

Occasional Glances

Bella

I was heading to work at the City Hospital. As I walked across the street, I sensed someone's eyes on me. I stopped and looked around the busy street, but I couldn't see anyone. I didn't know why, but these days, I often felt like someone was secretly watching me. Maybe I was imaginig things, but I couldn't get rid of this feeling.

I picked up my pace and hurried toward the hospital. Once I entered the hospital, I felt relieved. After calming down, I went back to my tasks for the day.

After a long day, I left the consultation room, my mind still preoccupied with whether what had happened earlier in the morning was just my imagination. The uorescent lights in the hospital corridor buzzed above me, creating a familiar environment, but the strange feeling persisted.

"Bella!" Amid the muted hum of activity around me, the clear sound of my name came from behind as Dr. Costa's voice caught my attention, even though I was determined to stay focused ahead and ignore him.

Dr. Costa was my senior and recently joined the City Hospital. I had assisted him a few times. He was a very nice and handsome man, and a very successful surgeon. Any girl would consider herself lucky if he pursued her. But the problem was, I didn't trust anyone so soon. I had given him hints that I needed time and space, but he kept chasing after me. Because of his constant pestering, I began to avoid him.

So, today I again chose to ignore him and kept walking.

I heard his footsteps getting closer behind me, and they quickened as he caught up.

"Dr. Bella!" The second call came with a gentle yet persistent touch on my arm. Reluctantly, I came to a stop, my gaze shifting to meet his intense, dark eyes. Dr. Costa stood beside me, his tall gure casting an intimidating shadow.

"Dr. Bella, how much longer do you plan to keep ignoring me?" His voice carried both curiosity and frustration.

I let out a sigh.

"I'm not intentionally ignoring you, Dr. Costa," I replied softly. Shifting my weight from one foot to the other, I felt the urge to smooth out the imaginary wrinkles on my lab coat.

"Really?" His voice was tinged with skepticism. His dark hair was slightly disheveled as if his mind had been preoccupied while he followed behind me.

"Why haven't you been talking to me since I invited you to dinner?" His words carried a gentle accusation.

"Dr. Costa," I started, my voice wavering just slightly. "I'm not ignoring you. I'm... busy." The last word slipped out with a hint of exasperation.

His gaze remained unyielding, his eyes seeming to penetrate through my carefully constructed façade.

"Bella, call me Orlando," he said, his voice softening. The use of my rst name felt too casual and intimate.

"Dr. Costa," I began again. "I don't go on dates soon after getting to know each other. For me it... takes time to trust someone. I've already told you." I reminded him. He had been persistently showing his interest in me. After the illusionary vision I started seeing following my accident three years ago, I couldn't conde in someone enough to share my life with them.

"I understand, Bella," he said, his voice carrying sincerity and depth. "I'm not asking you to date me. But we can go out for dinner or lunch as friends."

A heavy sigh escaped my lips, caught between a whirlwind of thoughts and the burden of uncertainty.

"I don't really know anyone in this city, and I enjoy your company. Having dinner with a friend who makes you smile isn't a bad idea," he said, his casual shrug masking the underlying vulnerability in his words. I felt bad about continuing to reject him. I knew how it felt to be alone in a new city.

"Alright, I'll think about it," I replied hesitantly.

A slow smile spread across his face.

"Thank you for giving me a chance," he replied, the sincerity in his voice touching something within me. "How about grabbing a coffee with me? I'm really craving one right now," he chuckled, his laughter a soothing melody that brought a genuine smile to my face.

"Hmm, let me check with Dr. Sarah," I responded, thinking of my friend. "If I go for coffee without her and she nds out, she'll probably kill me."

Dr. Sarah was both my colleague and a close friend.

His laughter lled the air, leaving behind a pleasant echo even after the sound had faded.

"You and Dr. Sarah are really close, aren't you?" he remarked, and his observation was correct.

"Yes, she's one of the few people I trust," I armed, smiling.

"You can trust me too, Bella. I promise I'll never betray your trust," he leaned in slightly as he spoke, his proximity creating both comfort and unease.

Averting my eyes, I felt my cheeks ush, the intensity of his gaze leaving me feeling exposed. I turned my head, nding solace in the familiarity of my surroundings. A quick glance at my watch conrmed that it was time to meet Sarah in the lobby.

"I will just be back," I excused as I went to search for Sarah, the distant sound of Orlando's soft chuckle fading into the background.

But then, like lightning in a clear sky, a gure caught my attention. My heart skipped a beat, and time seemed to slow as recognition washed over me. He was walking away, each step carrying him farther from me.

Vincenzo?!

"Vin!" I called out with urgency as I picked up my pace.

However, he was already quite a distance away. I watched, furrowing in confusion, as he disappeared around the corner. However, his tense shoulders and clenched sts at his sides did not go unnoticed. He looked... upset. Why was he angry?

"Bella!" Sarah's voice rang out like a burst of sunshine, her sudden presence catching me off guard. "Guess what?!" she exclaimed, a spark of excitement dancing in her eyes.

I raised a casual shoulder in response, intrigued by her sudden enthusiasm.

"What?!" I inquired with curiosity and casualness.

A triumphant sparkle lit up her expression as she displayed two disposable coffee cups in her hands.

"I was near the reception area, and Vincenzo Leonardi came," she breathed out. "Vincenzo Leonardi!" she repeated his name, sighing, as she touched her chest. "And he handed me two coffees!" She said with a mix of disbelief and joy in her voice as her excited squeal seemed to reverberate through the air. "Could you even believe it?!" she sighed dreamily, her gaze far-off as if she had already wandered into a romantic daydream.

I managed only a faint smile, my thoughts drifting to the exit where he had vanished just moments ago. Why did he leave without even a word and leave two coffees? My mind struggled to unravel the threads of his actions, nding it dicult to decode the mysterious puzzle that was Vincenzo Leonardi. He seemed too complex to understand.

I shook my head slightly, redirecting my attention to Sarah, who was still engrossed in her exciting story.

"Hey, Dr. Costa invited us to join him for coffee," I interjected gently, steering the conversation in a new direction.

A mischievous grin appeared on her lips, and her expression turned teasing.

"You mean he invited you to have coffee with him," she quipped, her tone playfully suggestive.

I shook my head, not willing to engage in her teasing.

"I won't go without you," I stated rmly.

Sarah burst into giggles.

"Don't worry, sweetheart. You're in safe hands. He seemed like a true gentleman," she winked at me with a naughty expression on her face.

I gave her a skeptical look, raising an eyebrow in question.

"Whether he's a gentleman or not, I'm not going alone," I responded, my determination rm.

With a mischievous sparkle in her eyes, Sarah leaned in closer.

"Okay, okay, I promise I'll be your wing-woman," she declared, a playful grin tugging at her lips as her voice lowered to a conspiratorial whisper.

I rolled my eyes at her playfulness before letting out a soft sigh.

"Enough, Sarah. Just come with me," I scolded in a hushed tone, though a small smile formed on my lips.

Side by side, we walked through the hospital corridors. Orlando was still waiting for me, standing in the same spot. We headed towards the bustling cafeteria, the air lled with Sarah's chatter as she engaged in animated conversation with Orlando. I couldn't help but feel relieved that she was taking the lead in this interaction. However, his occasional glances in my direction made me somewhat uneasy.