoke simultaneously.

Then, we smiled at each other and thought perhaps we knew each other too well. I was the first to break

the silence and got straight to the point, “Did you know Matthew cheated?”

“I know. I told you I saw him the other day, right?” Ivanna was straightforward this time, “He suddenly left,

and I even got someone to check the footage from that day. I was scared that I’d made a mistake.”

After hearing that, I closed my eyes briefly as tears streamed down my face. I abruptly opened my eyes

and looked at Ivanna, saying through clenched teeth, “Who was that woman?”

Chapter 23

Chapter 23 Recruiting Allies

Ivanna shook her head, saying. “The surveillance footage I got was too blurry. Also, I couldn’t see the woman’s face because Matthew’s arms blocked her face.”

“Do you have the footage now?” I asked.

She quickly sent me the footage, and I saw many people on the street that night. Matthew’s figure in the video was fleeting. He wore the same overcoat I had ironed for him, making his tall figure stand out in the

crowd.

His left arm was around a woman in a pink top. His large frame obscured her figure, so I zoomed in on

the footage, but it made no difference. I still couldn't make out the woman's face. 1

"He's quite the schemer," I said as my tears clouded my vision.

Ivanna silently approached and sat beside me before putting her arm around my shoulder. I held the

phone, choking on my tears as I said, "That night, I saw his figure on a live stream on TikTok. I sent him the video link immediately."

I paused, tried to calm down, and spoke again. "Matt found a restaurant, removed his jacket, and stood in

the hallway when he video-called me! Hahaha, I can't believe how sly he is. He lied to me so effortlessly!"

I laughed maniacally as I poured myself another glass of wine and downed it. Ivanna didn't stop me,

either.

"You shouldn't have lied to me, Ivanna. I.

"When you saw Matthew and me at the cafe, I was only giving him a piece of my mind and warning him not to break your heart. That's why I didn't want you to know that I met him alone," Ivanna explained and

sipped her wine. 1

I suddenly broke down as all my pent-up anxiety, fear, and helplessness erupted. I told Ivanna everything I knew, including what had happened after he let Ava fall last night and the continued lies.

"What do you plan to do?" Ivanna asked, her voice calm.

“I can’t just let Matthew bully me like this. He hurt me, so he must pay for what he did. Not just for me but for my daughter. I want to reclaim everything that’s rightfully mine!”

“Are you serious?” Ivanna asked again.

I firmly nodded as Ivanna analyzed all the possibilities with me. I felt stiffened with every word and understood the reasoning she presented. She feared I might lose everything I had if I took such a resolute

+15 BONUS

However, could I return to how things were if I didn’t take action? The answer was clear to me. No! Thus, I nodded and said with determination, “I’ve made up my mind, Ivanna!”

She stared at me intensely before saying. “I’ll help you!”

My mind was clearer than usual when I left Ivanna’s place. Later, Matthew returned home and played with Ava in our cramped living room,

Since Ava w

was a naive child, she babbled to him about how lovely Ivanna’s big house was. I feigned ignorance and pretended to be preoccupied with preparing dinner. However, I expressed how much I liked Amethyst Apartments.

Meanwhile, I secretly observed Matthew. Though he tried to seem engaged, I knew he wasn’t entirely focused.

During dinner, he intentionally asked me why I suddenly visited Ivanna. I responded casually, but I could tell he was uneasy about me visiting her.

The following day, I dressed meticulously before dropping Ava off at daycare and heading straight to my company building. When I arrived, I entered Matthew’s office, but he wasn’t there yet.

Johnson saw me and hurried over. “Madam, why are you here?”

I looked at his fawning smile and recalled the disgusting image of him in my phone, thinking about how

he was part of Matthew's repulsive circle. I said, "I'll be working here starting today."

"Uh...working?" My statement caught Johnson by surprise, and his expression stiffened.

"What? Is it that surprising?" I asked deliberately.

"N—Not at all, Madam! You should've returned to work long ago! I certainly haven't forgotten how powerful

you were back then!" Although he nodded smilingly, I knew he wasn't sincere.

"Prepare an office for me," I demanded.

Johnson hurriedly left, and I knew he would inform Matthew about my arrival.

Chapter 24

Chapter 24 Vanished Into Thin Air

Sure enough, Matthew soon came to the office.

With a composed smile, I asked, "Did Johnson call you? Where were you so early in the morning?"

"Yes, he called me. He said you were coming to work, and I was surprised you didn't mention it last night."

He removed his coat, hung it up, and then looked at me. "I just went to check out a construction site on

the way here."

I explained, "It was a spur-of-the-moment decision. I felt a bit free after sending Ava to daycare."

Meanwhile, Matthew approached and sat beside me. "I thought about something on the way back. You

can go to the general office if you insist on working. I think it suits you well. It's flexible, no pressure, and

it's also good to have someone overseeing company matters.”

“No, I'm going to the marketing department. That's where I'm best suited,” I rejected Matthew's

arrangement, expressing my thoughts and seeming stubborn.

I understood Matthew's intention to send me to the general office. It was just a nominal position, but I

wanted to get involved to know what Tanum Corporation was like as a company now.

“But Johnson is in the marketing department.”

“Hey! I can start as a regular employee. He's your right-hand man, and I won't usurp his authority. I want to challenge myself and see if I still have my previous drive. I miss those days,” I spoke lightly.

Then I smiled without care and continued, “The schedule is flexible too. If you make me work every day, I might not adjust well. I haven't worked for four to five years, so let me ease into it.”

Matthew relaxed once I said that. Then he walked over to my side, laughing. “All right, honey. You get to

decide. Whatever makes you happy.”

