

A Favor 621

Chapter 621

“Ohh, damn,” I muttered without meaning to, the moment I saw Mr. Wilsons’ fists clench. A strange mix of pity and pain washed over me, just watching him stand there, unable to tear his eyes away from what was unfolding right in front of him.

What must it feel like, still completely in love with someone who once loved you back, only to have them leave? Does it hurt so much that moving on becomes impossible? Does he care for her so deeply that he simply can’t bring himself to keep living without her?

How much pain had he felt, discovering that the woman he’d built a life with had betrayed him for someone else? And how much of that same pain was he feeling right now, still watching the woman he’d loved his whole life, standing in the arms of someone else—arms that were no longer his?

Madi’s Point of View

I kept watching the two scenes playing out in front of me. The first was the continuation of that repulsive kiss between the slender woman and the man, whose face I still couldn’t make out, since he was too busy devouring—kissing, I mean—that woman.

The second scene starred an enraged Mr. Wilsons, who couldn’t seem to look away from the sinful sight, something that had to be excruciating for him. Was he really foolish enough to keep watching? I was fairly certain, if I were ever asked to organize a parade of fools and martyrs, I’d nominate him for president and grand marshal on the spot.

I wouldn’t waste a second honoring someone who insisted on torturing himself like this.

You understand what I mean, right? I knew he was suffering. He knew he hadn't moved on. And still, he chose to stand there, watching, letting it hurt him even more. Heavens above.

I took a deep breath before walking over to where my ridiculous boss stood.

Since we weren't at the office, I figured I could set aside "formality" and "professionalism" for the moment. God help me.

I was standing right next to him now, and he still hadn't noticed me, too fixated on the scene between that woman and that man.

"So... that's her? What's her name?" I asked, not looking at him, and not looking at the two of them either, still glued together at the mouth. I just stood there, staring into the distance, waiting for an answer.

He finally turned toward me. Standing next to him, I felt practically dwarfed by his height. He pulled off his sunglasses, and for a second I lost my breath at the sight of his brown eyes.

Wow. I see these same brown eyes every single day. What was so different about them right now?

I mentally slapped myself for getting distracted by his eyes, of all things.

He frowned, sweeping his gaze over me from head to toe, mouth forming a small “o” without a single sound coming out.

I know, I know, I’m sexy and beautiful. I had to press my lips together to keep from smiling.

“Hi,” I greeted him, flashing a wide smile. His eyes went wide with something that might’ve been surprise.

Chapter 622

Wow, or did that come out a little too casual? Okay, let’s try that again.

“Good morning, Mr. Wilsons,” I said, more formally this time, another smile on my lips.

“Madi?”

My smile vanished at the way he said my name.

Damn it. Why did my own name sound so good coming out of his mouth?

“Sir—oops, can I call you Gabriel too? Since we’re not at the office and all.” I wished I could just shut my own mouth. Ugh, stop it, Madielyn.

“What are you doing here?” We asked the exact same question, at the exact same time.

“Just looking around.”

“I’m with friends.”

Both answers landed simultaneously, and my eyebrows shot up on their own at his response. Just looking around.

“Uh-huh. Looking around?” I studied his face, not buying it for a second. “Really? Wouldn’t ‘looking for someone’ be more accurate? Or maybe ‘following someone’?”

His expression shifted instantly.

“That’s none of your business,” he said through clenched teeth.

I’ll admit, that wasn’t quite the reaction I expected. But Gabriel should know by now—I’m Madi, and I don’t back down that easily.

“I completely understand it’s none of my business,” I said calmly, raising an eyebrow. That’s when I noticed the coffee cup in his hand. I have no idea what came over me in that moment, but before I even registered it, I’d already snatched it out of his grip and was walking straight toward the couple, who had finally come up for air.

I heard Gabriel call my name behind me, but I kept walking toward them. Once I was close enough to the slender woman—his ex-fiancée, presumably—I pretended to trip over a basket on the floor.

Right on target. My coffee—well, Gabriel’s coffee—went flying straight onto her.

“What the hell is this!” she snapped, whipping around to glare at me.

“Oh my gosh, I’m so sorry, that was completely an accident!” I said, delivering what I’d like to think was an Oscar-worthy apology. If looks could kill, I’d have been buried on the spot.

“Sweetheart!” The man beside her whipped out a handkerchief, dabbing frantically at her ruined dress.

