



I am Here

Grace

After surviving Mr. Costello's taunts and jabs for the rest of the day, I feel like fainting. The side of my head has gone numb by the time I step out of the tall tower.

To add to my misery, it's raining. Workers rush to their cars in the parking or hail cabs to get home while I stand in front of the tower, looking around.

My phone buzzes in my hand, making me sigh and glance at the message. As expected, it's Lily.

She could never stop herself from texting me to meet after watching the video that was circulating everywhere.

I open her texts and read them.

—We are sisters, Grace. How can you stoop so low as you try to harm my reputation?

I roll my eyes at the tone she used. She still thinks she can manipulate me.

The next text reads: I am ready to forgive you if you come over and meet at Club Euphoria at 8. I have made reservations in the VIP room. Just tell them my name and they will lead you up.

I go over the two texts numerous times. Hate brews in my heart, while anger threatens to take over me.



This is the same tactic she used to lure me into her trap before. The last time I went to the location she sent, a man was already waiting for me there. I barely escaped from getting assaulted by him.

Back then, I didn't believe Lily did it deliberately. She said the staff led me to the wrong room and it was their fault. I was so stupid that I believed a random man who didn't know me, who barely got to even glance my way would try to force his way with me out of nowhere.

Because I was so ashamed of what happened, I couldn't even tell Ethan about it or report the man.

And the truth came out only when she displayed those false pictures at her birthday party.

That day, I was not only livid with her. I hated myself too. How could I fall for such lousy lies? How was it so easy to fool me? 1

I type a quick reply to her: Will be there at 8.

The two ticks beside the message let me know that she read it already.

I clench the phone tightly between my hand and look up.

Before I can step forth and find my way to the club, a familiar black car comes to a halt in front of me, blocking my path.

Some workers around me gasp, before gossiping among themselves.

" It's the CEO's car, right? "

" What is the CEO doing here? "

A frown etches between my brows. I glare at the tinted glass that rolls down a little.

"Get in." Blue eyes find their way to me as he commands.

"I—"

"Get in, Grace." His voice is stern and demanding.

I look around, at the women and men staring at me—some are surprised, while some are looking me up and down with a hateful look in their eyes.

Gulping, I rush to the backseat and slip inside before it gets more awkward. As soon as I sit, the car zooms away, leaving the peering eyes behind.

"Tristin." I squeal, facing him, only to find him already busy reading a file.

My frown deepens. "I told you I don't want to cause a scene. I wanted to work as a regular employee instead of announcing to everyone that I am here because of you."

"You are working as a regular employee." He states, without sparing me a glance.

"Do you provide pick and drop service to all regular employees?" I scoff, folding my arms across my chest.

"I can if you want me to." His voice is static, with no emotions whatsoever.



I gawk at him, at a loss of words to continue this conversation.
What's the need for such weird words between us?

" Why would you do something I want you to do? " I mumble under my breath, my heartbeat escalating.

" Because... " Tristin lifts his head, his gaze cutting to mine intensely.
" I want to keep you on my side willingly. "

Willingly. My heart misses a beat.

If he had told this to someone else, she might have been smitten with these cheesy words. But all I can focus on is the simple term—willingly.

What happens if I don't remain on his side willingly? The question echoes in my mind as our eyes remain locked.

" Where did she ask you to meet her? " His deep voice pulls me out of the trance.

I break eye contact and look out the window first. " At the Euphoria Club. I have to get there by 8. "

" Luca. Take us to the Euphoria Club. " Tristin calls his man who is driving the car.

" Yes, Boss. " He replies curtly.

" Why are you coming along? " I question curiously.

" Are you going like this? " Tristin asks instead of answering me.

" Like what? " I look down at my clothes, a blouse and a skirt with



heels. What's wrong with it?

My gaze is drawn towards his face as I try to find what's wrong.
Tristin leans in and pulls the ponytail free from my hair.

I yelp, touching my aching scalp. My eyes glare at him. " why did you do that? "

" Do you always appear in front of Lily like this and make a fool out of yourself? What do you want to show her? That you are suffering and working full-time to support yourself after they kicked you out? "
Tristin's eyes narrow on me.

" For your information, they didn't kick me out. I left. And what's wrong with working? " I purse my lips.

Tristin looks at me as if he can't believe he is having this conversation with me or as if I am too dumb to understand what he is trying to say to me.

" You are impossible, Little Butterfly. " He nods to himself.

" What? Should I wear a short dress, get a handsome man to accompany me, and dance my way to her? " I retort, lifting my brows. 1

An awkward silence hangs in the air. His eyes narrow some more before he sighs exaggeratedly and looks away.

I do the same. I should think before I speak.

" You are so different. I like it. " I hear him mumble under his breath.

" What did you say? " My ears perk up.

" Nothing to you. " Tristin leans back and goes back to reading his document.

My heart threatens to beat out of my chest as I direct my gaze to the road again. Is Tristin trying to trap me in another one of his schemes? Why would he like anything about me?

And...

I swallow, slipping closer to the door. What is this weird energy between us, a heavy tension that makes it hard for me to stay in the same space as him?

I steal a glance at his side profile before sighing to myself. Pushing the questions at the back of my mind, I focus on the way to the club, all the while flinching every time he flips a paper.

Soon, we are outside the club and I can finally understand what Tristin was talking about. The club is a high-end place where people come, dressed to their best, and my basic attire is not fit to even pass me as a staff member inside there.

But I shouldn't care. I can't waste my time with these formalities and miss the chance to pull Lily down.

I open the door. " Thanks for the ride. I will return to your home when I am— "

" I am waiting here. " Tristin interrupts in his raspy voice.

" What? " I breathe, freezing on my way out of the car.

" I am waiting here, Grace. If something goes wrong, all you have to



do is to call me and I will be there. My number is already on your contact list. " He says, his voice deep and dismissive.

The ground beneath my feet turns to mush. I struggle to stay inside or get out or form any coherent thoughts. 1

" Don't you... " A lump forms in my throat. " Don't you have important work to do? Why waste your time on me? "

" I am here. I will not leave without you. " Tristin asserts, instead of answering me.

I can't help but look his way. The moment my eyes meet his steady gaze, assuring and soothing, my hold tightens over the door.

I know he is acting. I know he is not what he shows me. I know everything.

But I can't stop myself from feeling this strange comfort in my chest. To have someone wait on me, to make sure I am alright, even if it's a beautiful lie...it still warms my cold heart.

I nod at him reluctantly and walk away from before I forget who he is again.

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