

A Favor 701

Chapter 701

“Morgan! You can’t just ask that! That’s incredibly personal — don’t be rude!” Her husband scolded her sharply, clearly just as shocked as the rest of us, especially given how out of nowhere it came.

“It’s alright, Uncle James. I don’t mind,” I said, forcing a smile.

“Hey, love.” Gabriel had settled back beside me by then, taking my hand. “What happened? What don’t you mind?”

I glanced at him, and Aunt Morgan repeated her question.

“I was asking Madi how many boyfriends she had before you came into her life.”

With Gabriel now looking at me, his grip on my hand tightening, I realized just how invasive her question really was — it felt like she was practically asking if I was still a virgin, right there in front of him.

“Actually, Aunt Morgan, I’ve never really been in a relationship before—”

“Never?” Nancy’s voice jumped with surprise.

“Never,” I said, shrugging, trying to seem unbothered while avoiding Gabriel’s eyes as much as I could.

“So Gabriel’s your first boyfriend?” Aunt Morgan looked practically stunned, eyes wide.

I nodded silently, biting my lip, thoroughly uncomfortable.

“Damn, Gabriel, you lucky bastard!” Nancy said, a little too loudly.

“Nancy, language!” Their father shot her a sharp look. Before she could say anything else, Greg’s laugh cut through the tension — he’d just come back from the bar.

“She’s right, though. Gabriel really is lucky to have Madi.” Greg smiled over at him, and I barely managed to keep my eyebrows from shooting up at the compliment. When I finally worked up the nerve to look at my supposed boyfriend, I found the exact same crooked smile on his face that Greg had.

Suddenly, he lifted me straight off my seat and onto his lap, my breath catching, heart racing. His hands settled gently around my waist as he pressed a quick kiss to my lips.

“It’s true — I’m incredibly lucky to have won her heart. I’m not letting her go, no matter what. No man’s taking her from me. She’s mine, and she always will be,” he said, looking straight into my eyes before kissing me again and turning that same smile toward Greg.

I swallowed hard, eyes widening once more. This whole performance was starting to wear on me. There was something going on between Greg and Gabriel — I could feel it, though I couldn't name it. Watching their crooked smiles and pointed looks, I got the distinct sense that Gabriel wasn't at all thrilled about Greg's surprise appearance, while Greg seemed to be thoroughly enjoying every second of it.

"I trust Greg." We all turned toward Mr. Wilsons, his serious gaze fixed on his son. "You're a lucky man to have Madi in your life, son. I hope you always appreciate everything she does for you. Never forget to give her the time, the attention, the love she deserves. And always take care of her."

This was the second time I'd heard Mr. Wilsons offer that same kind of advice — about how Gabriel should love and care for me. Did he know something? Suspect something? Were Gabriel and I just getting paranoid, tangled up in our own lies?

Did you know that the life you're living today is the result of whether or not you've guarded your heart?

God gives us this counsel in His Word: Above all else, guard your heart, for it sets the course of your life. (Proverbs 4:23)

Why should I guard my heart? And what would I need to guard it from? God has given us a heart worth taking care of—a heart that has to be guarded from the things that pull us away from Him and from His truth. If the heart is what sets the course of my life, am I going to let it steer me while it's clouded with anger and resentment? With guilt and fear? With envy and comparison? With deception and false hope?

Guard your heart. Keep it in Jesus Christ, and He will keep your life.

“Of course, Dad,” Gabriel answered so smoothly, so sincerely, I couldn’t catch a single trace of the act in it.

I’d lost count of how many sighs I’d let out since retreating to the terrace off Gabriel’s bedroom. I’d needed the space — needed to be alone with everything happening, and with whatever role I was actually playing in all of it.

Was I wrong to go along with Gabriel’s plan? Or was I just being a fool? I found myself thinking back to the day I’d first seen him at the mall, stealing glances at his ex from a distance. I’d laughed in his face back then, called him the biggest idiot I’d ever met, for chasing after her, for having someone watch her every move. What struck me as most absurd of all was how convinced he’d seemed that she’d eventually come back to him.

And now, somehow, I’d become one of those fools myself, parading around with everyone else. They could probably build a monument to my own stupidity at this point.

I’d fallen in love with my boss. I was in love with him. What a joke. How was I even supposed to explain it? I was happy when he was happy, hurt when he was hurt. I could feel every bit of pain still sitting in his chest, like it was my own.