Sweetheart? Seriously? Ugh, so tacky. I shook my head as if genuinely devastated. My God, how could I have done that? I swear I have no idea what came over me...

My silent little performance was cut short by the man’s raised voice.

“Look what you did to my girlfriend!” he shouted, looking about ready to swing at me.

“I already apologized. I really am sorry. I—I didn’t see the basket on the ground.”

“Oh, darling, I’m so sorry for jumping on you like that.”

“You apologized? You ruined my dress, you idiot! Do you think ‘sorry’ is going to fix this?” The woman practically boiled over with rage.

“What—”

“She already apologized. What more do you want from her, Stacey?”

A chill ran down my spine at that cold, all-too-familiar voice right behind me. A strong arm wrapped firmly around my waist as he stared straight at the woman.

Stacey, I repeated her name silently.

“Gabriel!

Message 2 from Noa: Dear ones, did you know that God has known us since we were in our mothers’ wombs? (Jeremiah 1:5). Many times we think of God as someone distant, when in truth He has known

us since before we were born and formed each of us with care (Ephesians 1:4). God loves us and has been present with us in every moment, every sad moment and every happy moment of our lives. Buuut, even though He's by our side, He can't do anything if we don't give Him permission to work in our lives — if we don't ask Him. We can only receive from that love, that healing, that salvation if we accept it. It's a decision we can make at any moment, accepting Him as Lord and Savior, through faith in Jesus Christ. (Romans 10:9)

Chapter 623

She looked genuinely stunned to find him standing in front of her.

"Stacey," Mr. Wilsons replied, ice in his voice.

"You know her?!" Her eyes darted between me and the hand still resting on my waist.

"I do. She's my girlfriend."

His words dried my mouth up like a desert. It slowly dawned on me—I'd just, without meaning to, agreed to his entire deal.

"Your girlfriend?" Stacey laughed, mocking, as if the idea of me being his girlfriend was completely absurd. Which, fair enough, it technically wasn't true. But I caught a flicker of something bitter in her eyes—not the reaction I'd have expected from a woman who'd just been passionately kissing her own boyfriend.

"That's right. Exactly what you heard. This is Madi, my girlfriend—she'll be my wife in a few weeks."

I just stared at him, stunned.

“In a few weeks? Darling, this is Stacey, an old friend. And this is her boyfriend, Ray.”

Did he just call me “darling”?

My eyes went wide at the word.

“Why does she look so surprised that you called her ‘darling’?” the man introduced as Ray asked, a mischievous smile on his lips. Mr. Wilsons looked at me with a determined expression.

I let out a long, deep breath before deciding to play along.

I gave my boss a sweet smile, then turned back to the couple in front of us.

“Do you want to know why I was so surprised? It wasn’t the ‘darling’—it’s that he once told me he’d been in love with a woman who shared my exact name. That woman decided to betray him without a second thought.” I smiled to myself, watching their guard drop completely. “You know, if I ever met that woman, I’d have to thank her, honestly. For leaving Gabriel free—for me.” I looked deep into his eyes and rested my hand against his cheek, finishing the scene with a charming smile. “I love you, my darling.”

I don't know why, but my heart raced saying those words. What happened next leapt straight out of my imagination and into reality.

He kissed me. Kissed me deeply. My knees gave out beneath me, but he held me up by the waist, his arm bearing all my weight while his other hand cradled the back of my neck.

"I love you too," he said, pulling back with a grin, then pressed one more kiss to my forehead for good measure.

For heaven's sake. He had just stolen my first kiss.

My heart was still racing out of control. If we hadn't been standing in front of those two hypocrites, I would've slapped him right there.

"Is she really your girlfriend, Gabriel?" Stacey asked, clearly struggling to believe it.

"Why? Can't you believe I've moved on from you?" Gabriel's voice dripped with venom as he stared her down.

The shock and horror on both Stacey's and Ray's faces was impossible to miss.

“Pleasure seeing you again, Stacey. You too, Ray,” he said bitterly, before pulling me out of the store.

Chapter 624

I still couldn’t get a single word out after everything that had just happened—too stunned to react, at least until he tugged me toward a quieter corner of the mall.

My instinct was to yank my hand free from his, but he only tightened his grip.

“Why did you do that?” I demanded, my voice rising.

“Do what?” he asked, all wide-eyed innocence.

“Why did you kiss me?”

I wanted to add, “You stole my first kiss!” but I bit it back, knowing it would only feed his already massive ego.

