

Chapter 22

In Chapter 22, Phoebe takes a solitary drive to the Breakers in a champagne-stocked Mercedes, reflecting on the lives of the wealthy and their hidden desires. Her fascination with nineteenth-century novels about the rich frames her thoughts on what people truly need beyond material wealth. The chapter opens with Phoebe contemplating the emotional void a bride might feel, even amid a grand wedding setting, setting a tone of introspection and questioning the nature of happiness and fulfillment.

Phoebe then delivers the devastating news to Gary that Lila, the bride, will not be marrying him. Her confrontation in the wedding hall is marked by a mix of stoicism and raw emotion, as Gary silently processes the reality of the canceled ceremony. Phoebe's directness in addressing the assembled wedding guests underscores her resolve to face difficult truths head-on, signaling her personal growth and determination to live authentically, regardless of the discomfort it causes others.

As the wedding crowd disperses, the focus shifts to Phoebe and Matt, who share a quiet moment away from the chaos. Phoebe reveals her decision not to return to the hotel or the life she once knew, expressing a desire to take medical leave and pursue writing. Their conversation balances humor and vulnerability, highlighting the complexity of their relationship. Matt's restrained emotions and Phoebe's newfound resolve illustrate a turning point for both characters.

The chapter closes with Phoebe embracing the present moment, savoring small joys like her dress and a bottle of champagne. This scene symbolizes her shift from intellectual detachment toward a fuller engagement with life and her own body. The interplay between Phoebe's inner transformation and the external circumstances of the interrupted wedding creates a poignant exploration of identity, loss, and the hope for renewal.