

A Favor 501

Chapter 501

I was ready, utterly certain. I love him, and I knew he loved me too. We were husband and wife, bound together, and for the first time, I was unafraid to give all of myself to him.

A cry escaped my lips as I let go of every inhibition. My whole body trembled as I wrapped myself around him, finally understanding what it meant to surrender completely. My eyes squeezed shut, and I bit my lip until I almost drew blood.

Damn it!

He cursed softly under his breath, suddenly freezing in place. Concern flashed across his face as he pulled back, his brow furrowed in worry.

“Why didn’t you tell me?”, he asked quietly, searching my face.

There was something raw and vulnerable in his eyes, a mix of tenderness, confusion, even a little pain. I felt all of it, right alongside him, unsure of what to say.

“Why didn’t you ever ask me? And how exactly was I supposed to just blurt out something like that? What did you expect me to do, Daniel Kelley, announce I was still a virgin?”.

“For heaven’s sake... I should have realized. I just... I thought...”.

“You thought I wasn’t.” I finished for him, matching his uncertainty. “No, I never lost it.” I shook my head so he’d understand.

“I’m sorry, sweetheart.”

That apology eased something in me, and I managed a small smile as his eyes grew tender.

“It’s all right. After everything I’ve been through, I don’t blame anyone for not believing me when I say I waited.”

“Don’t say that. If you’d just told me—”.

“So what, it’s my fault for not saying anything?”.

“Let’s just drop it, okay? This argument isn’t going anywhere. It doesn’t matter to me if you were or weren’t, I care about you, not your past.”

“Wait! What are you doing?”. Before I could answer, he started to pull away from me, and I grabbed his arm in disbelief.

“We shouldn’t keep going. I can’t bear the thought of hurting you.” He shook his head, regret in his eyes.

I clung to him, a rush of frustration and longing crashing over me. How could he just stop now, leaving me teetering on the edge like this?

“No, I want this. Let’s just do it.”

“I can’t, Sophia. I’ll only end up hurting you.”

“And what if you do? That’s how it is for everyone the first time.”

“Sophia...”.

“It’s fine. But if you’re really going to back out now, I might just give JM another chance.” The way his eyes flared made me bite my lip to hide my laughter.

“Don’t even joke about that. Say it again and I’ll never let you out of my sight.”

I grinned, teasing him with a huff. “I’ve heard promises like that before—”.

That was all it took.

Before I could even finish my thought, he claimed my lips with a deep, urgent kiss, his body pressing me gently into the bed.

Chapter 502

At first, a sharp ache made me tense, but his touch grew softer and the pain slowly faded, replaced by a warmth that made my whole body ache for more. The world narrowed to the rush of breath between us, our chests rising and falling as we lost ourselves in each other.

We reached that perfect, breathless high together. When everything stilled, he settled beside me, and I couldn't help but smile, a deep contentment filling my heart.

He drew me into his arms, his hand brushing my forehead before pressing a lingering kiss there. His other arm slipped around my waist, holding me close as if he thought I might vanish or fall apart beneath the weight of everything we'd just shared.

But I stayed exactly where I was. Nothing in the world could have made me leave him now.

When morning came, I woke to an empty room, my entire body heavy with fatigue. As I shifted beneath the covers and tried to rise, a sudden sharp ache in my lower body made me wince.

"Ouch."

I bit down on my lip, clinging to the edge of the sheet while the sting lingered. A flash of red on the linens caught my eye, and I quickly pulled the sheet around myself for modesty. My legs barely wanted to cooperate, so I settled for perching on the edge of the bed, gathering my strength.

Come on, Sophia, pull it together. You need to make it to the bathroom before Daniel shows up. I drew in a deep breath and braced myself for the walk.

Every muscle ached, yet I found myself grinning as memories from last night flickered through my mind. Daniel had been right, he promised me the best night of my life, and he delivered. For the first time, I felt whole, and I was genuinely happy I'd given that part of myself to the man I loved.

After nearly half an hour beneath the warm spray of the shower, letting the water soothe my body, the ache faded into something gentle and sweet.