“Because you agreed to my proposal,” he said, as if it were obvious. Was he actually smiling?

Why was he smiling? This wasn’t the reaction I expected out of Gabriel at all. I didn’t need his smile right now, didn’t want it. Was the man bipolar?

"I never agreed to your deal, Mr. Wilsons!"

"Ahh, you said yes, love."

"Don't call me that!"

I stared him down, unflinching.

"Then why act like that? You jumped straight into the game, followed my lead. That means you were already on board."

"Fine, I admit I played along, followed your lead. But why did you kiss me?"

"Because you said you loved me."

My mood soured completely at the sheer nerve of that logic.

"I said that because I was playing a role!"

“I know. I played mine too.”

“By kissing me?”

If only I could wipe that smug, triumphant smile clean off his face. Ugh.

“It was just a kiss. And it’s your fault, for tempting me like that,” he said, shrugging.

“I tempted you?” I was sure my expression had gone straight to horrified.

“You looked me in the eyes, put your hand on my face, told me you loved me, and smiled like you wanted me to kiss you.”

Ouch. For God’s sake, this was ridiculous.

I couldn’t stand there another second with him in front of me. I turned to leave and find the girls, but he caught my hand immediately.

“We’ll talk about this later, Madi.”

“Talk about what? I only pretended, for you!”

“I know. But this isn’t over. I’ll pick you up tonight at seven.”

“No! Absolutely not!” I tried pulling my hand free again, but he held firm.

“Oh, darling. Have you already forgotten I don’t take no for an answer?”

Ugh. I was dying to claw that disgusting smile right off his face. If only I could.

“Tonight, seven o’clock.”

“I’ll be waiting on your driver, then.”

“No. I said I’ll pick you up, not my driver. Be ready.”

I couldn’t help but laugh at his sheer nerve.

“Excuse me, Gabriel. I think you’ve forgotten—we’re not in the office. So no, you don’t get to order me around.” I smiled at the flicker of surprise on his face.

“Fine. Then let’s see. If you’re not ready by seven, I’ll break down your door and sleep at your place. What do you think about that, love?”

“Ugh, you’re an idiot!” I wrenched my hand free and put distance between us for the second time.

Chapter 625

His voice, and that infuriating laugh, kept echoing in my head even after I’d locked myself in the women’s restroom at the mall.

Now I was starting to genuinely hate him—internally, at least. What had I even been thinking, grabbing that coffee out of his hand? It all started with that damn cup, and that skinny woman, this so-called Stacey, and her arrogant boyfriend.

Oh, come on. What was she even thinking, choosing that unremarkable man over Gabriel? Wow. Ray’s square jaw didn’t hold a candle to Gabriel’s perfectly sculpted nose, those hypnotic brown eyes, that charming dimple, his thick, flawless brows and lashes. And let’s not even get started on those soft, full lips.

My fingers drifted up to my mouth without thinking, the memory of his kiss still lingering there.

Damn it.

Madi's point of view

What am I going to wear? What am I going to wear? Argh!

I'd asked myself the same frustrated question almost ten times that night.

"I hate you, Mr. Wilsons!" I grabbed at my hair in frustration as I stepped into my closet.

What should I wear? A dress? Shorts? A short dress? A long one? I paused, a smile spreading across my face as an idea took shape.

Great, Madi—you really are a genius, I thought, a wicked little smile forming.

Ten minutes before seven, I went downstairs to wait for him in the living room. He definitely knew how to hit deadlines.

But as I came down the stairs, Jaime looked at me like she'd just spotted a clown.

I just rolled my eyes and smiled at her.

“What is that, Madi?” She couldn’t stop laughing.

“What?” I asked, all innocence.

“What are you wearing? Seriously? A skirt down to your ankles and a baggy white blouse? Where’d you dig that up—the fifteenth century? Sixteenth?”

She dissolved into laughter, clutching her stomach.

“Why? This is passion.” I just shrugged.

“Yeah, that’s a lot of passion, Madi. My great-grandmother’s kind of passion, back when she was a teenager.”

I laughed along with her. Why? Because I could already picture Gabriel’s face the second he saw my “gorgeous” outfit.

“Where are you going?” She bit her lip, trying to hold back another laugh.

Before I could answer, someone knocked on the front door.

She raised her eyebrows. “Expecting someone?”

I didn’t answer, just smiled and shrugged as I walked to the door. I took a breath before opening it.