I let out another sigh, a bitter little smile crossing my face as I shook my head, dismayed at how I’d ended up here. How could I have fallen for him — knowing he still loved her, knowing he’d probably never look at me any differently?

I rubbed my arms against the chill that suddenly wrapped around me, shivering.

“Why are you out here? Trying to catch a cold?” I heard Gabriel’s voice at the same moment something warm settled over my shoulders. I turned to find him draping his jacket over me.

“Thank you,” I said, managing a faint smile. He didn’t say anything back, just looked at me for a moment, then let out a sigh, his eyes drifting to the pool below, moonlight and starlight scattered across its surface.

“Thank you, Madi.” I looked over at him, confused. I didn’t know what he was thanking me for.

“For what?”

“For staying. For helping me. For all of it.” He gave me a smile that carried something wistful in it. I had to look away before it broke something in me.

“Gabriel, why do we have to keep pretending?” I swallowed before continuing. “Why are we doing all of this? Why act like you’ve already moved past everything that happened?”

He laughed suddenly. “Madi, I’ve told you a hundred times. To win her back. To punish her.”

“Just to punish her?”

He went quiet after I asked that, and I sighed. How foolish of me, asking a question the answer had already made obvious.

“Just to punish her,” he finally said.

“But why does she need to be punished at all?”

Chapter 703

“Madi, I want her to feel exactly what I felt when she left me for someone else!” My turn to laugh — bitterly.

“If you’re that determined to punish her, you never actually loved her.” He looked at me like I’d grown a second head. “If you’d really loved her, you’d let her go, let her be happy with whatever choice she made. If you’d really loved her, you wouldn’t want to punish her for it. You’d want her to be happy — you’d want to protect her from any more pain, not cause it.”

“Madi, you don’t understand!” His voice rose, eyes locked on mine. “She hurt me. She broke me. I ended up like this because of her! You’ll never understand this, because you’ve never felt this kind of pain!”

Wow, what a low blow.

I don’t know why, but I burst out laughing. Laughing straight through the pain, again.

“Wow, Gabriel. You really think I don’t understand your pain?” I shot back, pointing at my own chest, matching his tone exactly. “I understand every last detail of what you went through! And I don’t need to have lived through the exact same thing to actually understand you. If I didn’t understand you, I wouldn’t be here. I wouldn’t be lying to everyone, wouldn’t be helping you play out this ridiculous game of yours!”

I had to look away from him, my temper rising with every word he’d thrown at me. If I didn’t understand him, I wouldn’t be sacrificing my own happiness just to stay by his side. If I could order my heart to stop falling for him, I would, in a heartbeat. If I could take his pain away entirely, erase it without him even having to ask, I would do that too.

“Why are you telling me all this, Madi?”

Another sigh slipped out, but I didn’t answer.

“You know why I cried when you proposed earlier?” I didn’t wait for a response. “Because it suddenly hit me — what we’re actually doing. It made me so sad, because I genuinely want to help you move past all of it. I want you to have the kind of second chance you talked about when you proposed to me. I want you to actually see it, Gab. If she’s really meant for you, she’ll come back on her own. If she’s not, you need to learn to let her go. Let her have whatever she wants.”

“No, Madi,” he said, shaking his head firmly. I gave him another sad, worn-out smile.

What a load of nonsense.

"I can't do that. I've already got everything planned, you know that."

Chapter 704

"Do you know what the best revenge really is, against someone who hurt you? It's showing them you're actually happy — that you took every chance you had to build a real life for yourself." I stepped closer, taking both his hands in mine. "Because if you keep hating her, keep holding onto what she did, you'll never actually get past this, Gab. That pain—" I lifted a finger to his chest, "—it's going to stay right there, until the day you finally decide to let it go."

"That's exactly why I'm doing this! I want her to see I've moved on, that I'm happy!"

"No, Gabriel. Don't do this for her. Do it for yourself. Not her."

He went quiet, saying nothing. He just stood there until I noticed him swallow, his eyes fixed on me, my hands still holding his.

"Are you giving up on this, Madi?"

I had no idea where that had come from. I was only trying to offer him some advice — I never once said anything about giving up on our deal.

"Please, just answer me. Are you done with this?" There was something in his eyes I couldn't quite place.

“Gab—”

“No, Madi!” Suddenly he pulled me into his arms, holding me tight. “No. Please, don’t leave me. I can’t do this without you.” He said it fast, pressing kiss after kiss into my hair.

“Gabriel!”

He pulled back slightly, hands on my shoulders, looking straight into my eyes.