When I finally stepped out, feeling refreshed and new, I paused at the closet, confused about what I would wear.

Opening the first door, I stared in disbelief. My clothes, every last piece he'd brought for me, were neatly folded on the shelves. Shoes, handbags, and accessories were all perfectly arranged in the drawers, each one sorted by size and color, as if he'd anticipated my every need.

A surprised laugh slipped out as I gazed at the closet. "Go on, Daniel Kelley, try telling me again that I don't matter to you. Let's see you pretend I'm just some woman in your life."

I chose a breezy purple sundress and slipped my feet into a pair of crisp white sandals.

After brushing out my hair and freshening up in front of the mirror, I decided to finally explore the suite, something I hadn't managed the night before. But as I started down the stairs, I caught the sound of voices drifting up from below.

I couldn't resist finding out more, so I quietly followed the chatter. The moment I reached the bottom, I stopped in shock at who I found in the dining room.

Chapter 503

"Nanay Emily!". My voice rang out, full of delight, and she turned at once, along with two maids bustling nearby.

"Sophia."

Without hesitation, I rushed into her embrace, squeezing her tight. It had been nearly three months since I'd seen her or Tatay Berto, ever since they'd helped me slip away from Ben and his men.

"I've missed you so much, Nanay Emily."

"I missed you too, Nanay," I said, stepping back from her warm embrace as she squeezed my hands in hers. She looked at me with concern.

“How are you, Anak? I heard what happened with your father. I’m sorry we couldn’t be there for you.”

A gentle smile found its way to my lips.

“It’s all right, Nanay. My family’s healing, little by little. And as for those who hurt me... well, life has finally given them what they had coming.”

“That’s wonderful to hear, Anak.” Her smile deepened, and she brushed her palm over my cheek. “And what about you and your... well, your beloved?”

Heat crept up my neck as she winked at me.

“Nanay Emily...”

“I’m just happy for you. What I wished for all these years has finally come true.”

“How did you know I was here?”

“I heard your voice last night, Sophia. It wasn’t hard to guess.”

“Oh my God. That’s so embarrassing.” Mortified, I buried my face in my hands, the blush returning in full force.

“There’s nothing to be embarrassed about, Sophia. It’s a sign that you’re happy.” Nanay Emily just giggled, giving my shoulder a reassuring squeeze.

“By the way, Nanay, have you seen Daniel? He wasn’t here when I woke up.”

“Oh, he got an urgent call this morning. Something happened at the new project site, and he needed to handle it himself. But don’t worry, he made sure to ask me to look after you while he’s gone.”

I managed a small smile and nodded, even as a pang of disappointment tugged at me. After everything that happened last night, he’d left without a word. Not even a goodbye, just a quiet exit while I was still fast asleep, sore and exhausted.

“I get it. Work calls,” I murmured, almost to myself.

“Don’t let it get to you, Sophia. If it hadn’t been urgent, Daniel wouldn’t have gone anywhere. He cares about you, that’s the truth.”

“It’s all right, Nanay. I know.” I forced a brighter smile, waving my hands as if to brush away any lingering worry. I only wished my heart could believe it as easily as my lips pretended to.

“Would you like some breakfast? Let me make you—”.

“No, please, Nanay. I’m all right. I’m really not hungry.” I caught her hand gently before she could busy herself at the counter.

“You still need to eat, Sophia. Daniel asked me to make his favorite chocolate waffles for you.”

That made me pause, he remembered those were my favorite too.

A soft sigh escaped me, but I shook my head.

“Nanay, can you tell me exactly where we are?”. I asked, letting her breakfast offer drift away.

Chapter 504

Even after her explanation about Daniel’s urgent work, I couldn’t shake the sting of disappointment.

“We’re in his penthouse, right on the top floor of the KI Corporation building.”

“Wait... this is a penthouse?”.

Amazement spread across my face as last night's memories resurfaced, including the moment we pulled into Daniel's private parking spot.

"So, his office is one floor down from here?"

"That's right, though he's not in today."

"I never realized he had a place like this up here."