And my mouth went completely dry at what stood on the other side. The Greek god himself. The living Hercules. The endlessly handsome Gabriel Wilsons, dressed in something absolutely sinful—just a plain black shirt and black pants, and yet there was no denying the body underneath that tight fabric.

My smile only widened at the way he went completely speechless, taking in the “kind” of outfit I’d chosen.

In under a second, he pushed me back through the door and slammed it shut behind us. He caught my wrist, eyes narrowing.

My own eyes went wide at how fast he’d moved.

Chapter 626

“What are you wearing, Madi? This looks like something my grandmother wore at your age!”

The exact same words as Jaime’s.

I opened my mouth to respond, but that's when we both heard Jaime's laughter from behind us. We turned toward her—and the second she caught sight of Gabriel's stone-serious face, her laughter died instantly.

"Oops, sorry—I'm going to go check the kitchen. Might've left the tap running." She scurried off toward the kitchen.

The tap, Jaime? That's really the best excuse you've got? I thought as she disappeared.

Once she was out of sight, Gabriel asked me again.

"What are you wearing, Madi? What is this?" His tone dripped with disapproval.

I just repeated what I'd already told Jaime.

"This is what we call passion."

"Passion? Madi, I wasn't born yesterday. I know exactly what 'passion' looks like, and this isn't it."

"Oh, and what would you know about women's fashion choices? You're a man!" I yanked my hand back.

“Where’s your room?”

I looked at him, thoroughly confused.

“Why? What are you—”

“I’m asking you—where’s your room?”

“Upstairs. Why?”

“Come on.” He grabbed my wrist again and steered me toward the stairs.

“What are you—”

“We’re going to get you out of that ridiculous outfit and into something decent.”

My eyes practically bulged the second I understood what he meant.

“No! You can’t do that!” I stopped in my tracks, and he turned to look at me.

“And why not?”

“Because—excuse me—I can handle this myself!” I glared at him.

But the idiot just smiled at me.

“You know, I could help,” he said with a shrug, and I shot him a look.

Where had cold, distant office Mr. Wilsons gone? Because the man in front of me was the complete opposite.

“Absolutely not, Mr. Gabriel Wilsons. Go sit on the couch and wait for me in the living room!”

“Ahh, giving me orders now, Miss Davis?” he asked, a challenge in his voice, and I returned it with a cheeky smile of my own.

“Oh yes, Mr. Wilsons. You seem to have forgotten—you’re standing in my lovely apartment right now, not your office. So call it whatever you like, an order, a request, I don’t care. You’re not my boss here, which means I can say whatever I want.” I said it with pride, a smile plastered across my face.

His smile faded into something more serious, jaw tightening. I arched an eyebrow at him, and then, confused, watched as his lips curved into a devilish smile instead.

“I like this feisty side of you, Madi.”

I didn’t say a word as he turned and walked back into the living room.

I just let out an irritated sigh and headed for my room.

Now, back to my earlier dilemma: what was I going to wear?

I stepped back into my closet, throwing open every door. A pair of jeans? No—why did he have to be wearing jeans too? A black dress? No—why did he have to be wearing black as well?

Chapter 627

In the end, I settled on my white spaghetti-strap dress, hitting a couple of inches above the knee. I pulled my hair into a high ponytail, touched up my lipstick, and once satisfied, grabbed my phone and purse before heading back downstairs.

I found him and Jaime sitting together on the couch. The moment they spotted me, Jaime gave me a teasing little grin, while Gabriel just stared until I stopped in front of them.

“Ahem. Are we going, or not? Because it would honestly be a huge favor if we skipped this—”

“Let’s go, then,” he cut in, taking my hand. “Thanks, Jaime,” he added with a smile in her direction, already heading for the door.

“No problem. Just take care of my friend, Gabriel.”

“I will.”

I glanced back at her, still being tugged along toward the door. She winked at me, grinning like she’d just won the lottery.

Why is she smiling like that? What did Gabriel say to her?

He led me to his car and opened the passenger door for me.

“I have my own car!”

“I know,” he said, shutting the door on me anyway.

“Rude. Idiot,” I muttered under my breath, watching his figure circle around toward the driver’s side.

Madi’s point of view

“What a beautiful dress, darling.”

My head turned toward him.

“Don’t call me that! We’re not a couple—you don’t get to treat me like this.” I could already feel my patience wearing thin.

But he didn’t answer at all. He just gave me a small smile and kept driving.

