



Printer's Devil Review

Edward Porter. *A Proposal*.
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A Proposal

SHE WAS LATE. She was always late, and he was used to waiting for her like this, in a stupor of nerves and fever. Gerald sat in a Windsor chair, looking down from the window on the descending terraces of formal gardens outside the hotel room. The Virginia hills resort swam in flowers: crocuses in the gardens, tulips in vases, rose-pattern drapes and bedspread. It was stuffy; it stank of old money. All the better, he felt, for secret fucking.

He had driven down the day before from New Jersey. She was arriving by plane today. They had picked out the resort on the internet, at her house in the suburbs, while her husband was at Columbia Presbyterian renovating a forty-nine-year-old socialite's face. Something special, Grace said, for their two-year anniversary. He wore tight jeans and a white sleeveless tee shirt – that was how Grace wanted him to dress for her. When he could no longer bear sitting, he went into the bathroom to reexamine his shave and touch it up with a dry razor. Then he flung himself on the bed face down, giving himself at least the pressure of his body against the rose-covered tessellation of the quilt – the large squares were softly resistant, like breasts.

When her knock finally came – quiet, clear, code-like – it made him jump. He ran to the peephole. Her lovely, angular face was tense: she knew he was looking at her. He wanted to talk softly to her through

the door, tell her to unbutton her stiff, white blouse while he watched, but she might not be alone in the hall. Instead, he turned the knob with deliberate, teasing slowness.

She darted in, dropped her bag, and threw her arms around his neck, clinging to him tightly as he kicked the door closed. He bent his mouth to her pale neck and throat. She never kissed back or did anything willingly at this stage, but liked him to do all the work. Blood flushed in her face and neck, and she trembled. Her nails dug into his wrists, directing his hands, as if by accident, to her thick leather belt. Trapping her between his legs, he undid the buckle and pulled it free. She hit at his chest, almost hurting him, and in response he turned her around, levered her arms behind her back, and tried to get a loop of belt around her arms below the elbow. Finally, she had to stop struggling for a moment so that he could get it cinched in the right place.

“Not too tight,” she whispered.

Later, she pulled rumpled bedclothes over herself and snuggled against him. She put her hand on his upper arm, half-circling it, measuring him with her thumb and forefinger. “I like this,” she said. “I like this part here.” She slid her thumb into the hollow of his elbow and ran it up over his biceps. “And this part.” Her hand moved down along his forearm and turned his wrist. “And this,” she said, stroking the hard pads of his palms, calloused from years of handling wood and stone.

In response, he cupped her breast, lifting it just enough to feel its particular and delicate heft. Her breasts were slightly pear-shaped. She had been self-conscious of that until he'd made it clear how beautiful he found them. “Oh yes,” she said, and then he closed his hand around her, tightening slowly until he drew from her a long soft, “Ahh.” She looked into his eyes, letting him see that she did not want it to stop. He relaxed and tightened again several times, and she stayed with him. It was like bending a rod against a big fish down deep.

She talked about her daughter who was away at boarding school. Lucy had been caught smoking pot on the school grounds and Grace had to be angry on the phone, although what was smoking pot these days? But of course *Stan* wanted to punish Lucy by not letting her come

on vacation, which meant two weeks in Switzerland with no one but Stan to talk to which, aside from being unfair to Lucy, was unfair to *her*. Gerald listened, more taken with the music of her voice than with what she was saying. Sunlight slanted across the lilacs on the wallpaper, inched its way from one flower to the next, and his own internal time slowed to the same pace. She talked until her voice grew fuzzy and drowsy, then she was asleep in his arms.

Grace had been a client. Two years ago, he'd supervised renovations to her Tudor mansion in Saddle River. The husband was a plastic surgeon whom he had met only once. A week after the job was over, Gerald had a slow day and called to ask her if he could come by and make sure the caulking on the French doors had cured properly. When he arrived she offered to make espresso, and by the time the water began to boil and sputter in the DeLonghi they were fucking: first standing in the kitchen, her hands gripping the edge of the sink, and later in the master bedroom, in front of all her framed photographs of family. The second time he came over, she took a flat leather paddle from the back of her closet and pressed it into his hand.

He found he enjoyed it: perhaps that was leftover animus from his divorce. Marion hadn't left him because she'd had the affair: she'd left him because he'd done such a lame job of trying to win her back. Or so she said. Losing her had been a public shaming but not a heartbreak.