“Madi, please.” He closed his eyes, let out a long breath, and opened them again. “Please, stay with me. If you don’t want me kissing you in front of my family anymore, I’ll stop. Just stay until I finish this. Until I figure everything out.”

Figure everything out? What was he even talking about? He sounded like he was genuinely my boyfriend, begging me not to walk away.

“Gabriel, what are you talking about? I never said I was giving up — that never even crossed my mind. We were just talking. And what do you mean, figure everything out? What is it you’re trying to figure out?”

He looked at me, confused. “So — you’re not giving up?”

“No,” I said, shaking my head.

“Thank you, love.” He let out a long, relieved sigh and pulled me back into his arms. “Just — bear with me, okay?”

I laughed a little at that. “Is that a promise?”

“It is. I promise.” I laughed again as he raised his right hand like he was taking some kind of oath.

“Swear it?” I asked, holding out my pinky the way kids do to seal a deal. He chuckled but hooked his pinky around mine.

“I swear.” We both laughed at how childish it was. Somewhere deep down, I wished we could just stay like that forever.

“So what happens if you act like an idiot again?” I raised an eyebrow to make sure he was taking it seriously.

“You get to slap me. Hard.”

I stared at him, genuinely caught off guard. “You sure about that, love?” I said the last word with emphasis. He laughed out loud.

"I am, love. Slap me all you want, if I act like an idiot again."

"Deal. Remember — this was your idea. Not mine." I laughed again, then shivered as the cold breeze swept over my skin.

Gabriel frowned, catching me shiver, and wrapped both my hands in his.

Chapter 705

"You're freezing," he said, rubbing my hands between his own. I gave a faint smile as his warm breath washed over my fingers.

"Ugh," I said, teasing.

The seriousness in his expression melted instantly into something more playful. He kept breathing warm air over my hands.

"Gabriel, that's disgusting. This isn't warming me up at all," I said, pulling my hands back.

"No, love. You're still freezing."

“Yuck!” I yelped as he playfully bit the tip of my finger, clearly enjoying every second of it. “I will kick you in your precious jewels if you keep doing that,” I warned, stomping my foot for effect.

“You should’ve led with that — works like magic.” He stopped instantly, letting go of my hands entirely.

“Precious jewels?”

“Yes. Precious jewels,” I repeated, rather proud of the phrase.

“Did you seriously just call my testicles precious jewels?” he asked, incredulous.

“Yes, and I—” I couldn’t finish, cut off by his laughter. Real laughter, the kind that comes from somewhere deep, uncontrolled and light.

I frowned, not entirely sure what was so funny. “What’s wrong with calling them precious jewels? Oh, love — you can kick me anywhere except these two precious jewels I happen to have. How else am I supposed to become a father someday? How would we ever give our parents grandchildren?” He winked at me.

My lips curved into a smile despite myself.

“Ha. Very funny.”

“I promise I’ll stop being an idiot. Even at the office.”

We were both still laughing when a knock came at the door. It was already 10 p.m. — who could possibly be knocking now?

I was about to go answer it when Gabriel got there first, taking my hand along the way. Another knock came before he opened the door. I frowned, spotting Greg standing outside.

“Greg,” he said.

“Ahh — sorry to bother you.” He glanced down at our joined hands, then looked at me with a smile. “Madi, is this yours?” He held up a white handkerchief.

My eyes went wide as I looked at it — my handkerchief, embroidered with my childhood nickname. Maiden. The same name my restaurants carried.

I took it from him at once, smiling. “Thank you, Greg.”

“Tss.” Gabriel let out a scoff. “So that’s the only reason you’re knocking on our door this late?”

“Gab?” I gave his hand a light squeeze.

“Yes,” Greg said, short and clipped.

“You could’ve just given it to her tomorrow. Why do you have to—”

“Because I also wanted to say good night to her.” He smiled at me. “Good night, Madi.”

“Good night, Greg,” I said, smiling back.

“Night, cousin.” He gave Gabriel a pat on the shoulder before disappearing down the hall. I felt Gabriel’s grip on my hand tighten, and I flinched slightly.

“Gab!”

“Oh — sorry, love.” He sighed, checking my hand over once he’d shut the door.

As I turned to walk away, he pulled me back gently by the hand.

“Love—”

I looked at him. “Hmm?”

“Can we be friends?”

Chapter 706

My lips spread into a wide smile at the question. I stepped back and took his hand again — I genuinely couldn't believe he was asking me that.

“Yeah, why not. Friends,” I said, offering my hand for a proper handshake.