I was genuinely starting to wonder what had happened to the cold, lifeless man from the office. Now he seemed insufferably full of himself, practically radiating arrogance with every breath he took.

Selfish fool.

I couldn’t help rolling my eyes at him. Maybe he really had loved that slender woman, Stacey, given how easily he’d let her back into his life.

Honestly, I preferred this version of him over the zombie who wandered the WEC halls like a ghost. But you know what the real problem was? He was quickly turning narcissistic.

“I can see your eyes on me, love. Staring.”

My eyes widened, though not from surprise—from irritation.

“What are you talking about? Obviously I’m not looking at you.” I huffed, crossing my arms.

“Of course, love, don’t worry. I’m all yours today.”

What on earth was happening right now?

If it weren’t for my seatbelt, I swear I would’ve forgotten my manners entirely and torn this man into a thousand pieces.

In the end, I chose not to react, not to say a word. I just took a deep breath and turned my attention to the scenery sliding by outside the window.

Now here I was, wondering all over again how this “conversation” was going to end, since last time it hadn’t gone particularly well. And how was I even supposed to explain any of this to my mother? How would she react?

He'd been driving for thirty minutes straight, and we still hadn't stopped anywhere.

"Are you taking me to Africa?" I finally asked. My legs were starting to go numb.

"What?" he asked, clearly startled, a playful smile tugging at his mouth.

Chapter 628

I just rolled my eyes. "Where are you taking me? Where are we even going?"

"Just relax, Madi. We won't be long now."

I shifted in my seat and let out a long, deliberate sigh—loud enough for him to hear.

Fifteen minutes later, we finally pulled up in front of a Chinese restaurant.

I raised an eyebrow at him. I had no idea he even liked Chinese food. Still, I supposed I should be grateful he hadn't brought me to one of my own restaurants again. I genuinely had no idea what I'd say if we ran into George or Arielle there. Right now, only Noelle knew about my situation with Mr. Wilsons.

The moment he unbuckled his seatbelt, I did the same. He gave me a look, one that clearly meant wait for me to open your door. Ugh.

Not a chance. He wasn't even my boyfriend, so there was no reason for that. I ignored him completely and pushed my door open before he could lock it or stop me.

I breathed in the fresh air as I stepped out of the car.

"Why didn't you wait for me?" a clearly irritated voice asked. Very grumpy indeed—Mr. Gabriel Wilsons, walking around to meet me.

"What do you mean? I'm right here. What are you talking about?" I knew exactly what he meant, but I smiled anyway, just to needle him a little more.

"Why didn't you wait for me to open your door?"

"Ahh, that door? I can manage that myself, Mr. Wilsons."

"Madi, please, just call me Gabriel." He gave me another look.

I laughed again. "Okay, but why would I do that? We're not even friends... sir." I put extra weight on the last word, just to twist the knife a little.

“Look, Madi, don’t push me. I could kiss you right here, right now, and announce to the whole world that you’re my girlfriend, soon to be my wife. How does that sound?” he asked, smiling.

I clenched my fists, took a breath, and stepped away from him, heading toward the entrance without waiting.

I felt him close behind me by the time I reached the door.

“My love, you left me behind again,” he murmured near my ear, and I nearly shivered at the way it landed, entirely against my will.

The security guard smiled at us. I smiled back, though deep down, all I wanted was to slap away the arm now settling around my back.

Once the host confirmed our reserved table, the waiter led us over.

We ordered, and I barely looked at him the whole time—not until the food actually arrived.

“Now tell me what your deal actually is,” I said, knife and fork in hand.

“Not now. After we eat.”

“No. Tell me now.” I’d challenged him to say it again, No, only after we eat, but that’s not what happened. He just sighed and settled into that same serious expression.

“I already told you this morning at the mall. We’re getting married in a few weeks, as soon as everything’s arranged.”

Chapter 629

I closed my eyes for a moment, took another breath. There it was. What an idiot. That stupid kiss. That stupid coffee.

“You’ll be my girlfriend, publicly. In front of everyone.”

“What? Don’t tell me you’re serious—even at WEC?” My eyes went wide, my voice rising to match.

“Yes.”

“No! Not at your company!” I shook my head.

“Madi, you’re going to be my wife. You’ll meet my family, all our relatives.”

“Wow. That’s a huge part of your plan, apparently. Are you really doing all this because of her?” I asked, still unwilling to believe it. I set my fork down. He watched every movement I made and just shook his head.

“I told you to eat first.”