Gerald liked his job, liked being first on the site at six in the morning, liked walking through with a cardboard cup of black coffee, a mason's level and tape measure, averting other people's mistakes: stacks of half-inch sheetrock about to be hung where the fire code demanded five-eighths, sections of trim that had been primed but were still not puttied. He liked being around the guys, the few other Micks or Italians left in the business, and the ones from Trinidad, Jamaica, and the Dominican who had come to *El Norte* to make their fortune. There were no women in the trades. He knew female clients and decorators of course, but that was different. They were people he might have lunch with – blueprints and fixture catalogues spread across the table – but never dinner. Until Grace.

His eyes would not close, and he eased out of her arms. His naked body in the bathroom mirror made him wince; he had been looking at the smooth curves of her body, and his own knotted, hairy limbs seemed

simian in comparison. Matching white terrycloth bathrobes hung on the door, so he slipped one on and went over to the Windsor chair again where he could watch her sleep and also look out the window.

Two floors below, a red brick patio ran along the length of the hotel, overlooking the gardens. At the moment, it was empty except for a young couple. The willowy girl had long blond hair and a sweet face, while her companion was black-haired and stocky. Their casual intimacy, the way she ran her hand along the lapel of his jacket, showed they thought themselves unobserved, making them irresistible to watch. The girl spoke, and the boy followed her conversation, amused, sly. Gerald could hear nothing, but thought he saw her make jokes that the boy laughed at, ask questions that he answered, like watching television with the sound off.

The girl performed a slow dance, moving from one side of the boy to the other, drawing him down the length of the patio; she was slowly bringing him to some logical yet unexpected conclusion. Gerald could tell by the accelerating expressions of perplexity on the boy's part and anticipation on the girl's. Until suddenly, she went down on one knee before him, her face radiant.

Some private Arctic descended on the boy; he froze, then shivered. He helped her up and patted her on the back, while his eyes nervously flicked back and forth. They both leaned on the black iron railing, the boy looking at her, the girl's head dropped straight down, her shoulders hunched, her back to Gerald. The boy spoke earnestly, and his hand reached towards her, only to pull back. Then they turned and walked away together. For a moment Gerald saw her face again; it seemed pinched and wearied, as though a switch had been thrown taking her from youth to middle age.

He stood and yanked at the cinch on the drape, letting fall a curtain against what he had seen. A proposal of marriage. It must have been. Of course a girl *could* propose, that was just unusual, not unnatural. But it changed everything. For a boy to propose and be turned down – that was cause for sympathy and amusement. But for a girl ... It was too painful. The couple must be staying here for the weekend. How could you go on, how could you even look at each other? His last glimpse of the girl's face would not leave him. In the way that movies sometimes affected him, he felt more for her than he had felt for himself in a long time.

From behind him came sounds of stirring and stretching, and he turned. Grace shifted to her side. Warm, amber sunlight from the other window shone on her pale limbs, the dark brown thatch between her legs, the pink of her nipples, and the ivory lines of her beautiful face. A red, five-fingered mark was visible on her hip, as if a possessive hand still rested there. God, but she was fine.

“What’s wrong?” she said, “You look all ... tragic, or something.”

He blurted, “Oh Jesus, you’re the best thing that ever happened to me. All my life, I’ve been just drifting along like an idiot or something.”

“Gerald, are you crying?” She sat up stiffly and pulled the sheet around her.

He was. He sat down next to her, surprised. He had not cried since he was a kid. She put her hand on his neck, trying to calm him.

“You’re great,” he said, “I’ve never known anyone like you.”

She laughed. “I’ve never known anyone like you, either. Don’t sell yourself short.” Her fingers went through his hair, grasping it, gently shaking his head like a puppy’s. “You okay there?”

“We do this,” he said. “We meet like this, and it’s all ...” He could not find the words. He wanted to ask how she felt about him.

“Shh,” she said, lowering his head to her breast, still combing his hair with her fingers. His loneliness began to ease with the thought that, for women, it was never just sex.



They went out to the nearby bathhouses, built in the eighteenth century on a hot spring. The octagonal, white clapboard buildings stirred his professional interest. “Center-pole,” he said, as they got out of his pickup.

“I’m sorry?”

