

A Favor 721

Chapter 721

I stared at him, eyebrows raised. “With Nancy.”

“And who else?”

Why do I get the feeling he’s interrogating me about who I had lunch with? “Well, you already know there was someone else, don’t you?” There was no need to ask how he’d gotten that information—it wasn’t as if there were anything wrong with him knowing.

“Yes! But why won’t you tell me who?” His voice carried a faintly menacing edge.

“If you already know the answer, why keep asking?” I walked past him and set my bag down on my desk. I could feel myself losing patience—not just with the questions, but with his tone.

“Madi, I’m just asking who was with you! I’ve been calling you for nearly an hour since I got back, and you haven’t answered!”

I nearly rolled my eyes and smiled sarcastically.

“Oh, so you’ve been trying to call me for almost an hour? Wow, that’s great—means you haven’t forgotten my number yet. Well, just so you know, I’ve been calling you for almost two days. I even sent

you several messages this morning. But where have you been? Did you pick up my call? Did you even respond to a single message?"

"Madi, do you know where I've been?"

"Ah, I'm sorry, Mr. Wilsons, but as your employee and personal assistant, I have no idea where you are. I couldn't care less about your personal business. In fact, I've already canceled two of your meetings this morning," I said, in my most professional tone.

"I don't care whether you canceled all my appointments today or not! I'm not speaking as your boss right now—I'm speaking as your husband!"

"Oh, so now you're talking as my husband? I must say, you're quite the pretend husband, sir. And since I'm your pretend wife, is it really so important who I had lunch with? Because as far as I remember, I never asked what you did, or with whom, over the last two days."

"We're getting off topic, Madi! Who was with you, besides Mrs. Aguilar and Nancy?"

Wow. We're going off-topic... or are you just avoiding the real issue? That's what crossed my mind.

"I was with Greg, Mr. Wilsons! Your cousin and your best friend!" I answered, with a certain pride. Patience. Patience. That's what I need, I thought again.

“Why were you with him?” he asked through clenched teeth, his jaw tight.

“What does it matter to you if I’m with him? He’s my friend—”

“I don’t want you talking to him anymore. In fact, I want you to stay far away from him, Madi!”

If he were a dragon, I’m sure I’d already be burnt to a crisp. I remembered Nancy’s words. Is he jealous of Greg? I don’t think that’s possible... maybe it’s just his ego.

“Wow, Mr. Wilsons, now you’re intruding on my personal life.” You’ve already made your way into my heart, were the words that came to mind. “And if I asked you to stay away from Stacey, would you do that for me?”

Chapter 722

“Madi, that’s completely different, and you know I can’t.”

“Then I can’t either. Greg is my friend—”

“Friend? You don’t even know him, Madi.”

“Oh? And you don’t know me either.” I looked at him and watched his jaw clench as he said, in a low voice, “Madi—”

We were interrupted by a knock at the door, and we both turned to look. It was Sandy.

“Excuse me, sir, but Mr. Greg Anderson is in your office. He said he needs to speak with you,” she said, glancing between me and Gabriel.

What would Greg be doing here? Inside Gabriel’s office?

“What’s he doing in my office? Why did you let him in?” he snapped at Sandy, who nearly jumped in surprise.

“I’m sorry, sir, but he wouldn’t listen when I told him not to go in,” she repeated. “He just walked right past me.”

I glanced at Sandy, trying not to laugh. He walked in... well, she’s not wrong. Greg is every bit as stubborn as his cousin—the only difference is he’s far more cheerful and approachable than Gabriel.

“We’ll talk about this when we get home, Madi,” he said, putting heavy emphasis on the word home. Right. I’d almost forgotten—we lived under the same roof now.

“Okay,” I said, shrugging. But I already had plans for tonight. I wanted to avoid seeing him around the house as much as possible, so I wouldn’t have to feel that sting every time I remembered what he’d been up to for the last two days... with her.

The moment he left, Sandy came rushing over to me.

“I think he’s jealous of Mr. Anderson.”

“I don’t know,” I replied, shrugging. “I don’t want to think that way. My heart’s already a mess. I don’t want to go home and lose what’s left of my sanity.”

