

Chapter 2

Chapter 2 delves into the emotional turmoil experienced by Phoebe and her husband, Matt, following the heartbreak of a failed pregnancy. The couple embarks on a search for a vacation destination, hoping to find solace and a break from the pain that has marked their fertility struggles. In their quest for healing, Phoebe comes across the Cornwall Inn, a Victorian hotel offering amenities such as hot tubs, yoga, and paddleboarding. Her excitement leads to the creation of a detailed spreadsheet outlining the fun activities they could enjoy during their stay. However, Matt's reaction to Phoebe's meticulous planning reveals a growing sense of frustration. His impatience with her need to quantify every aspect of their lives—especially their attempts to conceive—becomes evident. This marks a deeper rift in their relationship, highlighting the tensions that arise from their differing perspectives on life and its challenges.

As the couple contemplates their getaway, Phoebe reflects on her academic career and the underlying tension in her marriage. She struggles with feelings of inadequacy as she compares her stagnant role as an adjunct professor to Matt's success at work. His recent achievement of winning an award only deepens Phoebe's sense of professional failure. While Matt's victory is celebrated by friends and colleagues, Phoebe is left questioning her worth and feeling disconnected from the joy those around her seem to feel. This disparity in their careers and achievements exacerbates the growing divide in their marriage. Phoebe's internal conflict centers around her complex feelings towards Matt's success, and her struggle to reconcile these feelings with her own unmet ambitions. The contrast between their professional lives intensifies the strain in their relationship, leaving Phoebe to confront her personal insecurities and the disconnect she feels from both her husband and her career.

The dynamics between Phoebe and Matt further deteriorate as they both face pressures from societal expectations regarding childbearing and professional success.

Phoebe begins to grapple with her identity outside of motherhood, questioning what it truly means to be “normal.” Her thoughts revolve around societal expectations, feeling as though she is failing to meet the milestones expected of her. As Phoebe struggles with the reality of her unfulfilled desires and ambitions, hints of infidelity begin to surface. These insecurities only deepen her sense of isolation, causing Phoebe to question her worth not just as a partner but as an individual. The couple’s interactions are tinged with both humor and sadness, as they attempt to reconnect amid their emotional baggage. The cracks in their relationship become more pronounced, as both Phoebe and Matt are burdened by their unspoken grievances. Through these struggles, Chapter 2 paints a picture of a marriage teetering between hope and despair, with the couple’s future uncertain as they navigate their personal and societal challenges.

Ultimately, this chapter reveals the complexities of Phoebe and Matt’s relationship as they wrestle with their shared disappointments and individual aspirations. It highlights the emotional distance that has formed between them, stemming from their struggles with fertility, professional ambitions, and societal pressures. Phoebe’s introspection on her identity and place in the world provides a deeper look into her character, as she grapples with the tension between her personal desires and the role she feels she is expected to play. As their marriage faces mounting challenges, Phoebe and Matt’s journey serves as a poignant reflection of the difficulties many couples face in balancing their ambitions with their emotional needs. Their crisis is not just about their fertility struggles but also about the larger question of what it means to be fulfilled, both individually and as a couple. Chapter 2 reveals the fragile nature of their connection and sets the stage for the difficult journey ahead.