

Chapter 0005

Grace

“Right here,” I told George as we arrived in front of Darkwood Apartments.

Eason and I kept an apartment open for when we needed to escape from clubs, and bars in the middle of the night, and were too drunk to trust ourselves to make it home. Eason got more use out of it than I ever had, but I still had a key.

“Thank you, George.”

I stepped out of the car with a grateful smile and hurried inside, feigning urgency. When I was on the upper floors where the windows were mirrored, I looked down until I saw George drive off and sighed before shuffling my way up the stairs to the apartment. Then, I called Eason.

He laughed. “We haven’t had an SOS in a long time. You okay?”

“I’m here. Thank you... I’m never going out again.”

“What?” Eason asked. “That’s not acceptable birthday girl.”

“And I’m selling this dress at the first opportunity.”

He gasped. “Don’t you dare! I handpicked that dress for you and it makes your ass look fantastic. It would be such a waste.”

I scoffed and kicked off my heels. “It attracted a cheating scumbag...”

“Was he handsome?”

“Eason! That’s not--”

“What? You’re a free woman. How do you know he was a cheating scumbag?”

“His mate bond was perfectly intact.”

He hummed. “Fine, sore spot. Throw him back in the sea and go fishing again.”

“Not happening.” I sank onto the couch, pouting. “I went back to his hotel.”

He cheered in my ear. “There’s my Grace! You can’t let one bad catch put you off getting back out there.”

I shook my head. “I’m horny, but I’m also too angry and disappointed to want to get off.”

“Ah, it’s hard having a moral compass. Well, at least enjoy the bathtub and the quiet for the night. There’s food and everything there. Little Bit One and Two will hang in there until Sunday if you want the weekend.”

“I couldn’t—”

“I’m offering. You can. You will, so don’t argue.”

I smiled and shook my head. “Thanks, Eason. I’ll... I’ll see you on Sunday. I love you.”

“Love you, too.”

I hung up as tears stung my eyes. I went to the window and looked out at the lights of the city, feeling worse than ever. The memories of the night crashed down on me. The way he held me close. The taste of his mouth on mine, the heat of his desire threatening to burn me up from the inside. I shivered and then scowled at my reflection.

I pushed away the guilt and the deep stab of grief that cut through me. It wasn’t my fault he was a cheater. I couldn’t have known he was a cheater. Up until that point, it had been everything that I had needed. Memories of my younger self, carefree and full of passion, flashed before my eyes. Cheater or not, he’d brought that part of me out when I thought it was completely gone, so while he was despicable, I couldn’t completely regret the night.

I took a deep breath and headed to the bathroom. I carefully slipped out of the dress. It was a gorgeous dress, but I needed the money. Eason would be upset, but when he found out about everything that had been going on, he’d understand. I dropped the dress into the clothes bin and stripped out of my underwear.

I stepped into the shower, hoping the water would wash away the tangled mess of emotions. The hot droplets cascaded over my body, but my mind was still racing as I thought about tonight and what would await me on Monday. I wanted the distraction. I’d gotten it. Now it was time to focus on the path forward. The Winter Moon Festival was coming up. Some werewolf or lycan woman would want to go out feeling as sexy as Charles had made me feel. I hoped that they’d pay top dollar for it too.

Monday came too quickly. I didn’t even remember the blur of trying to take back all Cecil and Richard’s presents. I had barely made it inside the 60-day return window, so there was a bit more space on my credit cards, but not enough to celebrate. The threat of foreclosure that had been stuck in my mailbox felt like it was burning a hole in my jacket as I boarded the bus a few miles from my house, headed to Wolfe Medical’s headquarters. Eason was going to flip when he found out, but if I could just scrape together enough money and plead enough, maybe I wouldn’t have to tell him. I scrolled through the insurance company’s catalog of everything in the house and worried my lip. Most of the furniture that had been in the house since I was a kid was tucked in the attic. I could see everything that I’d bought since I married Devin. I didn’t know where it all came from, but it all told had to be enough to cover things.

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