“Hmm... I liked the way you handled that,” she said, with an evil, faintly ironic smile. “Tsk, tsk. This just gets more ridiculous by the day—but the good part is, it’s thrilling too.” She winked at me, laughing at her own joke. “If I were you, I’d take every chance I got to go out with Mr. Anderson.”

I furrowed my brows. “And why’s that?”

“To make Gabriel even more jealous.”

“Tss. Get back to work, unless you’re trying to add fuel to the fire and lose your precious job.”

“Ahh, I highly doubt that.” She proudly patted herself on the shoulder. “I know you’d never abandon me. You’d help me if he ever tried to ruin my career at WEC—if that day ever comes.”

“Uh-huh. You’re completely crazy.”

“I am, Mrs. Wilsons,” she said, laughing as she ran toward the door.

Gabriel’s point of view:

“What are you doing here?” I asked my cousin the moment I stepped into my office. He was sitting casually in the chair across from my desk.

“You’ve lost your mind, man. I’m here just to see you, of course,” he said, a smile on his face. He didn’t shift even slightly in his seat.

Chapter 723

“Is this really about seeing me, or about seeing Madi?”

“Ohh... both of you. I wanted to see my beautiful Madi, but I also needed to talk to you.”

“Don’t call her yours like that! She’s not! Besides, we’re married!” I slammed my fists on the table. He just laughed in my face and shook his head.

“I know, I’ve seen the wedding ring. But as far as I know, this is nothing more than an act—an arrangement between the two of you.” He was starting to get serious now.

"This is none of your business, Greg," I said, looking away from him.

"As long as this arrangement exists, that deal stands. But don't be mistaken—this is my business too, Gabriel. We're best friends. You tell me everything. So why do I get the feeling that when it comes to Madi, you're shutting me out of your life?"

"Don't think I'm excluding you from anything. I just don't want to see you with her."

He laughed sarcastically, crossing his arms over his chest.

"Oh, really, Gabriel? And why don't you want me getting close to her? Are you jealous? Do you think I'm a threat?"

"And why would you be a threat?"

"I don't know—you're the one who has to answer that," he said, shrugging, laughing at me. "Okay, let me spell it out for you, dear cousin. Hmm... I think you're afraid Madi might fall for me."

"That will never happen!" I looked at him, my tone sharp with anger.

“Oh, how can you be so sure? Because if you’d pay closer attention... I’m not the bad guy here. You are. You’re the one who dragged an innocent soul into your selfish plans. And don’t act like you’re allowed to feel jealous, because you have no right to be.” He was standing now, staring at me like I was a piece of meat about to be torn apart. “Yes, you really did marry her. But let me remind you of your own words—even after the marriage, there’d be nothing between you and her. Have your plans changed? Or has your heart?”

I looked at him, not quite sure where he was going with this.

“Are you already falling for her, Gabriel?” he asked through clenched teeth, anger in his voice, and slammed his fist on the table. I didn’t give him the answer he wanted.

“Damn it! Stop being so indecisive, Gabriel! Why don’t you end this ridiculous plan with your ex and just move on? If you care even a little about Madi, stop being selfish—let go of all your past grievances!”

“I can’t, Greg! You, of all people, know I can’t do that. I’ve waited too long, come too far—there’s no way I can stop now.”

“That’s where you’re wrong, Gabriel.”

He crossed the room in an instant, grabbing my collar and shoving me against the nearest wall. I didn’t try to resist—I just let him do what he intended.

“I swear to God, Gabriel, if I see Madi get hurt by this cursed plan of yours, I’ll forget we were ever friends. I’ll forget you were ever my best friend, or my cousin. So you’d better start praying—because if I catch even the faintest chance, I’ll take her away from a selfish man like you.”

He let go of my collar and, without looking back, stormed out of my office. I sighed and straightened my shirt, then clenched my fist and slammed it on the table.

Madi’s point of view:

I saw Greg leaving Gabriel’s office just as I stepped out of Sandy’s room. His grim expression stopped me in my tracks.

“Greg!” I called out, and he broke into a smile the moment he saw me.

“Madi.”

“What happened to you? You looked pretty uneasy walking out of Gabriel’s office. What happened in there?”

“Ah, it’s nothing. You don’t need to worry about it.”

“Greg?” I raised an eyebrow, giving him my most suspicious look.

“Okay, fine. Let’s just say your boss has been acting like a jerk, and we had a small disagreement. It’s really not a big deal.”

