

NOELLE
I don't exactly know how to put it.

ZACK
(cheerful idiot)
Oh - I know what you're going to say.

Noelle eyes the bee again.

NOELLE
No you don't. Trust me.

ZACK
(growing concerned)
Then - what's wrong?

Noelle hesitates. This is unbearably hard. She looks from Zack to the bee.

ZACK
(very concerned)
Abby? Please, tell me. What is it?

Zack is looking at Noelle with puppy-dog eyes. It's just too much for her. The bee is right there. RIGHT - THERE. All it would take is one split second of mad courage -

Noelle PLUNGES her face into the flower!

It only takes an instant. Noelle raises her face with her eyes tightly closed in pain and the bee clinging to her cheek.

ZACK
My God!

Zack leaps to brush the insect off her face.
It's too late.

110
thru
111
112 OMIT

112 INT CATHEDRAL FIVE MINUTES LATER

110
thru
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112

Noelle sits on a pew, her face between her knees.

Zack is crouching next to her, trying to console her. Because they're in church, they keep their voices low.

ZACK
Let me see.

NOELLE
No!

(CONTINUED)

(No 13)

ZACK
It can't be that bad. Let me see.

She lifts her head.

Noelle is transformed. Her right cheek is the size of a melon. Her eye is swollen shut. She is grotesque.

Zack cocks his head.

ZACK
On you, it's attractive.

NOELLE
I'm a monster.

ZACK
You're a little Quasimodo-ish at the moment, but in here it works. Maybe they'll let you ring the bell.

NOELLE
It's not funny.

ZACK
Come on. The swelling will go down soon and...

NOELLE
No, it won't.

ZACK
Sure it will.

NOELLE
No it won't. You don't understand. My whole family's allergic. My sister got stung - it never went away. It got a little bit better but people still stare at her, and - I'm telling you, Zack, I'll never be the same.

ZACK
You're upset...

NOELLE
I swear to God. This is me from now on.

Noelle points to the crucifix at the front of the cathedral.

NOELLE
May He strike me dead if I'm lying.

(CONTINUED)

Zack realizes she's serious. He shoots an anxious sideways glance at Noelle: that cheek is really big. He takes it all in, struggles with it, swallows. Finally:

112

ZACK
Yeah, okay. So this is you. Let's get you checked out at the hospital, and then we'll put you to bed at my place where I can look after you.

NOELLE
I'm always going to look hideous.

ZACK
Yes, honey, you told me. I know. Let's go.

NOELLE
So you can just leave me now and I'll understand.

ZACK
(incredulous)
Leave you? This doesn't change anything between us.

NOELLE
Why not?

ZACK
(frustrated)
Why not? You want to hear this now?

NOELLE
Yes.

ZACK
Because I'm crazy about you.
Because I stay home every afternoon just to hear your heart and humor on the radio. Because I want to read you to sleep every night and wake up to you playing violin every morning. Because you saved my dog - and you might be saving me.

Noelle takes a deep breath. Tears roll down her face.

NOELLE
So - you want me anyway? Even like this? Even - ugly?

Zack takes Noelle's hands in his and presses his lips to her upturned palms.

(CONTINUED)

ZACK
Yes. Yes, Abby. Yes.

Noelle closes her eyes. A sob catches in her throat. She swallows until she can speak again.

NOELLE
That's good, Zack. That's really good. That's how it should be.

She winces, feeling her heart break. Zack thinks it's the bee-sting that's causing her pain.

ZACK
Does it hurt?

NOELLE
(breaking)
Yes.

ZACK
(tenderly)
Then can we please go to the hospital now?

Noelle wipes her tears away. Joy for Abby begins to overwhelm her own sadness. She touches Zack's cheek with her hand.

NOELLE
No. This will be all gone in a couple hours.

ZACK
Huh?

She rises.

NOELLE
I like you, Zack. You're turning out to be the most decent guy I've ever known.
(beat)
We're through.

ZACK
What? Where are you going?

Zack stares after her as she heads for the exit. At the door, she turns around and crosses herself.

NOELLE
(to God)
Thanks for playing along.

And runs out.