

## Chapter 2

Aurora: Alex, where are you? Can we do a video call now? I miss you.

Alex: I'm in a meeting outside the office, darling. I'll call and video chat with you once it's done.

Aurora smiled wryly as she reread the short message she intentionally sent to Alex while enjoying lunch with Velia.

Despite Alex's claim of being in a meeting, Aurora had seen him clearly walking intimately hand in hand with Amanda Nicole, her cousin and Alex's personal secretary.

Alex was clearly lying. He wasn't out for a meeting; instead, he was enjoying his break by walking with another woman.

"No wonder Alex rarely invites you to have lunch together. Turns out, now he has a new partner to have lunch with. Or maybe... a partner who can accompany him in other things. Like, sleeping, for example."

In Aurora's office, when she was back at the hospital, Velia's voice was heard provoking.

Since the beginning of her relationship with Alex, Velia had never liked the brown-eyed man. Especially when in a relationship with Aurora, Velia often heard rumors that Alex was known for changing partners frequently.

Velia wondered what was going on in Aurora's mind that made her willingly accept Alex's love. Was she too infatuated? Was she fooled by sweet words or perhaps affected by the typical charms of a womanizer, leading her to surrender to his proposal despite their brief acquaintance?

If Velia observed from the roots, Alex came from an ordinary family. The position as the head of a retail company, which he currently held, was even given to him for free by Aurora's father.

In Velia's eyes, Alex had no merits other than being above-average in appearance. In her opinion, he was essentially worthless. Alex couldn't even provide Aurora with offspring, as he was diagnosed with infertility. Despite this, Aurora accepted and covered up her husband's shortcomings from both their extended families and Alex himself.

"If I were you, I would have confronted Alex right then and there," Velia said again. Her tone clearly conveyed frustration mixed with irritation.

"No need to go crazy, Velia. I don't want to create a scene in public."

They had been engaged in this forbidden affair for who knows how long. If Aurora wanted, she could follow Velia's suggestion to confront them. However, Aurora didn't want to act recklessly. She also didn't want to create a scandal in public that would tarnish the reputations of both families.

"But your husband is clearly cheating. Even exchanging affectionate messages with the opposite sex is considered cheating. Moreover, he was caught several times going out together, and you don't even know what they're doing. Are you going to stay silent?" Velia asked, still annoyed. She was curious about what actions her friend would take next.

"I can't act impulsively. I have to investigate and gather evidence first. Maybe it's not what we imagine."

Velia sighed deeply. She was confused about what was going on in Aurora's mind. Despite seeing firsthand what her husband was doing, Aurora could still think positively and assume that her husband wasn't betraying her.

"It's up to you. I pray that after you find accurate evidence, you can still stand strong. If you need help to confront them, just let me know. I'll gladly help."

After saying those words, the door to Aurora's room was knocked, followed by the entrance of a nurse looking for one of them.

"Doctor Velia, Doctor Asher is looking for you. He said there's a new schedule to be discussed."

Velia nodded, raising her thumb. After the nurse left, she intended to leave Aurora's room.

"Do I need to tell Asher what has happened between you and Alex?"

Aurora immediately shook her head vigorously, signaling Velia not to act too recklessly. Regardless, Aurora knew exactly Asher's temperament. He didn't like his family members being disturbed, let alone mistreated.

"No! Please don't. You know what kind of person Asher is. I'm afraid Alex won't survive if he's grilled by Asher."

"That's exactly what I want. So that Alex learns his lesson for treating you like this."

"No! Let me handle this on my own. It's better if you go quickly to meet Asher. And be careful, don't talk about anything inappropriate."

In the evening, like the nights before, Aurora was seen waiting for Alex's return. At exactly 7 p.m., the Arab-blooded man returned from work and went straight to the bedroom. Before deciding to take a shower, as usual, Alex approached Aurora first. He gave her a warm hug and a tender kiss.

"Good evening, dear. I---"

"Miss me a lot?" Aurora interrupted, as if she memorized the sentence Alex was about to say. How could she not memorize it when he said the same thing almost every night? Previously, Aurora felt flattered every time Alex expressed his longing or affection for her. But after today's incident, for some reason, Aurora felt bland. She suspected that those words were just a camouflage to cover up a big lie that Alex had been hiding from her.

"I miss you too," Aurora said nonchalantly. This time she didn't put much sincerity into her words. "What did you do today?" she asked, curious if her husband would give her another lie like he did earlier in the afternoon.

"Nothing special, dear. Had meetings outside until evening. Met some clients. Once everything was done, I hurried home to see you."

"So, you were super busy all day? Didn't get a chance to relax at all? How about lunch? Did you have time for that?" Aurora asked intentionally. She just wanted to know what answer her husband would give her.

While undressing, Alex prepared to answer. He casually responded to Aurora's question.

"Don't worry, I still had time for lunch."

"Where did you eat? With clients?"

Alex nodded repeatedly.

"Yes, dear. After the first meeting, I had lunch with clients at a restaurant. Don't worry, you don't need to be concerned. I couldn't forget about you, of course."

"Thank goodness," said Aurora with a smile. In her heart, she felt sorry because her husband had clearly provided false information, in other words, lied. "You must be tired."