“Hmm... so he’s been a total idiot?” I asked, shaking my head.

“Yes, but anyway, that’s beside the point. I have to go now, Madi. Nancy’s waiting for me in the parking lot.”

“Ah, all right. No worries.” I smiled at him, and he kissed my cheek.

“Thanks so much for lunch, Madi.” He turned to leave, giving me a playful wink.

“You’re welcome, Greg. But I hope next time it’s your treat.”

“Ah, don’t worry about that. How about tonight? I know a great place to unwind. You can bring Sandy too.”

“Wow... really? Okay, count me in. Can I invite Noelle as well?”

“Huh?” I laughed at his reaction. “I’m kidding. Bye, Greg. Send me the address later.”

“Right. Bye, Madi. See you soon.”

Once I watched him step into the elevator, I headed toward Gabriel’s office. I remembered my promise the moment he turned back into an idiot. Be ready, my dear husband.

I didn’t even knock on his door. It would be quick—I wasn’t planning to stay long. I found him frowning, his eyes flicking repeatedly over the folders in front of him. When he saw me come in, he straightened in his chair and smiled.

“Madi—” (the sound of a slap)

He stared at me, bewildered, then pressed a hand to his left cheek.

“What are you doing?”

“Ha!” I smiled. “That’s your reward for being an idiot, my love. Remember? I’m just holding you to your promise.”

I gave him a sweet smile, then turned and walked toward the door. He stood there, completely shocked and bewildered. I only sighed once I was outside.

Madi's perspective:

It's four in the afternoon, time for my boss and husband's third coffee of the day. But before I can make his coffee, I first need his signature on some important documents, which also need to go to Sandy so they can be sent to the right department.

I had the documents in hand and was just about to knock on his office door when it suddenly swung open in front of me. Gabriel's hurried gaze landed on me.

"Oops! Excuse me. Are you in a hurry, sir?"

Chapter 725

I really need to ask, when I already know the answer.

"Yes, someone called me—"

"Did Stacey call you, sir?"

"Madi..."

“Ah, it’s all right, sir. I just need your signature on a few documents. May I?” I smiled, as though it weren’t a big deal to me at all—and it wasn’t something that affected me.

“Yes, come into my office.” He opened the door and stepped back inside, not bothering to sit. He simply took the documents and signed each one.

Aren’t you going to read them? You really can’t wait to go see her? To sleep with your ex? Your girlfriend, again? I asked him silently, in my mind.

But he only smiled and handed the papers back to me.

“I don’t need to read them. I trust you, Madi.”

I raised an eyebrow and made a joke. “Oh, really? And what if this is part of my plan to drain a few million from your account?”

But instead of looking even the slightest bit worried, he said, “It’s all right. Take as much as you like. And don’t worry—I can give you anything you want, Madi.”

I laughed inwardly. Yes, you can give me anything I want. Except your heart.

And then, to my surprise, he gave me a quick kiss on the lips.

“What—” I reacted, but he’d already slipped out the door. I swallowed hard and let out a bitter laugh, brushing my fingers over my lips.

We’d been married for two weeks, and yet we barely saw each other at his house. You could count on one hand the nights he’d actually spent in that massive, empty house. We only crossed paths at the office—after that, whatever hours were left were his own, spent however, with whomever, he pleased.

And with that, I’d really started to wonder whether he still needed me for his plan at all, given that two weeks had passed and he hadn’t said a word to me about it. Since he only showed up at the house once in a blue moon at night, he’d never noticed what time I actually got home each evening. There was even a night I didn’t come home at all, sleeping instead at my old apartment, and he never noticed that either.

He kept right on pursuing her, and I kept fading further from his sight. Every day, I had to smile and show him I was fine, that everything around me was fine.

But every day, that smile felt like a mask—a mask of loneliness, hiding what I truly felt underneath. Then again, did I have a choice? I’d chosen this myself, hadn’t I? So I told myself to simply endure the pain of my own foolishness.

“Madi, are you ready?”

“Yes, I just need to change at Gabriel’s place.”

Chapter 726

It was Friday night, and we were going out to celebrate at a bar with Nancy, Greg, and two of Greg's friends. Since Gabriel had taken the afternoon off, it was more or less certain he'd be spending his night wrapped up in Stacey's arms.

