

Truth or Lie

Grace

" Did you... " I swallow the lump in my throat to prepare myself for asking the terrifying question. " ...try to kill Tristin? "

Ethan's hand falls by his side as a cold look flashes across his droopy eyes. " he is all you care about... "

" Did you? " My chin wobbles. " did you do it because of me? "

Ethan stares into my eyes. I don't know what happens, but in that moment, the look in his eyes becomes detached and it feels like we have finally chosen a separate path at the crossroads.

We are no longer lurking on the edges, desperately trying to stick together. Now we know, there is no going back. Maybe, we knew, when I tried to kill him. Maybe he realized the truth when he almost ended up dead.

" No. " Ethan shakes his head and looks away from me first. " I had nothing to do with his accident. "

The weight on my shoulders becomes less heavy. The numbness leaves my body and my eyes water.

I have been so scared in there. The voices still ring inside my head. But the thought that haunted me the most was the fact that Tristin might have gotten hurt because of me. 1

" There is no way back, right? " Ethan murmurs, turning his head to the other side.

" You killed our child. There was never a way back from there, Ethan. " I whisper, trying to stop crying.

As long as you are suffering but there is no one around you are familiar with, you continue to feel less affected by the pain. But once you find a familiar face in the crowd, the emotions pour out and it's impossible to put a stop to them, to the tears, to the heartbreak.

Ethan grabs something from the bedside table and turns towards me. I wipe my cheeks and clench my hands on my lap.

It doesn't take me long to recognize the papers. The world slows down again, and other voices disappear.

Ethan's hand holding the pen hovers above the papers. I look up and meet his eyes which are filled with the same detachment.

" If you stay my wife, they will keep forcing me to hurt you. " Ethan says, his voice weak. " You will suffer at the hands of people I can not fight. "

My heart clenches. " No one...hurt me more than you did. No one ever will. "

His eyes freeze, a strange emotion flashing across them before he looks down and signs the papers.

In a single moment, it's done. Suddenly, I remember my thoughts from the day when he was desperate for a divorce.

A signature bound us for life.

A signature broke that vow.

Ethan offers me the papers. With trembling fingers, I sign on my spot and suddenly, the weight crashes down on me again.

With a signature, we were finally pushed on the separate roads. The promises of accompanying each other through health and sickness and happiness and misery and life...proved false.

Words became meaningless just as love did.

I rise from the stool, the signed papers still in my hand, but the pen drops.

" I am...Grace now. " I whisper, moving robotically to get away from Ethan. " Just Grace. "

Before I can turn and leave, Ethan grabs my wrist. Fear grips my heart and I grip the papers harder.

" No. No, don't go back on your word. " I sniffle, shaking my head. " We are done. I don't want to be with you. "

" Grace. " Ethan's voice has become more dreadful.

Shuddering, I clench my teeth and stop myself from running far away from him.

" Tell me the truth one last time. " His whisper puts a stop to my thoughts. " did you ever cheat on me? "

" No. " Tears slide down my cheeks.

Silence follows, but my mind fills with noises. No matter how many times I tell people I didn't do something, no one will ever believe me.

" Did you love me? " He asks.

I turn around and face him. My eyes drop to his hand around my bandaged arm.

Memories flash across my mind. Coming across him on a rainy day, finding solace in the thought of him, yearning for one look from him in secret, finding him on the altar, getting kissed by him for the first time, enduring his anger, fixing everything that Lily broke inside him, making a home with him, getting pregnant for him, fighting for his love.

Years after years, all thoughts, all feelings, all dreams...were consumed by him.

Ethan.

Did I love him?

Our eyes meet, and I smile through the tears.

" No. " I whisper.

Love is not supposed to hurt this much. Love is not supposed to destroy someone.

What I felt for him couldn't be love. It was an unrequited desire to be with him, to be something to him and it crushed everything I held dear. I don't want to call this love now when I know it was a mistake.

Ethan's eyes reflect nothing as if he is as empty as me inside.

His hold loosens over my wrist and I find the chance to leave him

behind. I don't stay even when his face from that night keeps flashing across my mind.

Make me bleed but don't leave me. His words were spoken in a drunken stupor or else...why would he cry for me?

As I walk out of the hospital room, Ethan's family is shouting again. I turn to them and wave the papers in their face.

"No need to concern yourself with me again. Ethan and I are divorced."

Shock takes over them, and I slip away before they can come up with something new.

"Mrs. Calder, Boss wants me to escort you—"

"I am not Mrs. Calder anymore. I am just Grace." I whisper, trying to smile or rub it in Josh's face but I no longer feel the desire to tick him off.

He continues to follow me. I let him drive me to the Roberto manor.

I get a bath and change my clothes into a casual white T-shirt and blue jeans. After inquiring about Tristin's whereabouts, I make my way to the hospital where he is staying.

On my way, I transfer the money I think I owe Tristin for looking after me all this time.

It's the final transaction between us. Someone has gotten to Lily and Ethan let me go which means I mean nothing to Tristin now.

It's time to do what I have been planning. 1