

## **A Favor 571**

### Chapter 571

“Aghh, damn it! Forget the bag! I’m taking you to the hospital now!” Without waiting another second, he crouched down and swept me into his arms.

I gasped in surprise but held on to his neck as he swiftly carried me down the stairs.

“Darling, we need to bring the bag to the hospital. All my documents are in there, along with the baby’s things.”

“Don’t worry about it, love. I’ll have Nanay Emily bring it to the hospital.”

I closed my eyes and went still as another wave of pain hit, my mind tangled in a strange, half-delirious thought about how much pain a human body could endure compared to what a woman experiences during childbirth.

A human body can supposedly withstand forty-five units of pain, while a woman in labor can feel up to fifty-seven—equivalent to twenty broken bones.

Then again, some doctors say that claim is entirely false. They argue there’s no real unit for measuring pain, and that even with today’s technology, it can’t be quantified, since every person’s tolerance depends on their own experience, and experience is unique to each individual.

Yes, the human body is capable of extraordinary things, and many people can endure remarkable amounts of pain—while others simply cannot. But no matter what anyone says, there's no amount of pain that can outweigh a mother's love and devotion to her child.

"Ugh, damn it!"

"Why? What happened?" I asked, confused, after he set me down in the passenger seat.

"I forgot the damn key!"

I took a deep breath. Under any other circumstance, I swear I would have laughed at him. Thankfully, before he could run back for the key, Ben and two of his men pulled up driving my car. They helped us in right away. We sat in the back seat, and I watched how worried my husband looked as he held my hand, kissing my forehead every time I squeezed his arm. He never once complained, because he knew how much pain I was in.

"Ahh... little one, have mercy on your mother, please," he murmured over and over, until we reached the emergency room and they rushed me straight into the delivery room.

Thirty years later...

Sophia's point of view

“Hey! Mr. Kelley, stop doing that!” I whispered—half nervous, half amused—when I caught my husband watching me as I stood in front of my makeup shelf, applying cream to my face.

He was lying on the bed, head resting against the headboard, a book dropped in his lap. He probably thought I hadn’t noticed, but little did he know, I could see him perfectly well from the corner of my eye.

“Huh? Stop doing what? I’m doing nothing, beloved. I wasn’t even moving.” He tried to feign innocence, but couldn’t quite hide the smile tugging at his lips.

“Yes, you’re not doing anything, but your eyes were moving! I can’t focus on applying my cream!” I turned to him with a scowl.

He dropped the book and laughed, the sound echoing through the room.

“How did you know I was looking at you if you were busy putting something on your face?”

Chapter 572

I lifted my chin and arched an eyebrow at him.

“Ahh, beloved, thirty years have gone by. I’ve memorized the sound of your snoring, the smell of your farts, and even the times you get up to pee every night—so don’t ask me how I know you’re looking at me. I have two eyes, and I can see you from the corners of them!”

His laugh this time was even louder than before, but I kept applying my cream, pretending not to be affected. A few seconds later, I noticed he'd gotten up and was walking toward me.

Our eyes met in the mirror, and it struck me just how many years had passed—yet I still felt the same way about him as I had thirty years ago. This man, who had stood beside me all this time, had become my source of happiness, strength, and inspiration.

The one who had promised to love me, and only me, until his last breath. And I thanked God every day for leading me to him, and for letting him keep that promise.

“Look who’s watching, Mrs. Kelley,” he said, a mischievous smile on his lips.

I swallowed hard.

“I just noticed how handsome you are today, my love.” I winked at him, and he laughed again.

“Really?” He placed his hands on my shoulders.

“Yes.”

“Only today?” I nodded. “Wow! I can’t believe it. We’ve been married for over thirty years, and only today did you realize I’m handsome?”

I laughed as he began massaging my shoulder blades, sending shivers through me, slowly pulling my body into a quiet wave of desire. I bit my lower lip to hold back the moan threatening to escape my throat.

“What are you doing?” I asked in confusion as he leaned in and rested his chin on my head, his hands trailing down to my arms.

