

Trap

Grace

On my way back, I can't help but feel like the ground is too soft beneath my feet. It feels like I am floating away, completely detached from the surroundings.

My mind...keeps sending me back in time.

This fear in my heart is the same as when I came home from college and tiptoed around Mom and Dad to avoid their wrath.

This fear is the same as when I tried to hide my drawings, my projects, and my dreams so Lily couldn't take them away from me.

This fear is the same as when I avoided looking at Ethan to hide my crush on him.

Because I knew...

All those things will bring me pain.

And I was scared to bear the pain alone. I didn't want my heart to bleed only for the lack of comfort to make it worse.

I knew...

If I fall once, I will never get back up again. I have been like this.

But now, all those things that I feared have already happened.

I smile mockingly.

Even last night, I feared Alma would get to know the truth about me and hate me and it didn't even take one day for her to find out everything.

Shaking my head, I enter through the main door again.

" Why did you bring her here, Tristin? And why didn't you tell me it's her? " Alma's voice comes from the lounge, making me stiffen.

" She had nothing to do with whatever happened. She doesn't even know anything, Mom. " Tristin sighs.

I frown, wondering what this secret is. What did Lily do to them? 1

" Still, you could have told me. " Alma insists.

I sigh, turning towards the stairs. I should quickly grab that phone and leave this place. I don't want to face them.

" And you would have let the sister of your son's murderer into our house? " Tristin's angry voice resonates. 1

I pause on the first stair, my eyes widening. What...the...hell?

" Enough, Tristin! Stop going after her! She ruined my elder son! I don't want this to happen to you too! We don't want to have anything with her. " Alma yells, startling me. 1

I press my palm to my mouth to stop myself from gasping. An eerie silence echoes in the house for a few seconds that follow.

" That's because you don't know what happened, Mom. " Tristin's voice becomes cold, sending a chill down my spine.

“ You are using that poor girl for revenge, aren't you? ” Alma accuses.

Poor girl...

“ Grace is the key to getting back what Lily took. ” Tristin announces.

I shudder. I knew he was using me, but I didn't know Lily had delivered such serious blows to this family.

“ You said so yourself. She has nothing to do with this and she doesn't know. ” To my surprise, Alma hisses. “ Leave her out of this. She doesn't look like an evil person, Tristin. Don't use her. ”

“ She wants it. I helped her, and she knows my help comes with a price. I won't let her go until she has paid every bit of it. ” The ice in his voice makes me freeze.

This should scare me. I should turn and leave even if I have to damn that phone.

But I stay there, just rooted on my spot.

“ Tristin! ” Alma calls out to him.

Hearing the footsteps behind me, I turn around and face them. Tristin halts when he notices me standing there. His eyes, dark and hollow, are zeroed in on me.

“ Tris— ” Alma pauses.

My gaze flickers to her face. I sigh, shaking my head.

“ Alma. ”

“ Did you...hear everything? ” She whispers, her arms folding around her chest.

“ I did. ” I nod, and glance at Tristin again. “ and you are right. I know your help comes with a price and I will pay it. I will not run away from this. ”

A frown etches between his brows, his eyes darkening. “ You should go to your room. ”

“ Tristin, let her go. She shouldn't get involved. Nothing is her fault. ” Alma whispers, a look of guilt displayed on her face.

My chest tightens. This woman...even after what I heard...how can she take my side?

“ Alma. ” My eyes soften. “ You don't know this but I...am very much involved. The people that hurt you have hurt me all the same. ”

The image of blood and pain flashes across my mind, making me swallow.

“ I will help. In whatever way is necessary. ” I tell them honestly.

“ Tristin! You— ” Alma starts again but Tristin doesn't let her speak.

“ Mom. ” He glances at her from over his shoulder. “ You heard her. If she doesn't mind, you shouldn't either. We are not guilty towards any Whitlock. ”

Alma presses her lips in a thin line, her worried eyes moving towards me. It feels like she is trying to say something to me—something I can't understand.

My heart misses a beat. She appears scared for some reason, as if she wants me to run away from here. 1

Idiotically, I refuse to take up that warning and leave this place. I am already in hell, what more can happen to me?

"Fine." Alma nods slowly and turns away sharply. "but I will not be a part of whatever games you play, son."

I watch as she leaves the area, never glancing back or stopping.

"I...escaped Ethan only to get caught in your trap, right?" I whisper, shifting my attention to the tall man.

The frown between his brows smoothens. Tristin's eyes lower to my wobbling chin before meeting my gaze again.

"What you want, you can't achieve without losing something, Little Butterfly." He says, in a hoarse voice.

I nod, my hands clenching by my side. "Did you lie to me, Tristin? About anything?" 1

As I scan his face and his body, I find him become a mask of emotionlessness.

His lack of emotions should have scared me away the first day, but it's what brought me into this house.

He doesn't show good emotions. But he doesn't show hate either. I don't need to tiptoe around him.

"No." Tristin states, his tone firm.

“ Good. ” I whisper, unclenching my fists. “ do whatever you want with me, but don’t lie. Don’t...make a fool out of me. If you...can do just that...I will be by your side willingly and do whatever you want, Tristin. ”

A brief pause of silence ensues as he stares at me. Finally, something flickers across his gaze—a fleeting emotion that he masks masterfully in a mere moment.

The temperature drops in the room as we stare at each other. My heartbeat speeds up, leaving me waiting for a response but he doesn’t give any.

Sighing, I turn away from him again and climb the stairs.

“ I won’t hurt you. ” His voice chases me to the top of the stairs.

“ Huh? ” I halt, facing him.

Our eyes meet as he cranes his neck to look up at me. I can’t help but notice the eagerness in his eyes.

“ I won’t hurt you like they did. ” Tristin repeats. 1

A shiver runs down my spine. I tighten my hold over the railing.

Opening my mouth, I tell him that I don’t believe that...but something in his eyes makes me stop.

I sigh. “ I want you to do something for me. ”

Tristin’s questioning gaze remains on me, making me nervous. 1

“ I have something I want you to send to the news channels. A gift



for the Calders and Whitlocks. * My lips curl in a smirk.



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