

Come Home

Grace

"Come home with me, Grace. Come home and I will make it up to you." He whispers, his eyes holding the longing, and plead.

For a second there, my heart stops beating. My eyes search his gaze, now gentle, and focused solely on me.

Didn't I always want this? For Ethan to push Lily aside and reach me for once? I think.

Then, I burst out laughing. "Have you gone deaf on top of dumb, Ethan? Did you hear what I said, and do you hear yourself now? Come home? What home?"

"Grace—" He takes another step closer.

"Leave me." I whisper, interrupting him. "and sign the papers, Ethan. I want nothing to do with you. Besides, you already got what you wanted from me, right? You took my grandma's inheritance and got control over the Whitlock Corp. Now you are unstoppable."

"No!" Ethan, grip tightens on my arm. "I don't want anything from you! Just come home, okay? I will return it to you. I will give you anything. I will forget you cheated on me and let you—"

"Are you serious right now?!" I scoff, struggling to break free. "Are you this stupid?! I never cheated on you. It was all your Lily's doing. She..."

I stop myself mid-sentence. Why should I bother? He didn't believe me in the past so why must I repeat the history again.

My heart clenches as I stop fighting his grip and look into his eyes. "I

will not stop here. The longer you refuse to leave me alone, the more you and your Lily will suffer."

" Grace, why must you do this to me? I just loved Ethan so much. I am so sorry. I was not thinking right. I am so sorry." Lily drops on her knees beside Ethan, drawing my attention to her. " After everything I endured, I had lost the ability to think clearly. Sebastian, my ex-husband. He—He, Grace, he made my life hell. You can not imagine how I suffered...away from you all. I am so—"

Before I can register it, Tristin steps in my line of sight, his back to me and his eyes looking down at Lily's crying face coldly.

" How? " He asks, his voice deep and low.

People have gathered around, recording the whole ordeal while the restaurant staff is stopping them. Once again, I have become a subject of people's gossip but I can't focus on it as I stare at Tristin.

" You know how! " Lily cries out. " He beat me, chained me to the bed, starved me for days on end."

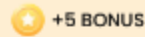
Tristin hums and crouches in front of her. My breath hitches when bitter anger flashes across his eyes

" Roberto, step away from her!" Ethan growls to my surprise and releases my arm.

Numbly, I glance at the spot he held until now and then lift my head to see his attention fixed on Lily.

" He beat you, yet you have no marks. He chained you to the bed, yet you bear no scars. He starved, yet you returned looking healthy and happy? " Tristin's icy tone makes me look at him.

Lily's tears stop as she looks taken aback by Tristin's comment. The



people around us whisper about her, her accusations and her state that doesn't match it.

"He was careful to not—to not leave permanent marks." She stammers.

"Do abused, innocent women break others homes, Lily? Do they hurt their sisters and kill innocent children?" Tristin tilts his head to the side.

Tears leak out of Lily's eyes again. She glances towards Ethan, pleading for help.

"I was—was not thinking straight. I just wanted Ethan by my side. I was so scared and I thought only he could protect me. I never wanted to be like this. You know me Ethan. You know I have always loved you and Grace and I am not cold-hearted." She sobs.

And as always, Ethan looks reluctant to either reach out to her or stay put. Given that he is not sparing me a glance now, I know the desire to reach out tops the urge to stay put.

Unwantedly, the old emotions of inferiority return with full force, making me take a hesitant step back.

Even after knowing she killed his child, he still wants to reach out to her.

What else was I expecting? I knew he will never stop that. That's why I went to the police, right?

Then, why must I feel this pain again?

I thought I was already over it...

"I like how you act." Tristin chuckles, drawing me out of the trance. "

Keep it up for as long as you can."

" I know you blame me for Sebastian— "

" Don't take his name!" The facade of calmness drops, leaving Tristin hissing angrily. " Or I will make the consequence worse for you, Lily Whitlock."

Ethan loses the battle within himself and steps between Tristin and Lily. " You think you can threaten her and get away with it? Soon, you are going down Tristin Roberto and— "

" Be a man first, Ethan." Tristin rises to his height, staring at him coolly.

Ethan steps forth threateningly but Lily pulls him back. " No. No, please, Ethan. I am so scared."

Her trembling body and soft cries make this act so real.

" You have a wife yet you protect another woman instead of her. You know this woman killed your child yet you stand by her side as her shield. You are pathetic. I don't even need to worry about you because you will always be less of a man than any of my enemies. " Tristin scoffs before turning to me.

Silence falls in the restaurant. I see Ethan's eyes shifting from Tristin to me, holding surprise.

" Grace." He whispers, stepping towards me but Lily clings to his arm, keeping him away from me.

" That's where you belong, Ethan. With a woman who abandoned you on the altar because you were nothing. With a liar, cheater and murderer! " I roll my eyes, reigning in the emotions.

"It's not like this. I do not—"

"Lily Whitlock." Two police officers push past the crowd and stop beside them.

Surprised, Lily faces them. "that's me."

One of them steps closer and states. "Ms. Whitlock. You are under arrest for charges of attempted murder on Grace Whitlock."

They are saying something else too, but my mind is keenly focused on Ethan's changing expressions. He frowns, then glares at me.

"Grace, how could you? Tell them it's not true." Lily shrieks.

My gaze moves towards her. My lips curl from the corners, wider and wider until I am grinning like she did to me the day she pushed me.

"Why, sister? Did you think I will not do this to you no matter what you do to me?"

Ethan comes to her rescue instantly. "Grace, you know Lily didn't want to—"

"Next, I am going to sue you for drugging me and trying to get me raped. I have proof for that as well." My grin widens more, until my lips hurt and my eyes burn. "I am going to bring things to light slowly, one by one, so the moment you recover from the last hit, the next pain is awaiting you."

"Grace." Ethan narrows his eyes.

"And you Ethan Calder. Know this. It won't end unless you divorce me." I hiss, turning my back to them.

I feel Ethan rushing towards me but Tristin blocks his path and grabs

+5 BONUS

my wrist. "Let's go home, Little Butterfly. I will get you something better to eat." 2

I nod, my eyes meeting his soft gaze. The look he gives me is always different from those dangerous looks he gives others. Somehow, I can't help but notice that. 1



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