“Tell me, my love, when did you find me the most handsome? Is it every morning when I wake up? While we’re having lunch, or dinner? Hmm... do you find me sexy in bed too?”

I swallowed hard, looking directly into his eyes. What the hell—where were these questions leading?

“May I know why you’re asking me this all of a sudden, sir? Don’t tell me you’re insecure about your body now?”

“Of course not! I just want to know if what I was thinking was right.” He raised an eyebrow. “That in these thirty years of being your husband, I can feel how you melt when I touch you. And look, I’ve always caught you drooling over this body.”

Oh, my God. I couldn’t help but roll my eyes. I’d imagined him saying something like that—again. Well, he always did; it was practically his favorite line. I bit my lip to hold back the laughter. If there was one thing about him that hadn’t changed, it was his arrogance, which had only grown into full-blown narcissism over the years.

## Chapter 573

“Come on, Sophia Kelley, don’t deny it. I know you’ve always wanted to touch me, and even if I hadn’t noticed, you’ve always held back because you’re afraid the kids might catch you.”

“Hahaha! Get your hands off me, Daniel Kelley!” I pushed his hands away as they started massaging my breasts. “Don’t you dare twist the truth!”

“I’m not, my love. I’m just stating the facts,” he said, winking at me.

“Hey, you’re just describing yourself, not me!”

I lifted my head to face him, though as always, I only reached his chin, so I still had to tilt my head back or stand on tiptoe for our eyes to meet.

“It’s you who could never keep your hands in your pockets, who could never wait for the kids to fall asleep! You’re the pervert who always finds a way to take advantage of me in public, even inside the car when the kids aren’t looking. So tell me, between the two of us, who really can’t keep it in their pants?”

Instead of answering, he pulled me by the waist. Before I even realized what was happening, my back was already sinking into the softness of the bed. He pinned my hands to the side, knees settling between my legs as he lowered himself over me, letting half his weight rest against mine.

“Tsk, ts, ts. Nothing has changed, my beloved,” he said, his eyes drifting from mine, to my nose, to my lips.

“What do you mean, nothing has changed?” I asked, even though deep down I already knew the answer. Nothing had changed about the way we felt for each other. We still had those same sparks, still ignited every time we were together, even after thirty years of marriage.

“Nah, don’t worry. I just want you to know that I love you. I love you more than anything, and I’ll keep loving you and our children until we grow old.”

“Tsk, tsk.” I sighed, cupping his cheeks the moment he let go of my wrists. “You know, even though I’m a little confused about why you’re being so dramatic this morning, I’m happy.”

“Are you?”

“Hmm.” I nodded, smiling. “I love you too, darling. I think even eternity wouldn’t be enough to hold the love I have for you.”

He gave me a melting smile, and I waited for his next move. And just like the old days, I didn’t need to ask “what” or “why”—my heart already knew what was on his mind.

“Let me tell you something. I don’t want to close my eyes while I wait for your lips to meet mine. I want to watch you close yours, and feel everything we’re feeling, together, at the same time.”

But before his lips could reach mine...

...the door to our room swung open.

“Oh my God! Mom! Dad!”

We both sighed in disbelief and turned toward the door to see our youngest daughter, Sabrina, covering her eyes with her hands.

“Ugh! Don’t you know how to knock?” Daniel scolded her, though there was laughter in his voice.

#### Chapter 574

“Of course I know how to knock, Dad! I did knock, but you didn’t answer, so I just pushed the door open!” She stomped her foot. “Isn’t it a little early for a kissing session?”

“Oh my God! When are you two ever going to stop being so clingy with each other?”

Daniel and I exchanged glances and laughed together at her reaction. I gave him a pat on the bicep, and he pressed a quick kiss to my forehead before rolling off me.

“You can uncover your eyes now,” I said, standing up, glancing at Daniel, who looked thoroughly disappointed beside me. “Sorry, baby. I promise this won’t happen again.”

“Ugh, you always say that, Mom,” she said, wrinkling her nose.

I tried not to laugh as my husband let out a frustrated sigh. Sabrina—or Sab, for short—was our youngest child and the only girl among our three kids. Our eldest son, Neil, was already married with a family of his own, while our second son, Luke, seemed to have inherited his father’s personality.