"Why do you keep calling it 'Gabriel's house'? Why not 'our house'?"

"Because it's not my house."

"But you're married—that makes it marital property."

"Sandy, I have zero interest in all the things and property he owns."

"Right, because your only interest is winning his heart."

I stayed quiet, because it was true. And the pain only deepened, knowing my love for him grew a little more with every passing day, with nothing I could do about it.

"You don't have to go home, Madi." I looked at her, and she smiled. "I've got plenty of dresses, you know. Borrow whichever one you like."

“It’s all right, you don’t have to do that.”

“But what if you run into your husband at home?”

“So what?”

“And what if he won’t let you go out tonight?”

“Oh, he can’t do that! I never asked where he’s been, so he has no right to ask where I’m going.”

“Huh? My God—Daring Madi, Version 2.0.”

I laughed at that. Daring Madi, Version 2.0... I wish.

In the end, I took Sandy’s suggestion. I didn’t waste time going home to change—I just borrowed one of her killer dresses.

“God, I missed this,” I said, spinning in front of the mirror. I was wearing a tight red dress that ended mid-thigh, a piece that clung perfectly to every curve.

“Oh my God, Madi! You look stunning and sexy!”

“Oh, I already know that. But thank you anyway.”

She laughed at my response.

“I wish your husband could see you in that killer outfit tonight. I bet he’d drop his whole plan against his ex and come chasing after you instead.”

It was my turn to laugh. “That’s not going to happen, Sandy,” I said, pressing my lips together after applying my favorite red lipstick.

“Well, who knows. Anyway, Madi, you truly look beautiful and confident tonight.”

I just smiled at her. In truth, that beauty and confidence were reflections of myself—the always beautiful, always confident, always strong Madi.

“Here we go.” I picked up my purse and looked at myself in the mirror one more time, sighing at my own reflection. I couldn’t remember the last time I’d worn a smile like this, felt this kind of confidence. But I promised myself I’d be that woman again tonight—the real me. Beautiful. Confident. Strong.

Greg was waiting in the living room when I stepped out. He shot to his feet, smiling.

“Wow. It’s been a long time since I’ve seen you in a dress like that. Should I say welcome back, or congratulations on being back?” he said, kissing my cheek.

“Come on, Greg. I’ve been here the whole time. Nothing’s changed.” Except my heart.

“All right, shall we go, then?” He took my hand and looped it through his arm as we walked toward his black Maserati.

“Where’s Nancy?” I asked as he opened the passenger door for me, having already opened the back door for Sandy.

Chapter 727

“Already at the bar. Flirting with Lawrence, probably.”

I just shook my head, smiling. Nancy’s original plan had been to stay with us at Gabriel’s house, but the moment she met Lawrence—one of Greg’s friends—she decided to stay at Greg’s apartment instead.

We reached the nightclub right at seven. Sandy and I didn’t bother waiting for Greg to come around and open our doors—the second we parked, we hopped out ourselves.

“Why didn’t you wait for me?” Greg asked, pouting, once he’d caught up and was standing in front of us. We just laughed and kept walking toward the entrance.

"It's fine, you know we can manage on our own," I said, resting my hand on his right arm. "There is one thing we can't manage tonight, though."

He looked at me. "And what's that?"

"Paying our own bills." I shrugged and winked at him.

He laughed, scratching the back of his neck. "Tsk, ts. All right."

My smile widened. "Thanks, Gregy. You're so cute." I pinched his right cheek.

"Tss. You know it's just natural talent," he said, puffing out his chest proudly.

"Leaning on the expert, huh!" I said, laughing.

"Obviously. You're my best teacher." He winked at me. I just smiled and rolled my eyes.

The loud music was already pumping through the club when we walked in. Greg led us to the VIP section, where I met Greg's friend, Luis.

“Where are Nancy and Lawrence?” I couldn’t help but ask when I noticed they weren’t with us. He tilted his chin toward the dance floor. We followed his gesture and spotted the two of them dancing.

“Wow, she’s already having fun,” I said, shaking my head.

“Yep. Tsk, tsk,” Greg said, sitting down beside me. “What do you want to drink?”

I smiled at the question. “You don’t have to ask. Anything works for me.”

