

Chapter 21

Chapter 21 begins with Phoebe waking up beside her husband, who appears to be peacefully enjoying a deep, restful sleep—something she finds herself envious of. As she glances at her phone, she notices it's devoid of any messages, and a feeling of uncertainty begins to seep in. She remembers that today is Gary's wedding day, which leads her to question her choices. Phoebe struggles with guilt, questioning whether she has made a mistake by walking away from Gary and finding herself with someone who does not feel like her true partner. This internal conflict marks the beginning of her emotional journey through the day, as she grapples with the complexities of love, commitment, and the consequences of her decisions.

Later, when Phoebe enters the bridal suite, she finds Suz and Nat already prepared, signaling that the wedding is fast approaching. The room is filled with excitement and anticipation, but Phoebe notices that Lila, dressed in a floral silk robe, remains distant and seemingly aloof. As the women shower Lila with enthusiasm, Phoebe observes her friend's quiet demeanor, sensing an underlying tension that contrasts sharply with the outward celebration. During this moment, a stylist named Tiff begins to work on Phoebe, suggesting a side bang, a small yet significant change that excites Phoebe and transforms her look. This minor adjustment to her appearance helps to shift Phoebe's focus away from the mounting tensions and adds a refreshing spark of confidence to her, allowing her to feel more connected to the moment.

The mood in the suite changes when Jim enters with an eccentric offering of spoons, hoping to make amends for his previous behavior. However, his attempt to apologize only seems to deepen the tension, especially when Lila remains silent, her aloofness unsettling Phoebe. It becomes clear to Phoebe that Lila's calm exterior may mask deeper uncertainties about the wedding and her relationship with Gary. Lila's mother, Patricia, offers champagne to the group, but Lila surprisingly declines, opting to stay

sober, further adding to the sense of unease. The quiet that envelops Lila during these moments speaks volumes, and Phoebe is left to wonder about the stability of her friend as she approaches such a monumental event in her life.

With all the women ready, Lila asks Phoebe to help her with her dress, commenting on its beauty while voicing a deep-seated fear that the wedding may be doomed. In this vulnerable moment, Phoebe realizes that Lila's concerns are rooted in genuine worry about her future with Gary, something that has been building beneath the surface. The two engage in an honest conversation about love and loyalty, with Phoebe attempting to reassure Lila about Gary's commitment, though her own voice trembles with uncertainty. It becomes clear that Phoebe is not entirely convinced about the stability of Lila and Gary's relationship, but she still offers her support to Lila in a bid to soothe her nerves. Their exchange allows them both to connect on a deeper level, offering a fleeting glimpse of understanding amidst the emotional chaos that is unfolding.

As they prepare to leave the bridal suite, another obstacle arises when Lila rejects the black town car, insisting it does not meet her expectations of a vintage option for the wedding. This small, seemingly trivial issue sparks a heated confrontation, with Phoebe trying to reason with Lila about how the details of the day should not overshadow its true meaning. Lila's tears betray her deep insecurities and fears about her marriage to Gary, as she expresses doubts about their love and questions whether she's making the right choice. Phoebe, seeing her friend's vulnerability, steps in to offer emotional support, suggesting that Lila prioritize self-care and freedom from the marriage if it doesn't bring her happiness. This moment of understanding highlights the complex emotions Lila is navigating, and Phoebe's willingness to listen further strengthens their bond.

Lila, in her moment of reflection, acknowledges that despite the grandeur of the wedding, something about it feels wrong to her. Phoebe, now more attuned to Lila's inner turmoil, reminds her of the practicalities and fleeting nature of weddings. The exchange becomes a pivotal moment of emotional connection, where the two women recognize that love does not always conform to societal expectations or traditional

roles. Their conversation culminates in a recognition of the deeper, more meaningful aspects of love, with Phoebe expressing her gratitude for Lila's influence on her throughout the week. This emotional exchange not only deepens their friendship but also underscores the complexity of relationships, both romantic and platonic, and the importance of understanding one's true desires in a world that often prioritizes appearances over authenticity.