Well, I’m not saying he was as rude and arrogant as his father, but unlike Neil and Sab, who were both extroverts, Luke was the complete opposite of his siblings. He’d always preferred reading books and playing guitar over going out with friends, meeting girls at clubs, or attending parties back when he was still a student.

He was now the current CEO of KI Corporation, while Neil was a successful cardiac surgeon in LA, still pursuing further specialization in his field. Luke had only had one girlfriend, back in high school, and after they broke up, he never pursued another relationship. But don’t get me wrong—he loved his siblings so much that he sometimes acted like the eldest of the three.

Meanwhile, our youngest and sweetest, Sab, had graduated in fashion design in New York, where she’d met the man who won her heart—the same man who would walk her down the aisle in three days. We were in the middle of preparing for the big wedding, and yesterday alone had left us so drained we’d all slept in this morning.

“Come here, I’ll help you with your hair,” I said, nudging her father onto the bed and gesturing for her to sit in front of my vanity. She’d told me last night that Kian, her fiancé, would be picking her up today.

“Mom...”

The look she gave me sent Daniel and me into another round of laughter. I knew that look well—it was her silent plea: Mom, I'm old enough to do my own hair. I'm not a baby anymore. We always ended up in the same lighthearted argument over it.

"I know you're not a baby anymore, but can you blame your mother? Your wedding is in three days, and you'll be moving in with Kian after that, so let me do this. I'll miss it once you're not around anymore." I gave her a soft, sad smile and opened my arms for her.

## Chapter 575

"Ahh, Mom..." She laughed lightly but stepped forward to hug me anyway. "Mom, we'll be in New York, alone, and—" I cut her off before she could finish, still caught up in shock.

"Oh, my God! You said 'alone' as if the flight from Los Angeles to New York takes ten or fifteen minutes!"

"Mom, your husband is rich," she said, winking at her dad, who laughed. "He's got three private jets that can fly you to New York and back whenever you want. Right, Dad?"

"Certainly!" Daniel agreed, which made me roll my eyes.

Like father, like daughter.

"I can buy you a house in New York too, my love, if you want. You only have to say the word."

“See? Dad can do anything for you, Mom. Don’t you remember? He’s one of the biggest billionaires in LA!”

“And don’t forget I’m also the most handsome one, baby,” Daniel added, winking at me.

“I completely agree with you, Dad!”

“Uh-huh, you really are my daughter!”

They gave each other a high-five.

“Wow. I told you, nothing’s changed—if anything, it’s multiplied,” I said.

“Alright, that’s enough. I don’t think I want to know where this conversation is heading,” I said, laughing at them both. “Be careful, Sab, and please tell Kian to bring you home before dinner, since Aunt Rian and Uncle Alex are joining us tonight.”

“Really? Are my cousins coming too?”

“Hmm, I’m not sure. I’ll ask your aunt later.”

“Okay, bye Mom, bye Dad. I have to go.” She kissed my cheek, then her father’s, before heading for the door.

“Be careful, Sabrina, please,” Daniel and I said at the same time.

“I will.” She waved before disappearing from sight.

Daniel got up to close the door, and when he turned back around, that same familiar smile was already spreading across his lips.

“Finally!” he shouted, taking a step toward me—right before a loud bang echoed from outside the door. I covered my mouth to muffle my laughter as he punched the air in frustration.

He opened the door and found his daughter standing there again.

“What?” he asked her, his voice tight with mock frustration.

“I forgot my phone,” she said, shrugging.

He opened the door wide to let her in, and just before she left again—

“Dad, please?”

“Please, what?”

“I know Mom can’t get pregnant anymore, but just to be safe, I’ll remind you again—I don’t want a new little brother or sister.”

“And why not?”

“Oh my God, Dad, you’re too old to take care of a baby!”

“What—”

“Bye! Love you guys!”

We wore two very different expressions as she left us alone—Daniel’s frowning deeply, mine barely holding back laughter.

