

Chapter 13

Chapter 13 opens with the narrator busy vacuuming the living room when she notices a shadow moving outside the window. Curiosity piqued, she steps closer to the window and sees Enzo working in the backyard, digging at the flower bed in the front yard. From what the narrator gathers, Enzo appears to rotate between houses, taking on various landscaping tasks. His presence has become a normal part of the household rhythm, yet something about the day feels different as the narrator's thoughts start to wander, especially regarding Nina's health.

Feeling unsettled, the narrator grabs an empty glass from the kitchen and fills it with cold water, unsure of what she hopes to accomplish by approaching Enzo. She steps outside, a bit unsure of herself but driven by a growing curiosity. After overhearing two women discussing Nina's supposed mental instability, the narrator can't shake the thoughts that have been building in her mind. Her unease only grows when she discovers antipsychotic medication in Nina's medicine cabinet, making her question the situation further. While she isn't one to judge anyone for having psychological struggles—having encountered many women in similar circumstances during her time in prison—the narrator feels it would be helpful to understand Nina's situation better. She wonders if gaining insight into Nina's mental health might offer clarity, perhaps even allowing her to find ways to support her.

Recalling Enzo's cryptic behavior on her first day, when he seemed to hint at something, the narrator senses that now might be the right time to approach him for answers. With Nina away, Andrew at work, and Cecelia at school, she recognizes an opportunity to confront the mystery, even if the language barrier makes it difficult. The only challenge is that Enzo speaks very little English, so communication could prove difficult. Regardless, she figures that offering him the glass of water would be a kind gesture, and maybe, just maybe, he'll be more willing to talk. As she steps outside, she

finds Enzo engrossed in his work, still digging away without acknowledging her presence. Undeterred, she clears her throat several times, trying to catch his attention, but he remains focused on the task at hand. Finally, she waves her hand and says, “Hola!”—realizing too late that she might have used Spanish instead of Italian.

Enzo finally looks up, an amused smile playing on his lips as he responds with a cheerful, “Ciao.” His reaction, lighthearted yet slightly knowing, shows that he is aware of her attempts at communication, despite the language gap. This brief interaction highlights the growing sense of complexity between the narrator and Enzo, and perhaps even the greater mystery surrounding Nina’s mental state. Enzo’s presence, coupled with the underlying tension in the air, signals that there are layers of meaning and secrets yet to be uncovered in the household. The protagonist’s simple gesture of offering a glass of water becomes a symbol of her desire to bridge the distance between herself and the people in the house, particularly Enzo, who seems to hold some hidden knowledge.

In this chapter, the narrator’s curiosity about Nina’s mental state and her interactions with Enzo reflect the larger theme of discovering the truth about those we live with and the emotional complexity of trying to understand someone else's private struggles. The protagonist’s internal dialogue reveals a deep desire to help Nina and connect with her, but the realization that she doesn't fully understand Nina’s situation heightens the tension. The language barrier with Enzo adds a layer of complexity to the situation, as the narrator tries to navigate her way through the maze of unspoken rules and secrets in the house. While the attempt to communicate with Enzo is driven by a genuine desire to understand Nina’s behavior, it also highlights the challenges faced when trying to connect with others, especially in a household filled with tension and unspoken expectations.

The chapter captures the tension between the narrator’s need for answers and the hesitations that come with not fully understanding the people around her. This dynamic of trying to reach out, combined with the complicated nature of Nina's behavior, emphasizes how deeply psychological issues can affect relationships within a

home. As the narrator continues to grapple with the complexities of Nina's mental health, her attempts to communicate with Enzo reveal both the potential for connection and the difficulty of bridging the emotional gaps that exist between them. The unease the narrator feels grows, and this chapter illustrates the fine line between wanting to understand and the challenges that come with trying to understand someone else's deeply personal struggles.