“All right.” He shrugged, got up, and went to grab our drinks.

Greg knows me well—he knows exactly how much I can handle when it comes to alcohol. I can drink an entire bucket of beer without getting drunk. We took the same course in college, and we’d both gotten used to this kind of drinking.

After dancing wildly and burning off some energy on the floor, Nancy finally came back to sit down.

“Hi, Madi.” She hugged me and kissed my cheek. I could smell the alcohol on her breath.

“Don’t get too drunk, Nancy,” I said, giving her arm a little pat.

“Of course, Madi.” She smiled at me. “So how are you and my idiot brother doing?”

“Still the same,” I replied, avoiding her gaze.

“Tsk, ts, ts. Don’t worry—the wheels know how to spin on their own.”

That’s when Greg came back with two glasses of vodka in hand. My grin widened as he handed me mine.

“What is that?” Nancy asked, curious.

“Vodka,” I said, smiling proudly.

“Is it strong?”

“Hmm... eighty percent alcohol.”

“Whoa! Can you actually drink that, Madi?” Her eyes went wide, but Greg just laughed at her reaction.

Chapter 728

“Yes—I can drink an entire bucket of beer too, and not even get drunk.”

“My God. How are you even able to do that?”

“Five years of facing down nearly every kind of alcohol out there will make you immune, Nancy. And Madi’s got a serious tolerance,” Greg said from beside me. I was sitting between the two of them.

“Wow, Madi, I bet you could drink an entire bucket, couldn’t you?” she shrieked, and Greg turned to look at her.

“Nancy!”

But Nancy just ignored him. “I have an idea!”

And what she did next caught us all off guard. She ran up to the stage and grabbed the microphone.

“Good evening, ladies and gentlemen! I’ve got a friend right over there—actually, my sister-in-law.” She pointed toward our table. “She has a very high tolerance for alcohol. Now... is there anyone who wants to challenge her to a showdown?” she shouted, and the crowd erupted in cheers. “I’ll give ten thousand dollars to anyone who can beat my sister-in-law! Five bottles each. Who wants in?”

Greg clenched his jaw, watching his cousin single out a few people from the crowd.

"It's fine, Greg. I'm used to this," I said, giving his arm a light pat.

"But, Madi—"

"It's fine. Honestly, I missed this." I stood up and gave him a playful wink.

The crowd cleared a space and set the beer buckets down in the center, and the contest began. I was genuinely enjoying myself. Nancy, Sandy, and Greg's two friends were all cheering me on, while my killjoy friend Greg just stood off to the side, watching over me every few minutes. I wanted to laugh in his face, but I had a contest to finish.

Ten minutes later... I won.

"Yes!" Sandy and Nancy shouted together, hugging me and kissing both my cheeks. Greg's expression looked nothing like theirs. He just frowned deeper.

"Are you okay?" he asked, holding me by the elbow.

"Obviously. It's just alcohol!" I said, laughing.

We went back to our table and kept the drinks flowing. We laughed, danced, and turned the whole club upside down. I felt so free that night, like I truly belonged somewhere. I let go of all my stress, knowing full well I'd be back to fighting my own battles come tomorrow.

It was already one in the morning by the time we noticed. We decided to call it a night and head home. Greg drove me back and opened the car door for me, even helping me out as if I might stumble at any second.

"Thank you so much, Greg. I really enjoyed tonight."

"You're welcome, Madi. You know I'd do anything for you, right?" His tone turned serious.

"Greg..."

"I know. But nothing's changed, Madi. I'm still the same Anderson boy you met eight years ago."

I smiled at him and pulled him into a hug.

"Thank you, Greg." As I stepped back, I looked at him. "But you know, we both know everything else has changed."

Chapter 729

“I know. But I haven’t. And you don’t need to explain to me the things that have changed in you.”

“What do you mean by that?”

“You love him.” I swallowed hard and straightened up. “I can see it right through your smile—how your eyes light up every time you hear his name. But like I said before, I’ll wait for you, Madi.”

“Greg—” He pressed his index finger gently to my lips.

“I’ve waited for you for eight years. I’m willing to wait another eight, or longer, if that’s what it takes.”

I took his hand in mine. “Greg, I don’t know how to put what I feel into words for you.”