“Keep going,” I said, leaning back in my chair.

“Eat your food, Madi.”

“No. I’ll eat once you’re finished talking.”

He sighed again, gripping his spoon tightly.

“Like I was saying. I’ll introduce you to my family as my girlfriend, and I’ll propose to you in front of them, to make this official.”

“Great. How long does this whole thing last?”

“I’m not sure. But...” He paused, a flicker of unease crossing his face at the thought that all of this hinged on that slender woman.

“A year, since she left,” he said, and I had to swallow hard hearing it, watching his jaw tighten as he gripped the spoon even tighter.

Sorry, spoon. None of this is your fault, I thought.

“Wow. A year? That long?”

“Yes. Now that she’s back, it’s time to put the plan into motion.”

“A plan for revenge... or a plan to win her back?”

“Both.”

I needed water after that. My throat had gone completely dry at how honestly, how bluntly, he’d just admitted it. I’d been right all along. He’d just confirmed it himself.

“You’ll need to sign a contract for this.”

I looked at him, baffled. “What contract?”

“Honestly, we both need to sign one.”

“A contract for what, exactly?” My brow furrowed.

“A contract for the agreement we’ve discussed, and are about to finalize. You’ll be my fiancée, and eventually my actual wife. You’ll be Mrs. Wilsons, not just for appearances, but in an actual ceremony, in front of my whole family, and most importantly, in front of—”

“Her. In front of Stacey. Your ex-fiancée, the one who hurt you, betrayed you, brought you to this exact point.” I was sure every bit of bitterness came through in my voice.

“Yes. The woman I loved more than anything, who chose someone else over me.”

His voice matched mine, bitterness for bitterness.

“Don’t worry, the amount you’ll be paid once the contract ends will be spelled out clearly in it.”

I laughed, disbelieving, and shook my head.

“You’ll receive five hundred million dollars, instead of the hundred million I originally offered.”

That's when I really laughed. A few customers were staring by now, but I didn't care anymore. I wasn't smiling out of happiness—I was smiling because I was furious, picturing just how foolish the man sitting across from me really was.

Chapter 630

"Are you seriously willing to give me all that money, Gabriel?" I asked, incredulous, still shaking my head.

"Yes. I'm willing to spend every last cent I have to get her back."

The laughter died the moment he said that. Why did that ache settle in my chest every single time he brought up getting her back? Maybe I was the foolish one here too. Or maybe my own heart was trying to tell me something.

"Fine. I'll help you," I said, resolve settling into my voice. "But don't think for a second I'm signing any contract or paperwork for this."

"What do you mean?" He looked genuinely surprised.

"Exactly that. And I'm not taking a single cent from you either. When I say I won't take any amount, I mean I won't take a single cent out of your pocket until this whole thing is over."

This time, he was the one laughing. I just watched him until it faded.

“If you won’t sign a contract, and you won’t take any money, then why agree to this at all?”

Honestly, I’d been asking myself the exact same question. My mind came up empty.

“Let’s just say I’m helping you out. I love a challenge. You challenged me, and I’m simply accepting it.” I shrugged.

He studied me carefully, trying to figure out whether I was serious or just bluffing.

“Why?” he asked again.

“Why what?”

“Why won’t you sign anything, or take the money?”

“Because I don’t want to be tied to you for that long. The moment you get her back, I want to be able to walk away without dealing with contracts or paperwork. And I don’t need the money. I’m not some charity case you’re paying off afterward.”

“But it wouldn’t be fair, you not taking any money.”

“Don’t think of it that way. This is fair. I’m just helping you out. One friend helping another. And one more thing—I’ll help you win her back, but I want no part in your revenge.”

“Madi—”

“That’s final, Gabriel. No contract, no money, no revenge, and that’s how I’ll accept this deal. Which means... you can count on me.” As long as he met my terms.

He just stared at me for a few seconds. I held his gaze right back, wanting him to understand exactly how serious I was—no money, no revenge, no exceptions.

He finally sighed.

“Fine. No money, no contract—”

“And no revenge,” I added.

“Right. No revenge,” he echoed.

“And finally, this stays between the two of us, and only the few people we trust completely.”

“Agreed.”

“So we have a deal.” I held out my hand, and he took it.

That’s how we sealed it.

He looked at me without blinking, and I met his gaze with the same steady look.

And just like that, I had finally, and entirely of my own free will, agreed to the deal.

Madi’s Perspective

2:00 in the morning.