A soft sigh left my lips as I wandered to the wide living room window. I could hear Nanay Emily's footsteps behind me, her presence comforting.

For a moment, my heart fluttered as I gazed out at the sprawling cityscape of Los Angeles.

"Is it true? Did he really sell the house where I'd been staying these past months?"

I didn't turn to face her. My eyes stayed fixed on the scene below, watching streams of people move along the streets beside the KIC building, tiny figures, scurrying in perfect lines, almost like ants.

"Yes, he sold it. Right after his trip to Italy."

“But why would he do that?”. I tore my gaze from the window and finally looked at her.

“He must have had his reasons, Sophia.”

“Do you know what made him decide? Why sell the house now, of all times?”.

“That’s not really for me to explain, Anak. He’s the only one who can answer that.”

“But, Nanay Emily?”.

She only squeezed my hand, her expression kind but firm.

“Why not ask him yourself? I’m sure he’ll explain everything.”

I let out a quiet sigh and tried to muster a smile. “I guess I’ll just wait for him to tell me when he’s ready.”

“If that’s what you want, Sophia.” She nodded in understanding.

“Sophia, girl!”. Suddenly, Craig burst into my office, bursting with energy and waving his arms as he raced over to my desk.

“What’s got you so worked up?”. I arched an eyebrow at his theatrics.

“Guess who I just saw in the parking lot!”.

“Who did you see?”. I rolled my eyes, playing along.

“Your beloved!”.

“Wait, what?”.

“Yep, your beloved husband just pulled up and parked right in front of the studio!”.

“Are you sure?”. My stomach did a nervous flip. Suddenly, I became hyper-aware of how I looked.

“I saw him go into the studio, he’s probably on his way here now!”. His excitement was contagious, and I found myself letting out a little squeal.

“Oh, my God!”.

My heart hammered in my chest as I stood frozen, trying to figure out what to reach for first, lipstick, a brush, a dab of powder, or maybe a spritz of perfume.

I was so caught up fussing with my things that I missed the sly grin slowly spreading across Craig’s face.

“Relax, Sophia. I’m just messing with you!”.

“Just kidding!”.

Everything in me froze, and I stared at him with my mouth hanging open.

“What did you just say?”.

Chapter 505

“I am joking,” he replied, and then he burst out laughing harder than I had ever seen before.

“What is wrong with you, Craig? I seriously hate you!”.

The words flew out of me as I glared across the desk, yet my reaction only made him laugh even more.

“Oh, good heavens, Sophia. Your face right now is priceless,” he said, laughing again as he slapped his hand against the table because he could not calm down.

Slowly, I sank back into my chair and forced myself to breathe. Part of me wanted to strangle him for that stupid joke, but another part felt relief knowing it was not true.

I missed him, that much I could not deny, yet I still had no idea how to face him after what happened the night before. He had called me three times that morning and twice in the afternoon, and I ignored every single one. I even switched my phone to silent and tossed it into my bag just so I would not be tempted to look.

“I still hate you, Craig.”

“You say that now, but we both know you will get over it,” he replied, rolling his eyes without a shred of guilt.

Instead of answering, I turned back to my computer screen and forced myself to focus on my work. Unfortunately, the irritating man standing in front of my desk showed no intention of leaving my office, especially since he clearly enjoyed questioning me.

“So, what exactly happened to you last night, Madame Kelley?”

“Madame Kelley?”. I echoed, my brows pulling together as I looked at him.

“Fine then. Sophia Kelley. What happened last night? Because from where I stood, it looked like you walked out of that apartment and completely forgot what you promised me.”

A tired breath left me as I sank back into my chair. In that moment, I wished for something ridiculous, like a spell that could turn him into a frog, even if it only lasted for the day.

“I am not letting this go until you tell me everything,” he muttered, folding his arms across his chest. “You swore you would call me, and I sat there worrying while my phone stayed silent. I even tried calling your so-called brother and his girlfriend, but they were out of reach too.”

“I am sorry. I could not call you last night.”

“Oh my God. Did you fail to call me, or did you just forget altogether? Those are very different things, Sophia, so which one was it?”.