“Friends,” he agreed, shaking it, matching my smile with one of his own.

Then he pulled me into a hug, and I hugged him back.

“Tsk, tsk. My friend list used to be full of nice, kind people. Not sure I can call it a ‘cool list’ anymore.”

“Why not?” He raised an eyebrow, hands still resting at my waist.

“Because you just got added to it. You’re the total opposite of everyone else on it. They smile, they laugh easily. You don’t. They’re approachable. You’re not. You’re cold, distant—” He opened his mouth to interject. “—rude, a total jerk—”

“And what else — heartless? A scoundrel?” he cut in, fighting off a smile.

“Exactly! You get me completely,” I said, laughing at him.

He rolled his eyes, shaking his head. “Fine. I promise to work on your bad impression of me.”

“Sure you will.” I clearly didn’t believe him.

“I told you — you can slap me if I mess up.”

“Fair enough,” I said, shrugging with a wide grin.

“Alright, bedtime, it’s getting late.” At that, my eyebrows shot up.

“Yes, I’m heading to bed. But you — you’re sleeping on the couch,” I said, smiling, pointing at it. He just stared at me, speechless.

“Love, we both slept in the bed last night.”

“Yes. Last night,” I said, stressing the words. “But that was yesterday. Today’s a new day, and today, you’re on the couch.” I patted his cheek and dropped backward onto the bed.

“Ahh — this bed is so soft, so comfortable,” I said, rolling around dramatically. When I looked back at him, he was still standing there frowning. “Hey, love? You just gonna stand there? Not going to sleep?” I bit back a laugh.

“Love, this is a queen-size bed.”

“So?”

“It’s big enough for both of us. We can each have our own side and still—”

“Hmm, alright,” I said, sitting up. “If you want, I can take the couch and you can keep the bed. But — tomorrow, I’m telling your mother you made me sleep on the sofa while you had the whole bed to yourself.” I mimed reaching for a pillow, and he cut in immediately.

“My God, woman. Fine, I’m going to sleep now. On the sofa,” he said, stressing those last two words, and I laughed.

He grabbed a few extra pillows and blankets from the closet and settled onto the L-shaped couch. I lay back too, staring up at the ceiling, my thoughts drifting again. We can't keep doing this forever. No matter how badly I want to, I know we can't.

"I love you, my love." My head turned toward him.

"I have to say it back, right? I mean — do I have to say I love you too?" I asked, feeling the weight behind the words.

"Of course you do." He lifted his head off the pillow.

Chapter 707

"Fine. I love you too."

I sighed and turned my eyes back to the ceiling, then glanced over at him — but all I could see was the top of his head as he rolled over. I sighed. How was I supposed to sleep knowing he wasn't even comfortable?

"Love—"

The word slipped out so naturally, so easily.

“Hmm? Yeah, love?”

“You still awake?”

He laughed, and I immediately realized how ridiculous the question was. Obviously he was awake — how slow of me, how could he have answered otherwise?

“Yes, love.” He lifted his head. “Why, are you cold again? Want a friendly hug?”

Now I was the one laughing at him.

“No, thanks. I was going to ask you to come sleep in the bed, but I’ve changed my mind. You look pretty settled on that couch. Goodnight.”

“Ahh — love, you’re joking.” He was already up, hurrying toward the bed.

“What are you doing?” I asked as I felt the mattress dip under his weight. “Thank you, love,” he said, grinning wide.

“It’s fine.” I lined up two pillows between us and gave him a smile.

“What’s this?” he asked, making a face.

“Barriers. Sleep barriers, my love.”

“Ahh — sleep barriers. And here I thought you wanted that friendly hug.”

“Ha, no thanks. Cuddle the pillow if you want.” He laughed as I rolled my eyes.

“Alright. But if you change your mind, feel free to hug me anytime, love.”

“Ha ha. You know how to spell ‘desire’?” he asked, raising an eyebrow.

“Sure — d, e, s—”

“Wrong.”

“What? That’s literally how you spell—”

“No. New spelling. Y-O-U. It’s you,” he said, grinning as I rolled my eyes. “You’re just dying for morning to come so I can finally hold you.” With that, I turned back to my side of the bed while he kept laughing behind me.

“Alright, love. Goodnight.”

“Goodnight,” I said, smiling.

“I love you.” My smile faltered.

“Love you too.” I let out a breath and closed my eyes.

“Goodnight, my love,” I murmured softly, before finally letting sleep take me.

Madi’s point of view

“Greg, could you hand me the chocolate syrup?”