We’d always been like this. We’d been blessed with three intelligent, independent children—Neil, Luke, and Sabrina. But out of the three, Sab had somehow turned into a new version of me. She had her

father's face, yes, but most of her personality she'd inherited from me: stubborn, strong-willed, and quick-tempered.

## Chapter 576

I'm not sure if you know this, but when we first met, I was so nervous I could barely speak. Yet it was in that exact moment that I found the one meant for me, and my life found its missing piece.

As I walked our daughter down the aisle toward the man who had promised to care for her, joy and happiness filled my heart. I glanced at my husband, and a smile spread across his lips.

"Take good care of my Sabrina, son," Daniel said, handing over his daughter's hand to the man who would become her husband in a few moments. "Make sure you keep your promise. Love her, be her partner in all things, and in every decision you make together." He gave the groom a firm pat on the shoulder.

"I will, sir... I mean, Dad."

I simply embraced them both and kissed my daughter before letting Kian lead her to the altar. There wasn't much more to say; I'd already spoken with him beforehand, and I already knew how much he loved my daughter. I'd witnessed it with my own eyes.

Daniel took my hand and led me to our reserved seats. As the ceremony began, I looked down at our intertwined fingers, not realizing that my husband wasn't looking at our hands at all—he was looking at me. When I finally noticed, I smiled, and he smiled back, that same smile, his eyes shining with the same emotion I'd seen thirty years ago, at our own wedding.

He kissed my forehead before we silently turned our attention back to the ceremony.

Forty-five minutes later...

“Kian, you may now kiss the bride.”

Kian didn’t waste a second lifting Sab’s veil and kissing her, passionately, in front of everyone. Tears of joy streamed down my face as I remembered my own wedding day, as if it had happened yesterday and not thirty years ago.

On that day, my mother and brother had walked me down the aisle and placed my hand in the hand of the man I’d promised to stay with for the rest of my life. Now it was us, walking with our daughter, entrusting her to her new life partner.

We had just witnessed the union of their hearts. Nothing compared to the happiness of watching our children grow independent and content with the lives they’d chosen—especially our eldest, Neil, and now our youngest, Sabrina. Of course, there was still one who, as far as I could tell, didn’t even have the words “get married” or “find a wife” in his vocabulary—our Luke.

When the ceremony ended, Kian and Sab drove off in a new, expensive car—Daniel’s wedding gift to them.

“Let’s go, my dear,” Daniel said, taking my hand as we walked toward the entrance together.

He opened the passenger door for me, helped me fasten my seatbelt, and closed the door before circling around to his side.

I couldn't help but smile once we were finally alone, driving to the reception. I kept glancing at him, smiling every time he looked my way. There was so much on my mind that I wanted to share with him. Little did I know, the same thought had crossed both our minds at once.

## Chapter 577

"Why did you stop?" I asked when he suddenly turned the wheel and pulled over to the side of the road.

He ignored my question and unbuckled his seatbelt. I frowned, mirroring his movements, and just as I opened my mouth to ask again, my lips were sealed by his—warm, soft, and hungry, the kiss just a touch aggressive.

I was confused at first, but that confusion quickly gave way to the emotions rising between us. It felt like the old days. My heart raced in my chest as I kissed him back. He wrapped his arms around my waist on instinct, and I gasped as he pulled me onto his lap, never once breaking the kiss. As much as I wanted to stay lost in that moment, I couldn't let him carry on—not only because we needed to get to our daughter's reception, but because I was sure Alfred and his men were already wondering why we'd stopped, and what exactly we were doing.

Alfred was our new head of security, ever since our former head, Ben, had retired five years earlier.

"Daniel Kelley, what's gotten into you?" I asked, still catching my breath as I pushed him back.

“Nothing. I just missed your soft lips, my dear.”

I rolled my eyes, trying to hide my smile. Old age was creeping up on us both, yet I couldn’t understand why words like that still affected me so deeply, as if I were still the young Sophia who’d just received her first kiss.

“You really do know how to make my heart race and leap out of my chest, Mr. Kelley.”