“Alright. I forgot to call you.”

A short laugh escaped him.

“See? I knew it!”. He exclaimed, clicking his tongue and shaking his head.

“At least let me explain first, Craig.”

He let out an exaggerated huff. “As if I have a choice.”

A small smile tugged at my lips before I began telling him what had happened, starting from yesterday and carrying through to the night before.

Chapter 506

I left out the parts that were too personal and belonged to my husband alone, and he did not push for them. He understood enough, especially when it came to the disappointment that had settled in my chest that morning.

“Honestly, I had no idea what to tell you. I get why you feel this way, but none of us knows what kind of emergency pulled him away this morning. Still, I am convinced he has an explanation if you would just answer his calls.”

He stressed the word “answer” as if underlining it in the air.

“That aside, you should at least admit this much. You won. The annoying ex is out of the picture, and you finally learned how he really feels about you.”

“I know. That does not stop me from worrying about what he is doing now.”

“Relax. You took the first step, and once you did that, the rest will come easily. Second, third, fourth, all the way to the end. For now, focus on the important part. You finally tasted paradise.”

A laugh slipped out of me at his dramatic choice of words, but it died the moment he leaned closer with another question.

“So, is he big?”.

“For the love of God, Craig!”. I snapped, staring straight at him. Heat rushed to my face, and I felt it spread down my neck.

“What? What is wrong with asking?”. He blinked at me, wide-eyed.

“What is wrong with it? You are asking about my husband’s private parts. Do you hear yourself?”.

My outrage only fueled him, and he laughed again, clearly enjoying every second of my embarrassment.

“Fine, you do not have to say anything. Your face already gave you away. Honestly, that reaction was priceless,” he said with a smug grin.

"Priceless my foot. Get out of my office!". I yelled, jabbing my finger toward the door.

His laughter only grew louder. "Out of every girl I have ever teased about her boyfriend's, well, assets, your response was by far the best."

I refused to dignify that with an answer, but when he stood up, I grabbed my eraser and hurled it at him. The throw went wide, and it landed harmlessly on the empty chair, a clear reminder that I had no talent for aim.

"Alright, I am leaving. But be ready in twenty minutes. Bring a bottle of red wine and your favorite pizza." He finished with a wink before finally walking out.

The moment he mentioned pizza, my stomach betrayed me with a loud growl, reminding me that I had not eaten anything since morning.

"He is here."

My fingers froze above the keyboard as I lifted my head and found Craig leaning casually against the doorway.

I stared at him without a word, then turned back to my screen.

"Sophia, I am serious. He is here."

"I am not in the mood, Craig," I responded flatly, glancing at him again. "I am busy, and I do not have time for your jokes right now."

"I am not joking. Daniel is here. I saw him in the parking lot, stepping out of his car."

Chapter 507

"You have used that one before. Could you at least come up with something more original?"

"Oh my God, I am serious. I am not joking."

Instead of answering, I drowned him out by humming loudly and focusing on my screen, pretending his voice did not exist.

"Fine then. Do not accuse me later of keeping you in the dark."

His words were followed by the sound of the door closing. Several minutes passed before I managed to regain my concentration, but just as I did, the door opened again. Without lifting my eyes, I spoke.

"Craig, I am swamped, so please stop with the ridiculous jokes."

Silence greeted me, and I let out a slow breath.

“Why did you not answer my calls?”.

The sound of that voice sent a jolt through me, and my head snapped up before I could stop myself. My heart pounded hard as our eyes met, and a shiver traced its way down my spine. Even so, I forced myself to stay composed and offered a calm smile, as if nothing had stirred inside me.

“What brings you here, Mr. Kelley?”.

I noticed the way his jaw tightened and how his gaze sharpened as he studied me.

“That is not what you called me last night, beloved,” he responded, a quiet laugh slipping out.

Despite the way that soft sound unsettled me, I refused to show it.

“What did I call you?”. I asked, lifting a brow in feigned curiosity.

“Do not tell me you already forgot. Not after the way you whispered my name while you were lost in me.”