“Sure.” He passed it to me across the counter while I kept arranging pancakes on the platter.

“Thanks.” I smiled at him.

“You’re always so nice,” he said, winking. I just shook my head, smiling back.

I’d woken up early that morning — even though I hate mornings, hate waking up early — but it was our last day in Belleville, and I wanted to make breakfast for everyone. When I opened the door to our room, I found Greg out in the hallway, stretching, knocking out a few push-ups. When he asked why I was up so early, I told him I was planning breakfast. So there we were, cooking side by side in the kitchen — him working on his cheese and bacon omelet, me arranging chocolate pancakes and muffins.

Chapter 708

“I miss moments like this, Madi,” he said, flipping his omelet.

I shot him a quick look, a warning grimace, because it sounded like someone might have overheard.

“Ah — sorry,” he said, a little sheepish.

I sighed, glancing at him playfully, and he let out a low chuckle.

“Gregyyy,” I teased, using the nickname he despises. I remembered Noelle calling him that once, and the look he’d given her.

“Oh, Madielyn — stop it,” he groaned, scratching his neck.

“Why? Nancy calls you that too,” I said, smiling.

“You know I hate it. It’s a name for a five-year-old!”

I laughed as he threw his hands up, clearly disgusted by the nickname.

“I never asked for it. People just call me that.”

“But it’s fun.”

“For you, Madielyn Davis — not for me. You’re exactly like my mother, shouting my name in front of my friends, embarrassing me in the middle of the grocery store—”

“Gregyyyy!” We both turned as Nancy called out his name, and I burst out laughing at the way his jaw dropped.

“Good morning, Gre-g-yyyy,” I said, drawing it out, laughing so hard I had to clutch my stomach.

“Morning,” he said, grimacing.

“What are you making, Gregy?” Nancy asked, peering into the pan.

“Your favorite cheese omelet,” he answered flatly.

“Oh, nice — and Madi, wait, why are you laughing?” She turned to me.

I glanced past her at Greg. “Because he hates being called that.”

“Oh, sorry, Gregy! I didn’t realize you hated it. I’ll try not to call you Gregy again. But since you’re my favorite cousin, Gregy, and you’re making my favorite breakfast, Gregy — I’ll think about it.” She laughed along with me. Count how many times she’d just said it.

“Ugh! Madielyn Davis!” He narrowed his eyes at me playfully, starting to walk toward me.

“Wait, why me? I only said it once!” I laughed, backing away.

“Because you got this stubborn woman started!” he said, nodding at Nancy.

“Excuse me! I am not stubborn!” Nancy defended herself, laughing, watching her cousin.

“Well, it’s not my fault she said it six times.” I kept backing away.

“Fine — but once I catch you—”

“And once you catch her, then what?” I gasped as someone caught me by the waist, my back colliding with a solid chest. I looked up to find Gabriel, his expression dead serious.

“Love—” I tried, but he cut me off.

“What’s going on here?” His tone was irritated, and I raised an eyebrow.

“We’re making breakfast,” I said, holding his gaze steadily. I genuinely didn’t understand why he seemed so annoyed at both of us.

“Making breakfast — while he chases you around?”

“Come on, Gabriel, we’re just cooking and cracking jokes,” Greg said, back at the stove.

“He’s right, Gab,” Nancy added, and I had to bite my lip to keep from laughing when Greg suddenly turned to her.

Chapter 709

“Really? Is this a new joke now? Chasing my fiancée around the kitchen? If I hadn’t walked in, would you have caught her and hugged her too?” My eyes widened at the question. I glanced at Greg, who was just laughing, and Nancy looked as shocked as I felt.

“Why — am I not allowed to ask my cousin and my fiancée what’s happening in the kitchen?” He put extra weight on both words.

“Gabriel, what are you even doing right now?” I asked, unsure if this was still part of the act. It definitely wasn’t in the script.

“What’s going on in here, kids?” Mr. Wilsons walked in.

“Nothing, Dad. Gabriel’s just jealous that Gregy’s here,” Nancy said, flipping her hair.

I watched Mr. Wilsons’s frown melt into something far more amused.

“I’m not jealous! I’m just asking!” Gabriel pulled me tighter against his side. Nancy and I exchanged a glance, and I couldn’t help smiling at how obviously jealous he sounded.

“Oh really? Because that’s not exactly the tone of someone ‘just asking,’ Gabriel.” Nancy raised an eyebrow at him.