“That’s just a sign you’re still head over heels for me, my wife.” He chuckled. “Well, I can’t blame you. I still have that killer smile and the same appeal you once dreamed of having for yourself, thirty years ago.” He winked at me.

“Oh my God!”

“Guess what I did?”

“Nothing,” I said, faking a smile as I stared at him.

Did you see that? Nothing had changed. My husband always did know how to boast.

“I think we should go. I’m sure the kids are waiting.” I tried to slide back to my seat, but he wouldn’t let me, pulling me tighter instead. “Hey, let me go, Daniel! I know exactly what you’re thinking—stop being silly!”

“Arghh! Let’s stay just a little longer, my dear...”

“No! Your daughter is waiting, and I’m sure they’ll ask why we were late to the reception.”

“And if they ask...”

“Huh! If they ask, what do you want me to tell them? That her father suddenly pulled the car over to kiss her mother because he missed her lips?”

He shrugged. “Well, I don’t see anything wrong with telling the truth.”

“Wow, you’re something else.” This time I really did try to escape his hold and return to my seat. I noticed him pout, and I secretly rolled my eyes. “Ugh, age is really catching up with you, Daniel Kelley,” I murmured, barely above a whisper, then frowned when he suddenly burst out laughing.

“I heard that.”

Chapter 578

I turned my head toward him.

“Yes, you’re right, I’m getting older, but I can still do my job well”—he glanced at me—“especially at night. I can still make you scream.” He said it with unmistakable pride before finally starting the car.

“Arghh!” My face burned with embarrassment. “You irritate me so much!”

He let out the most infuriating laugh, which only made my cheeks turn a deeper shade of red. The car filled with his laughter as he drove on toward the reception.

I decided to turn on the radio, if only to distract myself from the subject and hide my flushed face. But the song that came on made him stop laughing entirely. I looked over and saw that same soft smile on his lips that I could feel on my own.

It was an old love song, one we’d both grown to cherish over the years—about staying together through good times and bad, about a love that had never once let the other person down, about being glad to have stayed exactly where they were, together.

He took my hand, love shining in his eyes, and brought it to his lips for a kiss.

“You know how much I love you, don’t you?”

I smiled and nodded.

“Thank you for staying with me all these years, for being the best partner I could have asked for, and for being the best mother to our children. I know it wasn’t always easy, but you’ve always been so patient with me. So thank you. I’m grateful for every effort and every sacrifice you’ve made for this family, my dear.” He kissed my hand again.

“Well, you’re right about needing patience, Daniel Kelley, because having an arrogant and possessive husband has drained me every single day. But I’m glad I stayed—we both stayed. So thank you, because despite being possessive, you’ve always made me feel safe. You’ve always made sure I knew I was the only woman in your eyes, and that your heart truly belongs to me. And don’t worry about ‘staying’—as I promised, I’m willing to stay another thirty years in this marriage, or more, for as long as I carry your name. I love you. And I know I haven’t said this often enough, but you’ve done an amazing job as a father to our children. They’re lucky to have you, and I’m lucky to have you as the most handsome husband in the world.”

I ended my little speech with a wink, putting extra emphasis on those last five words. And of course, knowing the husband I had, I fully expected his head to swell at the compliment—and he did not disappoint.

“Wow, I love you more, my dear! Though honestly, you didn’t need to point that out. I was born beautiful, I’ve aged beautifully, and I’m sure I’ll die beautiful too!”

And that was that.

## Chapter 579

Rolling my eyes, I let out the most exasperated laugh I could manage. Truthfully, we no longer needed to shower each other in compliments, because deep down, we both knew our love ran far beyond words.

Our love was deep—perhaps deeper than the ocean. Everything we'd been through was proof that falling in love was never a choice, and never would be, but staying in love always was.

In thirty years of marriage, I've learned many life lessons, and one of the most important is that love isn't about finding the right person—it's about building the right relationship. It's not about how much love you have at the start, but how much you're willing to build until the very end.

Our marriage isn't perfect, and neither is our relationship. Over the years we've discovered many things we have in common, but we've also come to recognize our differences—differences that, honestly, might outweigh the things we share.