I pressed my teeth into my lower lip, wondering why he had to choose his words so carefully, as if he knew exactly how to unsettle me.

“Sorry, I must have blanked out for a moment.”

“For heaven’s sake, Sophia,” he snapped, and my eyes widened when he closed the distance between us in just a few long strides.

“W-what are you doing?”. The question barely made it out as I swallowed hard, especially when he leaned down and brought his face dangerously close to mine.

“You claimed you could not remember, so I thought I would remind you of last night.”

Any protest died before it could form, because his mouth claimed mine without warning.

The thought flickered through my mind too late to stop anything.

The kiss started rough and demanding, as though he was searching for proof, and then it deepened into something that left me breathless. Heat rushed through me at his touch, and my body reacted before my thoughts could catch up. His hands traced my back with slow intent while his lips wandered from my mouth to my neck, and a helpless sound slipped from me when his teeth grazed my ear.

When he finally pulled away, we were both struggling to breathe, and he lowered his face to the curve of my neck.

Chapter 508

“My God, my love. You have no idea what you do to me. Every time I catch your scent, I lose my mind. I cannot even focus on my work because of you.”

A sharp breath caught in my throat as his lips brushed along my neck, gentle enough to make my skin prickle. His warm breath teased me, and I pressed my teeth into my lip to keep any sound from escaping.

Without warning, he pulled away and studied me, his face settling back into the same guarded look he had worn when he first walked in.

How could he switch like that so quickly?

“Why did you walk out of the apartment?”, he asked, his tone suddenly firm as his hands closed around my shoulders. “Why did you skip breakfast? And why did you ignore every one of my calls?”.

A quiet sigh slipped out of me as I looked away, the memory of waking up alone flooding back. I remembered the empty space beside me and the certainty that he had left for work, even after everything that had happened between us the night before.

“My phone was on silent. I did not even realize you were calling.”

“That cannot be true.”

“Believe me or not, that is your choice. But shouldn’t I be the one asking questions first? Why did you leave the penthouse?”.

The tension in his eyes eased as he let out a slow breath. He lowered himself in front of me, took my hands, and grounded me there with him.

“I got an emergency call, my love. I had to respond to it.”

“Do you not have people for that? Denise and Andrew are there for a reason, aren’t they?”.

“They are, but this time I needed to see the situation for myself.”

I nodded, though the disappointment still sat heavy in my chest. “You still did not answer what I asked. Why are you here now?”.

He said nothing in response. He only watched me, his silence stretching between us.

“Fine, you can go. I still have work to finish.”

“That is not happening. Pack your things. We are leaving,” he said, standing as he slid his hands into his pockets.

“No. I am staying to finish these documents. You can go if you want.”

His breathing grew heavier, and then he did something I never expected. He leaned over, saved the files on my screen, and shut my computer without asking. After that, he gathered my belongings from the desk and placed them neatly into my bag.

I stood frozen, staring at him as he continued. He lined up my books and folders, pulled my jacket from the drawer, and retrieved my car keys as if the decision had already been made.

“Put this on,” he said, and before I could respond, the jacket was already settled around my shoulders. “Come on. I already made a reservation for dinner.”

“Wait. I told you I am not going with you.” I tried to pull my hand free, but his grip only tightened. “Daniel—”.

The world tilted suddenly. “Oh my God, put me down! What do you think you are doing?”.

Chapter 509

“If you do not feel like walking, you can always say so, my love. I do not mind carrying you.” With that, he hoisted me onto his shoulder and headed straight for the door.

What was wrong with this man? Of all things, he loved carrying me around like this, and it drove me insane.

“Fine! I will go with you, just put me down already.” My teeth clenched as I spoke.

“No. You are staying right there.” His hand landed against me in a familiar, playful way, exactly like the day before when he carried me into the penthouse.

“Ouch! Why do you always do that? What, are you into that sort of thing?”. The words slipped out before I could stop them. It was too late to take it back. His laughter rang out, warm and unapologetic, echoing through the studio.

“You have a very active imagination, my dear.”