“Alright, alright, enough, you two.” Mr. Wilsons stepped between his children. “Gabriel, you don’t need to be jealous of Gregy.”

I looked away, catching Greg’s sour expression while Nancy fought to hold back her laughter.

“Dad, I already told you, I’m not jealous!”

“Fine, if you’re not jealous, great! But if you are—”

“Dad!”

“Alright, alright — sort it out before your mother gets here. Wow, who made this?” He hadn’t even finished the sentence before spotting the chocolate pancakes laid out on the table.

“That was Madi, Uncle Jonas,” Greg answered proudly.

“Wow — you know, Gabriel, if I were you, instead of sulking and getting jealous, I’d be giving my fiancée a nice, sweet kiss this morning.” Mr. Wilsons winked at me.

My eyes widened as Gabriel turned to me, smiling.

“Thanks, Dad, great idea.” He tightened his hold on my waist.

“Gabri—” Before I could finish, he cupped my face and delivered exactly the kind of kiss his father had described. Sweet, lingering, thoroughly unnecessary for breakfast.

“Thank you, love. Amazing,” he said, wiping my lips with his thumb. I grabbed his collar.

“You promised me, last night,” I hissed through gritted teeth.

“Sorry, love, Dad asked. I’m just delivering,” he said, smiling, before kissing my cheek.

I just blinked at him. Genuinely bipolar, this man — not occasionally, constantly. One minute jealous, glaring daggers at me and Greg, the next grinning like an idiot. I was itching to slap that smile right off his face.

“Mmm — something smells sweet and delicious in here.” We all turned to find Mrs. Wilsons, the other women behind her, Sav and Chris trailing along too.

“Morning, Mom.” Nancy kissed her mother’s cheek.

“Morning, sweetheart.” She hugged her back, then turned to me. “Good morning, my lovely future daughter-in-law.”

I gave her an awkward little smile. “Morning, Mom. Morning, everyone,” I added, smiling at the aunts.

“Wow, I like what I’m seeing this morning.” Uncle John appeared at the door, Uncle James and the two boys, Philip and Justine, right behind him.

“Madi and Gregy made all of this,” Nancy said proudly.

“Really?” Mrs. Wilsons looked between me and Greg. “Thank you both, so much.”

Chapter 710

“It’s nothing, Auntie,” Greg said, smiling.

“Madi, you cook so well — have you ever thought about starting your own business? A restaurant of your own?” I swallowed hard at Aunt Cindy’s question.

“Yes, honestly, I agree,” I said, sneaking a glance at Greg, who was biting back a laugh.

“Um — I’m pretty busy being my boss’s assistant,” I said, stressing the word boss. Gabriel laughed beside me.

“Darling, if you ever want to start your own business, I’ll back you completely. I could even help enroll you in culinary school, get some proper training—” He didn’t get to finish, because Greg burst out laughing — not at him, but at the idea of me going back to culinary school.

“What’s funny?” Gabriel asked, raising an eyebrow at him.

“Ah, nothing — not about you, cousin. Just some texts from a college friend,” Greg said, holding up his phone, the word college carrying a little extra weight. I glanced at him, catching the joke.

“Alright, alright, let’s eat — we need to get ready for Sunday mass,” Mrs. Wilsons said, gesturing for everyone to sit.

Gabriel kissed my forehead before settling into the seat beside me. I raised an eyebrow at him, and he just smiled back.

Gabriel’s perspective:

I’m just standing here, watching her as she sits beside me. We’re inside the church now, but I can’t focus on anything the priest is saying in front of the altar. I can gaze freely at her face, since all her attention is fixed on him.

She has long, thick, curved eyelashes, a small and delicate yet pointed nose, and a lovely dimple on her left cheek that I've only recently noticed. Her eyes are captivating too, and they light up whenever she smiles. And her lips—

Well, I had to swallow hard, remembering how delicious and soft her lips felt every time I kissed her. She has a very distinctive character and certainly a strong personality.

When I proposed to her, I know that half of what I said was a lie. But I was sincere when I thanked her. I admit that having her by my side has been an incomparable help, allowing me, somehow, to forget the pain I carry inside. She makes me smile every time she opens that clever mouth of hers.

I'm still a bit confused, not entirely sure why she agreed to help me with this situation, but I'm grateful she hasn't complained even the slightest, although there are questions she's wanted answered—questions I wouldn't even know how to explain to myself.

I feel so comfortable when she's near me, and I'm getting used to calling her "love." Sometimes I even forget I shouldn't call her that when it's just the two of us.