“Dollars to donuts they’re both hung off of a center-pole. That’s a big wooden thingy in the middle, to you.”

“Sure,” she said. “Big wooden thingy in the middle, center-pole, you just can’t stop talking about yourself, can you?” She squeezed his rear end. “See you in an hour.”

Inside the Gentleman’s Bath, two old men paddled slowly across the rock-and-sand-bottomed pool while a white-suited attendant tinkered with the wooden sluice gate that fed it. Floating on his back in hot

water, Gerald stared up at the spider’s web of timber radiating from the center-pole to the rafters. He noted the saw marks on the wood from the crude mills of the time. It was a hell of a thing to build with nothing but hand tools. Like most carpenters, he’d fantasized about building his own house. Of course, that dream only made sense if you had a wife and children to shelter. Since the divorce, he had been renting the top floor of a vinyl-clad two-decker and could barely rouse himself to change his own light bulbs.

Someone loudly splashed in from the other side. Black hair and a red face emerged sputtering in the middle of the pool: it was the reluctant beau Gerald had seen earlier. He let himself drift close enough to make conversation seem logical, if not natural. “You’re staying here at the resort, aren’t you?”

The man didn’t answer. He seemed surprised to be addressed, briefly nodded, and began to study the sluice gate as if he was calculating its rate of flow.

“Us, too,” Gerald continued. From close up, the boy’s features were overly symmetrical, effeminate. His attempt to be politely invisible provoked a sense of devilry in Gerald. “Romantic, isn’t it? My wife and I got engaged here. On the back patio, in fact. I remember it like it happened today.”

The other man turned slowly and stared. “How interesting,” he said.

Evidently Gerald had been right about the proposal. But now that he had gotten the man’s attention, he found he didn’t want it. The man’s arched brows and dark eyes were overcast with a puzzled, questioning intensity that was hard to bear. Gerald was unpleasantly conscious of their nakedness.

“Where are you from?” he asked, for want of anything better to say.

“Boston.”

Somehow that explained everything. “Well, good for you,” Gerald said and swam off awkwardly, now unsure why he had begun the conversation in the first place.

In the bathhouse’s gift shop, Gerald thumbed maps while Grace studied the soaps and lotions. “Let me guess,” the lady behind the counter drawled. “You two on a second honeymoon?” She put the emphasis on “moon.”

Gerald grinned. “Why, *yes*.”

“The way you’re looking at your wife,” she said. “I just knew it.”

“It’s great to get away from the kids once in a while,” he said. “Isn’t it, honey?”

“There’s no shame in that,” said the woman.

“I’ll take these.” Grace placed two silver combs on the counter.

Gerald had his wallet out before she could open her purse. “Sure you wouldn’t like anything else, sweetheart?” The combs had an elegant curve to them. One was larger, and one smaller. He guessed they were for herself and her daughter: a matched set. “Why don’t you get three of them?” he said. Stan, her husband, was bald.

“You go ahead and spoil her,” said the woman happily.

In the pickup, Grace said, “You’re in a mood.”

“Shall we call the little darlings when we get back to the hotel? Your mother must have her hands full.”

She laughed but didn’t reply, and he dropped the routine.

Instead, he asked, “Did a girl come into your baths? A blonde? Maybe ten minutes after you went in?”

“How did you know?”

“Did she seem okay?”

“She didn’t seem any particular way. Why?”

“I saw her earlier.” He didn’t know what else to say without admitting to his voyeurism. “I just wondered.”

Back in the room, she unpinned the rest of the drapes. No one could look into the room anyway, but Gerald had seen her do this before. She was creating a different atmosphere; she was seeking to shut everything else out. It was as if she felt safer in small spaces, like a cat.

“Did you bring it?” Her voice was flat and distant. She was talking about their bag of toys. She knew he had not forgotten it.

“What do you want from it?” he asked.

She stood at the window, looking out through the slit between the two long swaths of fabric. “Rope,” she said. “And the Vaseline.”

Forty minutes later, her phone rang. Because of Lucy, she never turned it off, never was far from it. He thought perhaps she didn’t register the sound: her eyes remained unfocused, her quick sharp breaths didn’t alter.

When it went off a second time, she surfaced from the depths and said, “I have to see who that is.”

She was, at that point, unable to get up or use her hands. Gerald disengaged from her with chagrin, found her purse by the door, and went through it for her phone.