There will surely still be discussions, arguments, expectations, and challenges ahead on this endless journey. A simple disagreement that sometimes grows into something more serious. There will be moments of pain that might overshadow the magic. But the true measure of love lies in how we hold on to each other, how we fight for what we have, and how we draw strength and inspiration from one another, especially when it feels like the battle is being lost.

I am Sophia Ysabelle Del Mundo-Kelley, and this is my story.

I finally tamed the cold, arrogant businessman—but I can't deny that he tamed the clever, stubborn woman I once was, too.

The true ending...

He had all the qualities anyone could wish for in the man of their dreams. Power, money, perfection, beauty, and the body of a Greek god.

Yet he was in love. He was in love with her. To him, she was the embodiment of his dream—the perfect wife, the perfect mother to his children. He would have given her everything, including his own life. He would have sacrificed his whole world for her.

Yet she left him. She betrayed him. She broke his heart into pieces. And in the aftermath, he became a cold, heartless, rude, arrogant billionaire, determined to prove she no longer mattered to him. But the truth was the opposite of everything he tried to show the world. His heart still ached for her.

And that was when he met me.

I had applied to be his personal assistant, hoping to check something off my bucket list—to explore my life, to experience everything it had to offer. He offered me a deal instead. He proposed to me, just to show his ex that he'd moved on.

“She’s pregnant.”

He let it slip, and I nearly stumbled where I stood. I grabbed the back of the sofa to steady myself. The pain blooming in my chest was unbearable, but somehow I managed to stay calm.

“Wow, congratulations.”

I said it with feigned enthusiasm, remembering the words he'd once told me: Betrayal wouldn't be the reason our marriage ends. Of course, I couldn't call this betrayal—not really. She had always been the real reason we were pretending to be a couple in the first place.

## Chapter 580

He still loved her. He was still in love with her.

And that was when I made the biggest decision of my life. Gathering every last bit of strength, holding on to the one small piece of my heart still hanging by a thread...

I let him go.

And I took my biggest secret with me: that I had already fallen for him.

Somehow, I'd already learned the lesson.

Loving someone who doesn't love you back is hard enough. But loving someone who's still in love with their ex, someone who's only using you to win her back—that's a different kind of hard entirely.

"Rude!"

This was my usual monologue every time he said nothing. Not a single “thank you,” or anything close to it, after handing me a stack of orders. Like I said, he didn’t know the word “thank you.” It simply didn’t exist in his vocabulary.

Madi’s point of view

“Tell me, Madi, why do you need another job? You already have your own fancy restaurants—three major ones in the city. And it’s not like you need the money; half of it goes straight to your charities anyway. God, aren’t you exhausted?”

This was Noelle, my best friend and the manager of one of my three restaurants operating in the city.

“Because, like I’ve told you, this has been my dream since college. That’s why I got a business administration degree in the first place—to check it off my list.” I tried reasoning with her, but she still didn’t get it.

It had been a month since I started working as an assistant at Wilsons Electronics Corporation, under our CEO, Mr. Gabriel Wilsons. And let me tell you, the pressure of working at one of the largest companies in Chicago could be overwhelming at times.

Running around all day, sending faxes and emails, updating my boss’s schedule, and making his coffee three times a day were just part of my daily routine.

And that wasn’t even counting my responsibilities running my own business “on the side.”

Honestly, feeling tired and exhausted came with the territory. “Let’s move on,” I said, waving my hand and going back to checking papers that needed my signature. We were in the back office of my first restaurant, a twenty-minute drive from the WEC building.

It was Sunday, my day off, which meant I could spend the whole day checking in on all three of my stores.

“Yeah, but you’re not getting any younger. You’re already twenty-six, single, have never had a boyfriend in your life, and you’re a total virgin in every department, for God’s sake!”

Thank goodness this office was soundproof, so I didn’t need to clap a hand over her mouth even when she practically shouted that.

Ever since she’d found out I landed the job at Wilsons, she wouldn’t stop bringing it up.

“Hey! Enough about my age and my love life.” I laughed as she brought her glass of orange juice up to take a sip.