“Madi, just let me do this, please. It’s all I can do for you—stand by your side whenever you need me. At the very least, let me be the friend you need. I’m still here, Madi.”

Since I couldn’t find the words, I just hugged him again.

“Don’t feel pressured by any of this, okay? I’m not saying it to make you feel like you have to do something, or to push you away. I just want you to know you can have me as a friend, or... something else, if that’s ever what you want.” He shrugged, and I punched him lightly in the shoulder.

“Thanks again, Greg. You have no idea how lucky I feel, having had you as a friend from the very start.”

“Ouch. I’m just your friend?” He pretended to look wounded.

“Greg!”

“Kidding. So, can I go?”

“Yes, but be careful. And thanks for the drinks.” I winked at him.

He chuckled. “No problem. Goodnight, Madi.” He kissed my forehead.

“Goodnight, Greg. Take care!” I waited until his car pulled away and disappeared from sight.

Then I walked to the front door. All the lights were already off, but I had my own key, just in case it was locked. I was humming to myself as I stepped inside, dropping my key back into my purse, phone still in hand. I’d barely taken my first step when a thunderous voice erupted from the living room, and the lights flicked on. There, glaring at me, was the furious face of my “husband.”

“Where have you been?”

I gasped, hand flying to my chest, nearly dropping my phone in shock.

For God’s sake, why is he still up at this hour? I wondered, staring straight at him.

“I just went out with my friends,” I answered casually, once I’d gathered myself.

“Out with your friends, Madi? At this hour?” he yelled. I honestly couldn’t believe he was actually shouting at me.

“Hey, hold on, dear husband—why are you angry?” I asked, laughing sarcastically.

“Why am I angry? Are you seriously asking me that, Madielyn?”

My eyes widened at that.

“Wow. So now I’m Madielyn to you, dear husband?”

“Are you drunk?”

“Me, drunk? No! Maybe just a little tipsy... but drunk? Nah.”

“I am not drunk. And excuse me, I’d just like to go rest.” I tried to walk past him, but he caught my hand.

Chapter 730

“Where have you been, Madi? You still haven’t actually answered my question!”

You still haven’t actually answered my question. I replayed his words in my head, then laughed right in his face.

You didn’t take my question seriously. I replayed his words in my head, mimicking his tone, before bursting out laughing right in his face.

“I already answered your question! I went out with my friends—and your sister!” I tried to yank my hand free, but he wouldn’t let go.

“You went out with them? And you’re getting home at this hour of the night?”

“What’s the problem? I told you, I was with Nancy! Greg was with us too—actually, he’s the one who drove me home!”

Gabriel clenched his jaw, eyes narrowing as he stared at me.

“Greg was with you the whole time? You were with him this entire time? Why didn’t you tell me you were going out tonight, and that you’d be with him?”

Holy shit. I blinked rapidly, trying to hold back the anger surging up in me.

“I’m sorry. What did you just say? Didn’t I tell you I was going out tonight? Gabriel Wilsons, since when do I need to report to you where I’m going or what I’m doing?”

“Since the moment you married me, Madielyn Wilsons!”

I let out a sarcastic laugh, unable to believe he’d actually said that to my face.

“Since I married you? Really? Have I ever once asked you where you go?”

“You’re married to me too. Do I ever demand an explanation for where you’ve been, every single time you don’t sleep in your own damn room? Huh?”

I wasn't really drunk, but I'd had just enough to give me the nerve to yell straight into that gorgeous man's face.

"Madi, this is something completely different! You knew from the very beginning, from the moment you agreed to this arrangement, that I'd be with Stacey, trying to win her back!"

"Of course! I agreed to your damn deal! But I never agreed to hand over every single detail of my life to you! And I definitely never agreed to let you start deciding who I can or can't spend time with!"

"But you're married to me."

"And you're married to me too! So what's the difference? Go sleep with your ex, I don't care! And if I want to sleep with someone, that's my business, and mine alone!"

I shouted at him, the veins in my neck straining. I knew our fight might wake the maids sleeping somewhere in this house, but I couldn't let him get away with trying to control every part of my life. With that, I turned toward the stairs, fully intending to head straight to my room.

"Madi, please, can we try to have a civilized conversation?" Gabriel asked, his voice calm and soft, as he followed me up the stairs. I turned to face him and sighed, forcing myself to match his tone.