



17 Chapter SEVENTEEN

Theme: Meeting the stranger 1

(FLASHBACK TO TEN YEARS AGO)

WINSLOW, ARIZONA.

(NIGHT TIME: BY BEACH)

Ivy Rivera settled by the beach, the water was calmer, warmer and it doesn't make her think about everything - Anything. Ivy decided that she wasn't going to let everything her mother said bother her though she was badly hurt. The thought foremost in her mind as she walked to where the water met the sand. Though the dark blue water was cold-nearly frigid, but she enjoyed the feel of it tickling her toes, licking at her ankles. The sand squished beneath her heels, then between her toes as the water receded, before her prints washed away with each new waves. For a minute, she wished everything about her could be washed away as easily. But no that wasn't true - such a wish would never come true. It will never happen.

Thought of leaving town flashed through her mind but she cut the thought off before it could take hold. Damn this town and every memories it evoked. No matter how hard things had been, or how things will be, Ivy told herself three



things she was going to work hard on to give her children, "Stability, Security and Unconditional love". These three things in which her parents never gave her. Three things she swore by the beach that her child - or children- will never do without.

A large wave rolled onto the beach, soaking Ivy to her knees and spraying up to her thighs and stomach. Ivy laughed, a gasping, sucking kind of sound as she tried to ignore the bone yarning cold that had invaded at the first brush of the water. Though it was cold, it felt good just to throw her troubles into the surface and let them roll a little farther out to the sea.

For Ace Clark, the drive to the beach seemed to take forever. Though sad that he couldn't find Ivy, but the fact that he would be alone - all by himself again made him sadder. The taxi man pulled up in front of the beach house and Ace slide out of the car and gave him instructions to go back to the hotel to get a fare. The driver obliged since Ace had explained things to him before getting into his car, and he drove away.

Ace Clark bounded up the steps and prepared to settle for sole real wine but he changed his mind and decided to take a walk to the beach. He walked down the beach, only to find a ladylike figure laughing and playing by the



beach. Butterflies formed in his stomach and he laughed a little at how pretty the figure looked by the beach.

"Who is she?" Ace chuckled at the playful figure playing with waters.

He moved closer and saw a lady with a blond hair, she was dressed in a purple tank top and a pair of faded jeans and her feet were bare. Ace Clark was sure he had seen this figure before.

Ivy watched the ebb and flow of the waves, savoring the feel of the cold water against her skin. She moved far a bit from the water and settled down again on the sand. Ivy closed her eyes tight and began to hummed her favorite west life song.

Ace Clark figured who she was when he got closer. "Oh..this girl..." He mumbled with a knowing look on his face and hastened his step just to settle right beside her.

He forgot what name they had called her at the hotel.

"You must be having so much fun," Ace Clark said, looking at Ivy as he sat next to her.

Ivy reopened her eyes quickly, startled at hearing someone's voice. At first she thought she was hallucinating but then she turned her face and was surprised to see Ace Clark.



"Oh..you..are the guy from the hotel?" Ivy stuttered with recognition on her face.

"Yes." Ace replied.

"Alright. It..is nice to meet you." Ivy forced a smile on her face.

"Likewise, but I didn't get the chance to apologize properly for causing you trouble with your family." Ace Clark spoke calmly.

"It's nothing. You..you..don't..need to apologize." Ivy stood up ready to leave.

"You are leaving?" Ace Clark asked.

Ivy hummed a positive response.

Ace Clark stood up too and they both stood face to chest. "Did I interrupted your special moments?" He asked.

"Oh no..no not all. It's pretty late..I don't want my mom saying that I am keeping late nights again." Bye." She rushed out her words and tried to leave but Ace grabbed her upper arm.

He didn't know why she was in a rush to leave. Perhaps is it because he was right there with her? Ace Clark couldn't help but wonder.

"Speaking of your mother, why did she treats you like that earlier on?" Ace Clark asked.

Ivy whispered to herself as she looked away



from him. "Are you not from this town?"

"Pardon?"

"Oh! Not you..I just remembered something very important. So I guess I have to go ahead now." She avoided answering his question.

"No..no.." Ace blocked her pathway. "I want have a chat with you. As a matter of fact I can tell that you also need someone to talk to about what's bothering you."

She jerked free from Ace's hold on her right upper arm. "No it is not like that. What you saw earlier is not what you are thinking, my mom is not a bad person. She just doesn't like it when..we ruin people's stuff. Yeah that's it." She forced a smile on her face so Ace would believe her but he didn't buy it.

In those eyes he could see pains as he stared into them.

"But your aunt doesn't seem to like what you mom said to you." He moved closer to her but she stepped backward.

"Don't get me wrong...." She stepped backward again trying to avoid Ace.

Ace couldn't help but chuckle at her attitude to get away from him. "Hey relax I am not a bad person. I just want to have a chat with you that's



all. And you can trust that I am not some serial killer or anything bad that you can ever imagine." His eyes studied her and she relaxed a bit.

"I am Ace, and you are?" He waited for her to fill in her name.

"Bethany." She lied.

But part of her was happy that at least someone came to her and wants to have a chat with her. Someone wants to know about her problems and someone asked her to trust him. But the other part of her told her not to allow him in, it warned her not to tell him about her worries and not to trust.

"Bethany? Ace Clark repeated. "It is a nice name. And nice to meet you again." He stretched out his hand towards her for an handshake.

She shook hands with him but let go within seconds.

"So you like the beach?" Ace Clark asked as they both turned to look at the vast area of waters.

She sighed, deciding to spend just a little time with the man she barely knew. "Yes, it is like a place of comfort for me. I mean..whenever I am here I let go of my troubles to the sea." She admitted.



"Really? So do you mind sharing those troubles with me too? Who knows I might help you." Ace Clark joked.

She couldn't help but smile heartily at his words. "You think you can do that for me?" She looked up at him.

"Yes and I think you look prettier whenever you smile." Ace complimented her.

Her cheeks turned pink and she didn't like the effects he was having on her. "That's not true...I am not anywhere near being pretty." She looked away quickly.

"But that's the truth. You just don't want to accept that you are really pretty." Ace added.

A flush crept up at her face again.

"Now look at you.." Ace laughed.

"What?" She smiled.

"You are blushing." Ace replied and they both laughed.

"No, I am not blushing." She turned her face away from him again.

This was her first time of hearing someone say that she was pretty when she had always wondered if she was even close to having a good look as a woman. Why? The girl from the wrong



side of the river always go around looking sad and downcast.

"You still don't want to tell me about your troubles? Come on, let me be your sea just for tonight." Ace persuaded her to open up to him.

Her face turned serious again. "It is not something you should worry about." She replied digging her right toes into the wet sand.

Ace decided not to pester her about it. "If you don't want to share your problems then why don't we play for sometime before you leave? Don't worry I will take you back home if it is too late."

"No! You can't take me home!" She objected in a raised tone until she realized that she just over reacted.

Even Ace Clark was taken aback by her sudden outburst.