Alex nodded again, smiling. Without any burden, he continued to act in front of his wife,

"Yeah, tired. It's called work. But, it's better to be tired from work than being idle, right?"

This time, Aurora nodded. Helping to tidy up the clothes that her husband had successfully unbuttoned, she then invited Alex to clean himself up.

"Just go ahead and take a shower. Later, before bedtime, I'll give you a massage so you won't feel tired again."

"Yes, dear. Thank you so much. I'm really lucky to have a caring and understanding wife like you."

"Don't sweet talk," Aurora replied with a smile. "Hurry up and shower. You might get too late."

Alex quickly walked towards the bathroom. Meanwhile, Aurora got up from the bed, then straightened Alex's dirty clothes, placing them in the laundry basket. Not forgetting, Aurora also tidied up Alex's work bag, which had been scattered on the floor.

As she placed it on the table, Aurora noticed something unusual. On the side zipper, something bulged faintly from inside the bag. Throughout her married life with Alex, Aurora had never once rummaged through her husband's personal belongings, and vice versa.

But this time felt different. Aurora was curious. Believing that Alex would still take a while in the bathroom, she decided to check what was inside her husband's work bag.

When Aurora opened it, she found a velvet box that undoubtedly contained jewelry. Opening it slowly, Aurora was amazed. Inside the box, there was a necklace and a diamond bracelet, the same set she had shown to Alex yesterday and asked him to make it her birthday present.

"Is Alex not mistaken about this? Did he buy it for me or what?" Aurora mumbled to herself. "But if it's for me, isn't it too early? My birthday is still far away."

Aurora suddenly realized. Knowing that Alex was almost done cleaning himself up, she quickly put the jewelry back to its original place. Instead of asking directly whose jewelry it was, Aurora chose to pretend not to know. She thought, maybe Alex intentionally bought it well in advance because he wanted to surprise her.

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"I have to work now, dear. Hurry because I have a morning meeting with a client from Turkey."

Alex gave a quick kiss on Aurora's forehead before leaving for work. Judging by his behavior, he seemed to be in a rush.

"Aren't you going to drop me off as usual?" protested Aurora on purpose. For the past few days, Alex had always let Aurora go to work alone at every shift. Yet, previously, her husband used to accompany and pick her up after work each day.

"Next time, okay? Today, I really need to hurry. Please."

Seeing the pleading expression on Alex's face, Aurora could only sigh deeply and then nod. It was pointless to protest; Aurora was sure Alex would still ask her to go alone.

"Alright, it's okay. I'll go by myself. Just be careful on your way to work."

Alex quickly got into the car. A few minutes later, it was Aurora's turn to leave. However, instead of heading to the hospital, she went to follow Alex to his office. For some reason, this morning Aurora felt that something was amiss with her husband. Her feelings and instincts were telling her so.

Upon reaching Alex's office, Aurora gathered her courage for a moment. She convinced herself to accept any possibilities and realities she might discover later. Once determined, Aurora decided to get out of the car and walk towards Alex's office.

Some staff members she passed greeted her politely and respectfully. Some even offered to accompany her.

"Mr. Alex is in his office, Mrs. Aurora," said one staff member who served as the receptionist on each floor of the building. "But it seems like he's in an important meeting with Nicole. Earlier, Mr. Alex instructed that if there's any guest or anyone who wants to meet him, they should be redirected or reschedule the appointment. Today, he wants to discuss work deadlines to meet the project targets for the early month."

"Oh, so my husband is in the room with his secretary?"

The receptionist nodded.

"Yes, ma'am."

"Okay, it's fine. I'll go straight there."

The receptionist could only nod awkwardly. Even if she wanted to stop her, it seemed too daring considering Aurora was the daughter of the owner and the wife of the company's leader.

While Aurora continued her steps, when she reached the floor where Alex's office was located, she found the secretary's desk right in front of her husband's room empty. Aurora chose to walk straight to Alex's room.

Initially, Aurora wanted to enter right away. However, realizing that the door was not completely closed, she chose to remain silent and peek. From behind the door crack, Aurora could clearly see what was happening inside the room.

"Is this for real? The luxury necklace and bracelet?" exclaimed the woman, who was none other than Nicole, Alex's personal secretary.

"Yes, dear. The necklace and bracelet are for you. I bought them especially for your birthday. Happy birthday. I hope all your dreams come true. And, of course, that you'll love me even more."

Nicole smiled joyfully, hugged Alex, and without hesitation planted a kiss right on his lips.

"Thank you so much, darling. I really love this gift. Don't worry. I'll continue to love and cherish you. As a celebration, how about we stay in a hotel this weekend, like we did last time? I want to spend time and make a love with you."

Alex nodded in agreement, approving Aisha's request to stay in a hotel together.

"Sure. I'll arrange the timing. You choose which hotel you want to stay in, and I'll make the reservation for us to have some fun."

"Thank you so much, sweetheart. I really really love you so much."

Meanwhile, Aurora, who had been standing and listening to Alex's conversation with his cousin, could only restrain herself while tightly closing her mouth. Choosing to step back, she quickly walked away with a pain that was difficult to articulate.