

Abandon

Grace

The next morning, I come out of my room, wearing another one of a grey pencil skirt and a white blouse sent by Alma. But, it fits me well now, instead of being painfully tight.

Lost in my own thoughts, I walk down the stairs only to see Alma standing at the end of them, staring up at me.

" Grace. " Alma calls me out and nods. " I heard about your sister on the news. "

My body freezes on the second last stair as I look at her. Her eyes are soft, but there is a lingering wariness in them, which became a part of them after she realized that I am Grace Whitlock.

" I— "

" I didn't know they had done something like this to you before. Is that why you are staying with us? " She interrupts me as if she can't bother to hear what I have to say to her.

My cheeks heat up. " Uh—Yes, Alma. But as I said, it's only temporary and— "

" I don't mind, Grace. This house is big enough for us to not cross paths even if we stay under the same roof. " She cuts me again.

I press my lips in a thin line and swallow the little hurt I felt. My hands clench by my side while I wait for her to speak and let me leave.

" You are a married woman, with a complicated history. " She starts, her brows raised.

I nod silently. There is no doubt about it. I do have a complicated history.

" I just want to tell you that you can stay as long as you want, but... " She steps closer and lowers her voice. " Please, stay away from Tristin. "

My heart skips a beat. I stare at her, completely taken aback by her assumption.

" Alma, there is nothing like that between Tristin and me. We just have a mutual goal and once our deal ends, I will leave quietly. " I defend myself.

But it doesn't seem to work. Alma looks at me like she doesn't believe a single word coming out of my mouth.

After all, I am a Whitlock and share blood with Lily.

My heart sinks. " Alma, I really— "

" You two spent a night in the same room at a club's VIP rooms. You come home with him late. You go on dinners with him. You even work in his office now. " Her voice is still soft, but there is an edge to her words.

How does she know about the club?

I gasp in surprise but then realize that she must have her eyes and ears around Tristin. She belongs to the rich society, after all.

In a moment, it feels like I have been downgraded to a bitch, someone who is married yet going after another single man.

Hurt swells inside my chest as my mouth dries and I find myself at a loss of words.

" I let my elder son get together with a Whitlock once. " She whispers, her eyes moistening with unshed tears. " she took him and never returned him. He is gone. She was also like you, taken, yet claimed to love my son more than life. "

My knees grow weak. I stay silent, listening to every word she has to say.

Sometimes, you can't help but feel guilty for things your siblings or parents have done. It's like shared guilt, like shared blood, something that runs in your veins. [1](#)

" Tristin is all I have got now. I have been separated from him for half his life. I can not bear it anymore. So, please, ask for anything you want, stay as long as you need, take everything you require from me, but leave my son alone. " Her voice carries a plea, a desperate call for me to disappear from Tristin's life. [1](#)

How do I make her understand that I am not in her son's life in any way?

I am incapable of loving someone again or using someone for anything they are worth.

Quietly, I nod in understanding and grab her trembling hands. I lost my baby, someone who was not even born. Yet I felt his or her loss, and the world flipped in my view, leaving me writhing and pleading

for any possible power to bring my child back to me.

I can understand her loss and fear—even if a little, I can understand Alma.

“ I promise you, Alma. I will never do what you are thinking. Like you said, I am a married woman, and I am not suitable for your son. Besides, I have no feelings or motives for him. He is someone great, worthy of a girl who will love him wholeheartedly and he will get that one day. ” I whisper, assuring her. “ You can trust me on this. Once I am done here, I will disappear from your world like I never existed. You will never see me again, and it will be the same for Tristin. ” 1

“ You will not go back on your word, right? ” Fear reflects in her moist eyes.

I smile softly, and pull my hands to my side. “ Like I said, you have nothing to worry about. ”

Alma nods, smiling back at me. “ Thank you. And I will trust you this time. Something inside me believes that you are not like Lily. You will not deceive me or hurt my family. I am counting on that belief, Grace. Please, don’t let me down. ”

I shake my head. “ I won’t. I promise. ”

She nods again and wipes the corners of her eyes. “ I trust you. Come and have breakfast before you leave. ”

“ No thanks, Alma. I don’t feel like eating. ” I shake my head. “ Let me take my leave now. ”

She doesn’t push me and so I walk towards the main door. Just when I am about to step out, I hear her voice again.

"Tristin."

I glance over my shoulder, at the mother-son duo. When Alma looks at Tristin, her eyes shine the brightest as if he is capable of taking away all her sorrows and worries. 1

I smile, at the picture they paint, of a perfect family where everyone loves and cares for each other.

I never had that. And I don't think I ever will.

So...what was the point of struggling this hard?

I shake my head and step out of the main door, to leave them alone.

I have never given it a thought before. But, I think there is nothing in life for me. No family, no love, no future.

There is just one desire left.

When I die, I should die as just Grace. Not Grace Whitlock or Grace Calder.

Like they abandoned me, I will abandon them and then abandon this world to be with my child. That way, Alma will not have to worry about me ever again.