“Show me the display,” she said. “I can’t read it like that.” She was on her side. He turned it. The phone began to ring a third time. “It’s Stan. I have to answer.”

He flipped it open and held it to her ear. His penis hung in her face, so he got down on his knees.

“Is everything all right?” Her voice was instantly cool and friendly. It was alarming she could do that. “I was just taking a nap ... Virginia, I told you, Virginia ... No, I told you ... college ... Two boys and a girl ... her husband does insurance, I think ... Oh come on. No.” Her body stiffened against the ropes. “Stan ... I’m a *guest* in someone’s house right now, can we please not ... I know what I *said*, you don’t have to ...” She rolled her eyes at Gerald and shook her head. “Yes ... When I get back ... Okay ... I’m sorry.” “*Hang it up*,” she mouthed.

She twisted against the ropes onto her back. “I hate that phone. Goddamn him. I’m sorry you had to go through that.”

“What could you do?” he said, but heard the thinness in his voice.

“His family is over. It wasn’t planned, they just came, and he wanted me to get on the phone with all of them and he was mad, because I wasn’t there to be a good wife. He couldn’t even remember where I was.”

A lot of men didn’t know when they had it good. “It’s none of my business.” He turned her on her side again and began to pluck at the knots.

“What are you doing?”

“The wind’s gone out of my sail.”

“Wait.” Her voice was plaintive. “Don’t let him spoil it. Wait.” She withdrew into herself. After some time, and without looking at him, she said. “You’re mad at me.”

“No.”

“I can tell. Admit it.”

“Yes.”

“You’re jealous. You’re angry I’m married to him and not you.”

Oh my God. “Yes.”

“So do something about it.”

After he started, she twisted her neck to look back, to let him see in her face how badly she needed him.



In the dining room, the waiter fussed over them with the formal tenderness good waiters lavish on romantic couples. Other men looked at him with envy, no doubt assuming, as the woman in the shop had, that this gorgeous creature was his wife. Grace drank with abandon, ordering a second bottle of wine that he felt obliged to help her finish. The room turned fuzzy and golden, and he began to float in his chair. She told a story about her uncle, a Congressman, and his affair with an Italian movie star. After their laughter finally ran out, he asked if she ever thought of having another child.

“Stan would never.”

“That’s not what I mean.”

She teared up instantly. “Sometimes – I think about having a boy. Yes. I think about it. What about you?”

“I guess that would depend on who the mother was.”

They looked at each other without speaking, until it became awkward and they had to look away.

When they slipped into bed, their arms went around each other and he said, “I love you.”

“Love you too.”

They had started saying that to each other a year after the affair began. Now it didn’t mean what he needed it to mean.

“I want to marry you.”

“That’s nice,” she said. “I’d like to marry *you*, too.”

“Okay then.”

“Okey-dokey,” she said. “Night night.”

The next morning, they kissed and petted, working up to sex without any theatrics. She rocked slowly on top of him, her face close, moving without any sense of effort or performance. He couldn’t bring himself to say anything at breakfast, and she was quiet too. They took a walk

around the gardens, holding hands, not talking. He insisted on driving her to the airport. In the car, he finally managed to spit it out.

“I really meant it, last night.” She didn’t respond. “I want to stop hiding.” She began to cry. She twisted in her seat, clutching at the shoulder strap. He took her hand and held it, small and limp in his big fist. “I want us to be together. Not this game we have now. I want to marry you.”

“I knew you weren’t just saying that.” Then she squeezed his hand and said, “Yes.”

“Yes, what?”

“Yes, everything. Yes.”

When they got to the local airport with its single runway, he offered to come wait in the Quonset hut terminal with her, but she told him to go. “You’ll make me cry more, and I don’t want to be like this in front of strangers.” She kissed him, her lips soft, lingering, hungry. “Thank you,” she said. “Everything’s going to be different.”

On the long drive back he found a radio station pumping out old Southern rock – Little Feat, the Allman Brothers – and he rolled down the windows and turned up the volume, drumming on the dashboard, pushing his old Nissan as hard as it would go, as if going faster would make the future come sooner. He understood now that he had been in love with Grace for a long time: certainly for this last year, probably even before he had come over to check the caulking. He thought about building a house and starting a family. Most of all, he thought about Grace herself: the sea-salt-and-lilac of her body, the candied rasp of her sighs, and her endlessly surprised gray eyes looking up at him. In that moment, and for the first time in his life, Gerald had a clear vision of exactly what it would take to make him happy, and for this, at least, he was to be envied.