Johnson was efficient and quickly cleared out an office for me. The room was decently sized, right next

to his office.

I was true to my words, slowly easing into work life again. I went through the motions at peace, doing nothing substantial all day. I looked at client information and checked in with different departments haphazardly, without strict protocol.

Sometimes, I disappeared for half the day but would show up in the office again before the day ended.

Nobody knew my routine.

I had been a restraint on Matthew since I returned to work. Although he seemed busy, we showed some

+15 BONUS

Initially, Johnson was quite nervous, closely monitoring and circling my actions. However, my working pattern for the past three days and idling for two left him at a loss on how to keep up. Gradually, he

relaxed.

That was when I heard him saying I was just passing the time by being at the company. Frankly, that wasn't all I was doing. While others thought I was just easing in, Ivanna had dug up Tanum Corporation's clientele information, and I was busy going through those records.

Time wasn't on my side, and Ava developed a high fever on the night Matthew was on a business trip in Operose. My daughter's fever was so severe that I had to immediately take her to the hospital.

However, after arriving at the hospital, I discovered the billing counter only accepted cash. I rummaged through my purse and, fortunately, found my bank card. A nurse told me there was an ATM near the entrance, and I handed Ava to the doctor before rushing to withdraw some money.

I was petrified when I realized I couldn't withdraw even a hundred dollars. This card held the money Matthew and I had saved to buy a house. We hadn't touched it for years, and the money was supposed to

remain in the account until we found the right house. 1

How could there be no money in there? I felt dizzy as I checked the account a few times. Then I quickly

pulled out my phone and called Matthew to ask what was happening and where the money went.

Chapter 25

Chapter 25 A Business Trip in Operose

I redialed Matthew's number, but a mechanical voice informed me that the call couldn't connect. I squatted in frustration, but the thought of my daughter's

fever struck me. Then I gritted my teeth, forced myself to stand, and returned to the lobby.

I tried calling Ivanna when I arrived, but her phone was off too. I paced around in panic and wondered where those two could've gone. At that moment, I felt like my pleas were falling on deaf ears.

Ultimately, I reluctantly called my in-laws. Although it was past one in the morning, and I didn't want to disturb them, I had no other option. Sure enough, my mother-in-law answered and sounded alarmed, "Chlo? What's wrong? It's so late. Is something wrong?"

I had trouble answering her question but soon apologized and told her about Ava's high fever and that I had no cash. My in-laws said they would rush to the hospital and quickly hung up. When they arrived, the doctor had already put Ava on an IV drip and diagnosed her with acute pneumonia.

I felt quilt

that my in-laws had to rush to the hospital in the middle of the night. "Why'd you come? You could've told Melanie to bring me the money since it's so late."

"She said she went to the Operose with her brother for business. She wasn't home," my mother-in-law explained, then hurried to Ava's bedside. "How did it get this severe? What's her temperature?"

"It's already 39.5 degrees. Ava has acute pneumonia. Can you watch over her while I pay the bill?" I asked my in-laws before rushing to the counter, cursing Melanie inwardly.

She was just a burden at this point. What business could she possibly have with her brother? The least she could do was not cause any trouble.

Once I settled the bill, I told my in-laws to go home. However, my mother-in-law insisted on making us some food before leaving. Afterward, I watched my daughter's face gradually regain its color. I immediately felt a massive weight lifting from my chest.

Still, all the money in the account had disappeared, and I felt uneasy. Various possibilities raced through my mind, making me increasingly conflicted.

Thankfully, Ivanna returned my call at five in the morning when she checked her phone. "Chlo, what's going on? Why'd you call me in the middle of the night? My phone died last night because I forgot to charge it!"

"Ava developed a high fever and has pneumonia. I had to take her to the hospital so late at night, and I didn't have any money," I explained as tears rolled down my cheeks.

+15 BONUS

"Damn it. Which hospital are you at? Wait for me there!" Ivanna replied urgently.

"Klinein Hospital." I sniffed.

Ivanna found us in less than half an hour. When she entered the ward, she felt Ava's forehead, saying, "is

she getting better?"

I nodded. "The fever's going down."

"Then why are you crying?!" Ivanna exclaimed, looking at me skeptically.

I wiped my tears and told Ivanna about the missing money. She narrowed her eyes and looked at me in

disbelief as I stated my suspicions. Once I finished explaining the situation, she cursed through gritted

teeth, "Damn it, We're a step behind that asshole." 1

felt helpless...

I Ivanna's confirmation. I covered my face and suppressed my cries, fearing waking Ava

or scaring her. She was still so young, and I didn't want her to know our family was in chaos.

Ivanna held my trembling shoulders and squeezed them, attempting to give me strength.

After a while, I looked up with clenched fists and stared at Ivanna with bloodshot eyes. Then I growled, “I must confront him and find out what he’s up to! I had nearly a decade’s savings, our safety net for Ava. I’ll get to the bottom of it.” 1

Ivanna shook her head. “Now isn’t the right time.”

“But I can’t just sit back and watch him wreak havoc! That’s mine and Ava’s money. You know that,

Ivanna. When we saved that money and put it on his card, he gave the card to me to make me feel secure.

“He even set up WhatsApp notifications for the card, but the money is gone. When did it disappear? I

didn’t receive any notifications. What does that mean?”

Ivanna was speechless. Ultimately, she comforted me and told me not to be hasty. Just then, my phone

buzzed, and I grabbed it and saw that it was Matthew calling.

I was so angry that I was about to answer, but Ivanna was quicker and grabbed the phone from me.

“Give it back!” I shouted in anger.

Instead of returning my phone, Ivanna stared at me and asked solemnly, “Chlo, do you want to get that money back?”