

Tristin's Mom

Grace

His house is more luxurious than I anticipated. It's like a castle straight out of a fairytale, painted blue and white.

As the car pulls into the driveway, a man dressed in a black butler's suit opens my side of the door.

I peek up at the old man before stepping out of the car. My heart beats furiously inside my chest, protesting against these sudden changes in my life.

"Come on, Little Butterfly." Tristin urges, walking up the stairs like he owns the place. Which he does, I mean.

Ignoring the strange feeling in my stomach, I follow him inside the white main door.

My jaw hangs low just as I step in. Being a child of a wealthy family myself, I am never surprised about the extravagance of places but his house is something else. 1

Every corner, the crystal chandelier that hangs in the middle of the sitting area, the white and blue themed walls, and the carefully designed interior—everything oozes power and money.

"Tristin Darling, you are late. You missed our dinner." A warm female voice scolds.

My cheeks blush as I close my hanging jaw and whip around to face the woman on my right.

I have seen my fair share of elegant women too, but I have never seen a woman so pretty in her old age. She is like the epitome of

beauty, with her blonde hair and blue eyes. Her small and petite frame adds to her graceful image.

And she is frowning at Tristin.

" Mom, things happen. We can have dinner tomorrow. " He replies, smoothly placing his hand on her shoulder.

Like an awkward addition to the room, I fidget with my fingers. The fact that I am still dressed in the drenched nightie with Tristin's coat draped over my frame...is killing me.

" Why are you drenched, Honey? " The woman's eyes widen as she finally notices her son's attire.

" Mom, as I said, things happened. " He shrugs, suddenly radiating a golden retriever energy.

Is he the same man who always has a dark look in his eyes? I can't believe that. All the more reason to be wary of him.

" You can get sick and— "

The woman's eyes suddenly land on me, and she pauses. Surprise crosses her expression, her mouth still open.

" And who is that pretty thing? " She asks, her voice still sweet.

Her gaze switches between me and Tristin, as she blinks. I fold my arms across my chest, finding myself too out of place to fit even in the corner.

" I... " I trail off nervously.

" She is my guest, Mom. Please prepare a room for her and let her settle in. " Tristin says nonchalantly and walks forward as if he is leaving.

" Tristin. " Unconsciously, I squeal.

The woman's eyes go round on me as an odd smile touches her lips. It matches the smile of Ethan's grandmother whenever she is about to tell me about having babies.

So pestering and scheming. I shudder.

" Take a bath, change into fresh clothes, and eat something, Little Butterfly. We will talk tomorrow morning. " Tristin says, without stopping or shooting me another look.

Is he...running away?

It seems like it. His speed is impressive.

And I am standing here, turning left and right as if finding something interesting to look at. Or to find something to say in my mind.

" Little Butterfly? Are you my son's girlfriend? " The woman strolls closer to me.

" No. " I blurt, flapping my hands violently. " It's nothing like that. I was in a tight spot and Mr. Roberto helped me out. I had nowhere to go so he brought me here out of the kindness of his heart. I will stay here only for tonight and find someplace to— "

" It's okay, Sweetie. " She places a hand over my shoulder and gives it a squeeze.

I put a full stop to my rant and blink at her. The look in her eyes is so soft that it melts a little part of me. 1

" Did you have a rough day? " She smiles, so genuinely and warmly that a lump forms in my throat.

I nod wordlessly. It was a horrible day. I was scared, angry, and hurt. In the end, I am here, and I don't know why things must come to this.

"It's okay." She whispers, patting my wet hair. "Everyone has bad days in their lives. But you know what?"

Her voice is soothing and soft. It's as if she is talking to a wounded child, telling her that everything will be fine.

"What?" I utter, completely entranced by her kind smile.

"Bad days prepare us for the good days. So when the good days come, we can feel every bit of the happiness that we deserve." Her eyes shine—I notice. Like that of an angel.

Tears well in my eyes as I barely hold myself back from breaking down again.

"Come on. Let's get you changed so you can have dinner and rest." She whispers, leading me forward with a hand on my back.

Like a lifeless doll, I follow her lead. My heart, which was drumming in my ears before, calms down under her soft touch.

"What is your name, by the way?" She asks on the way.

I can't even focus on the surroundings as my whole attention remains on her.

"Grace." I whisper under my breath.

"So Grace, are you really not my son's girlfriend?" She chuckles.

My cheeks warm up again. Instantly, I shake my head. "There is nothing like that between us."

For some reason, I can't bring myself to tell her that I am married or that I am close to a divorce, or that it's all complicated.

I expect her to ask, but Tristin's Mom doesn't question my attire, my state, my ruined face. In a comfortable silence, she leads me to a guest room and urges me to take a warm bath.

" Grace. " She calls out just when I am about to enter.

" Yes...Ma'am? " I turn around, unsure about what to call her.

" You can call me Alma. " She says, " and also, you can be at ease. I don't know what happened to you to make you come here in the middle of the night, but rest assured, you will be fine here. In this home, you are safe "

For some moments, I find myself rooted in my spot. This is not what I expected Tristin's Mom to be like.

Is she even really Tristin's Mom?

And...somehow...Lily's ex-mother-in-law?

My throat clogs. She must know Lily. And by the looks of it, I think Lily did something with Tristin's brother.

So...

It means this kindness is only temporary.

I nod and force a smile up my lips. " I will...remember that, Alma. Thank you. "

For now, I will just pretend to be oblivious and prepare for Ethan's demise.



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