His answering machine was empty. Often she left him sexy, funny messages after they’d been together. But not always. And this time, things had gotten beyond the joking stage.

He called her on Wednesday from his pickup. He was parked in a field beside a neatly carved rectangle in the ground into which a subcontractor was pouring cement. Gray slurry slurped into plywood forms as he

let the four rings, her message, and the tone cycle through twice. “Hey babe,” he finally said, “It’s me. Give me a call. Love you.”

When he got home on Friday afternoon there was an envelope in the mail. Inside was a cashier’s check for the hotel and restaurant bill, which he’d put on his credit card since, obviously, it couldn’t appear on hers. No note. He called again and left another version of the same message.

That evening Gerald stopped by a friend of his, a plumber named Steve who always had marijuana. Until three in the morning, Gerald hung out in Steve’s basement, talking shop, drinking whiskey, and smoking from a bong. When Steve finally asked him to leave, Gerald called him a dipshit, spilled bong water all over the carpet, and then was just sober enough to realize he was too drunk to drive and was in for a long walk. The next afternoon he had to trudge back to get his truck and apologize.

On Sunday afternoon it occurred to him that she might have been in an accident, so he called all the hospitals in the Philadelphia area and then all the Washington and Baltimore hospitals as well. Then he drove over to her place. Lights were on all over the house. Her car and Stan’s were in the driveway, along with several others: they had guests. He parked for a while on the other side of the street on the off chance she would see his pickup and come out.

He left another message on Monday and drove over again that night. This time the house was dark, and there were no cars at all.

When he pulled up on Tuesday night, her Saab sat alone in the driveway and the lights were on upstairs. He slammed the heavy brass lion’s-head knocker into the mahogany door again and again, his eyes fixed on her window above him. No one answered. He felt that people were watching him from behind curtains, wondering what he was doing there. He was out of place. He was humiliating himself. He should have known better all along. “I guess that’s that,” he said.

Focusing at work became a problem for him. Mistakes by his laborers and subcontractors escaped him. He allowed a bedroom to be Sheetrocked, taped, and painted, although the electrical boxes hadn’t yet been wired. He brought tilers onto a job before the plumbers had finished – four men sitting on their hands all day at nineteen-fifty an hour. His boss,

the twenty-five-year-old son of the company president, said he could either take his two weeks’ vacation and come back with his act together, or he would have to find another job. Gerald held up a pair of tin-snips and told him where they would fit.

Unemployment came as a relief. He wore pajamas, ate Sugar Pops three times a day, and watched tv. The wildlife programs were his favorites. For society, he rented porn from the local video store. He let himself get fat and grew a beard.

Eventually, he went days at a time without thinking about Grace. Instead, he thought about playing the banjo. He rented one from the local music shop and spent three weeks trying to learn it. He gave that up as impossible. He developed an interest in peanut butter and ordered specialty jars from mail order houses. One came already mixed with Dutch chocolate and was amazing on a toasted pumpernickel bagel. His mother in Orlando called him every other day to ask him what the hell he thought he was doing. He held the phone away from his ear, letting her tiny, violent barking go on and on until it exhausted itself.

When his unemployment checks ran out and his savings account had dwindled down to half, he started running in the mornings. He ran slowly, and just the half mile down the avenue to the ball-field and back. One day he shaved, got his hair cut, and made the rounds of his old contacts, canvassing them until someone gave him work as a carpenter. It had been a long time since he’d walked onto a job with his white canvas bag of hand tools and asked, “What should I do?” To his surprise, he found that he enjoyed leaving the work behind at the end of the day, enjoyed being one of the guys again, instead of the boss. Everyone knew he’d had some kind of breakdown. Some said it was booze, which they knew all about, so if he seemed down, they said things like, “One day at a time,” to him. He never considered telling anyone about Grace.

A year later Gerald had to show the family flag by going to a wedding – his mother insisted on it. His nephew Terry was marrying some Protestant girl in the Episcopal cathedral three towns over. The place was all high stone arches and stained glass windows, and the crowd in the nave was distinctly high-class: tuxedos, silk dresses, and jewelry. Great masses

of yellow and white flowers lined either side of the altar. It looked like his nephew had hit the jackpot. He was all too self-conscious about his worn, all-purpose, out-of-date suit.