He laughed again, loud enough to draw curious looks from a few students and even from Craig.

“If you ever want to explore those ideas, all you have to do is tell me.”

“Uh... explore what ideas, exactly? Because I am not sure I know what you are talking about.”

Craig's voice cut in at that moment, and I twisted my head to look in his direction, suddenly aware that we had an audience.

"Enough," I muttered, shooting him a sharp look.

Curious eyes followed us all the way to the car, right up until Daniel opened the passenger door and unceremoniously placed me inside before closing it with finality.

"So where are you dragging me off to now?" . Once he slid into the driver's seat, I turned toward him.

"I already told you. I booked a table at a very exclusive restaurant, and we are having dinner together."

I let out a soft hum and laughed under my breath. "Interesting. So now you are taking a woman who supposedly has nothing to do with you out to dinner."

"Sweetheart, if you do not stop teasing me, I will cancel the reservation and take you straight back to the penthouse."

"And what exactly happens at your penthouse?" . He did not answer right away, but the smile he gave me sent the same familiar shiver down my spine that haunted me from the night before.

"I will steal your glass again, and I will make you say my name the way you did last night."

The memory hit me all at once, vivid and uninvited, and heat rushed to my cheeks until I was sure they had turned bright red.

“Honestly, if it were up to me, I would rather have you for dinner than sit in some overpriced restaurant. What do you think?”.

My breath caught, and for a moment, my heart forgot how to beat.

“So?”. He lifted a brow.

“You mean we are going to eat dinner, and then you will take me back to the studio.” I looked away, forcing my voice to steady.

“Why would I take you back to the studio?”. He asked, a crease forming between his brows as he started the engine.

Chapter 510

“Because I still had paperwork waiting for me. If you had not dragged me out of there, I would have finished at least one entire folder by now.”

“That is unfortunate, but after dinner, we are going home.”

“Then take me to my apartment. I will ask Craig to bring my reports over later.”

“And who told you that you are going back to that apartment?”.

“What are you talking about?”. Confusion hit me all at once, and I straightened in my seat.

“You are moving in with me. You will be staying at the penthouse.”

“No.”

“Yes, my love. We will pick up your things tomorrow.”

The certainty in his voice sent a rush through me, and excitement stirred before I could stop it. I had just reached the second step of my plan.

“Are you absolutely sure about this, Mr. Kelley? What about your girlfriend? Will she not have something to say about it?”.

“Who exactly are you referring to?”.

“Your precious Chloe Enriquez. I imagine she would not be thrilled.”

“She is not my girlfriend, and you know that. I ended whatever that was the moment I married you.”

“You still allowed her inside your company. She was there every single day, and you even let her get close to you.”

“That sounds an awful lot like jealousy, my love.”

The smile on his face made my eyes widen despite myself.

“Do not flatter yourself. Why would I be jealous? I am nothing to you, remember.”

With a sharp breath, I folded my arms and looked away. Part of me waited for him to say those three familiar words again, convinced they would end this spiral of pointless drama.

Instead, he stayed silent, and rather than continuing toward the restaurant, he suddenly turned the steering wheel toward the KI Corporation building.

“You mean nothing to me? I already disproved that last night.”

“Wait. Why are you heading back to the company?”. I said at once, choosing to ignore his words.

He did not answer.

“Daniel, why are we going to your office?”.

“We are not going to my office. We are going home.”

It took a second for realization to hit me, followed by a quiet curse. I had completely forgotten that his penthouse sat directly above the building.

“I thought you said you had a reservation at the restaurant.”

“I will have Andrew cancel the reservation.”

“So you are not taking me back to my apartment?”.

“That was never the plan. I already told you where we are going, and starting today, you live with me. Whether you argue or not, we will share the same place, the same room, and the same bed. We will eat together, and we will sleep together.”

“That actually sounds... nice.”

“So you mean...?”.

“Yes. If your mind is wandering toward what couples usually do at night, relax. It will not be every single night, but whenever we get the chance.”

I choked on air, stunned, as he continued, “In our room. In the shower. In the living room. Even in the kitchen, if the mood strikes.”