After the wedding, the bride and groom stood at the doors receiving friends and family, and Gerald got in line to pay his respects. Suddenly, she was on the steps above him, hanging on the arm of a doe-eyed boy in a corduroy jacket who couldn't have been more than thirty. The two of them were chatting with a circle of five or six others. He felt sick. He thought of leaving, but instead found himself edging up the steps to just below their level. A woman turned around, a friend of his mother's, and said, "Gerry, come here, there's someone I want you to meet."

"But I already know Mr. Riordan," Grace said. "He did some excellent work at my house a few years ago." She smiled. He couldn't tell by her reaction what was on his own face. At least no one asked what was wrong with him.

She was dressed like a lawyer, in a dark blue blazer and skirt, a simple silver chain around her neck, and small earrings with small blue stones. No wedding ring. He was surprised at how calm and smooth her face was: had she been wound up with tension the whole time he'd known her?

She introduced her boyfriend to him as Peter, and the two men shook hands. Gerald, lower on the steps, had to reach up awkwardly.

"So, what brings you here?" Peter asked.

"My nephew," he said, nodding over at the happy couple.

Peter nodded too. "I went to Penn with the bride."

He understood from the conversation that Grace and Peter were living in TriBeCa and that Peter taught art at The New School. She was working again, she said, for the city. It turned out she had a graduate degree in social work. He hadn't known that about her.

He managed to converse politely for a few minutes, even thought to ask how Lucy was without really listening to the answer, then felt he could bear no more and excused himself. He had another *obligation*, he said. The abstract lie clanged in his own ear – what other *obligation* could he possibly have?

She untangled her arm from the boy's. "Let me walk you to your car; there's something I meant to ask you," she said. "I'll be right back honey."

They said nothing until they had gone around the corner to the parking lot. Fortunately, his car was close.

"What do you want to ask me? Something about shelves? Do you two need new kitchen cabinets?"

She tapped his chest lightly with two fingers. "You look good."

"You must be blind."

"I mean, it's good to see you."

His face began to tremble, and he didn't want her to see. He reached for his keys, and bent over the car door to unlock it.

"Stop. I owe you an apology."

He leaned his forehead on the door, bone against glass.

"That was a very hard time for me," she said. "I should have called but I didn't. I was awful, and I'm sorry. Stan was such a bastard. You can't know how hard, how painful that all was. We have a child together. I don't know if you can even imagine how vulnerable that made me." Her face flushed and she bit her lip. She touched his arm. "Thank you. I couldn't have done it without you."

He turned and looked at her. "Done it?"

"Anyway, I'm glad to see you're doing well."

"I didn't realize I was helping you do something."

"We weren't dating, you know. No one was supposed to get hurt. No hurt feelings, anyway." She laughed. "I still think about you, if that means anything."

He had not yet lost her in person. It was as though he had stepped out of the last moment in Virginia into this one. Whatever she had done or said, the part of him that mattered still yearned for her, still believed her love could be won, if only he found the right key.

"Take care of yourself, Gerald," she said.

"Let me ask you something. Does he *take care* of you?"

Her lip curled. "Stan and I ... reached an agreement."

"Not him. That Boy Scout in the corduroy – does he take care of you? You have to admit, I took care of you, didn't I?"

He reached out with both hands and drew her to him by the waist. He slid one hand down her body. She tried to push away, her hands against his chest. She was slippery-squirmy in his arms, and her hips rubbed

against him as she turned this way and that. Her arms beat inside his, as they had many times before. Half-formed curses shot out under her breath. “Fuck – fucking – asshole – cocksucker –” He loved seeing the words form on her lips. She managed to wrench herself around so that her back was to him: a familiar invitation. He yanked up her skirt and looked with fond recognition at her pale, gorgeous skin and the black, silky thong that promised she had only changed on the outside. He gathered the skirt into his fist, pinned her down on the hood of his car, and slapped her firmly on the ass. She cried out, and the purity and truth of it thrilled him. Running footsteps and shouts echoed in the parking lot. Grace twisted her head and looked up at him, her eyes thick with tears.

“Marry me,” he said. ●