



Live my Life

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Grace

I wince, sensing the soreness between my legs. Even with so many injuries, he was relentless and insatiable.

We ended up having sex in his bedroom again before he finally called Luca and got his wounds bandaged.

I laid there, trying to make sense of things, and he was there, wiping my body with a wet cloth.

I didn't speak, and he didn't push me into anything. In the end, we found ourselves on the same bed.

Now, he is lying beside me, his hand placed so close to mine. My heart is pounding in my chest, refusing to calm down or settle.

"Now, what do we call what happened between us? Is it a one-time thing or what?" I clench the sheets.

"I want you to stay by my side. You can stay in whatever way you want, Little Butterfly. You can be my girlfriend...or my wife. I don't... mind." His hoarse, tired voice echoes in the silent room.

My heart misses a beat. Girlfriend or wife...

Both titles scare me.

And the fact that Alma was terrified of the same thing happening ticks me off even more.

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"Were you really going to jump?" Tristin murmurs, his voice sounding exhausted in the dark.

I pull the sheets to my chin and hum. "Not really. I was just... walking."

I can feel his gaze on me but I refuse to look at him right now.

"Walking on the—"

"Tristin." I sigh. "I did think about killing myself before. It's true. When I was desperate for a divorce from Ethan, I was already planning on dying after we were done."

Suddenly, the distance between our hands ends, and he intertwines our fingers.

A lump lodges in my throat. "but then I almost killed Ethan and for some reason...I changed my mind. Death didn't seem so good anymore, Tristin. It felt terrible to know that things could end so smoothly, and no one would know what you are capable of."

"You are capable of great things in life. I know that." Tristin squeezes my fingers.

"I need to know that too. I don't want to die anymore. I want to chase my dreams...for myself. I don't want to end up dead without trying, just because I think I have no one." I swallow the lump and smile to myself. "I am going to continue my education. I will do everything I want in life. And if I still fail...I will know that I tried my best. I will not die cold, and crying, Tristin. I want to die smiling."

Ethan's face flashes before my eyes. The guilt he felt that day when I thought he died...it crushed something inside me and made me think about my last moments.

What if I end up with such guilt? What if when I am dying all I can think about is what I could have done more instead of finding peace like I wanted?

If there is no peace in death, then what's the use of killing myself?

"You had a hard time, and I was not there for you." His lips find their way to the side of my head, and I shudder. "It will never happen again. I promise."

"It will never happen again, Tristin. I know that too." I sigh. "but it won't be because of you. It will be because I will not let it happen again."

"What?" He breathes.

"I told you I am going to continue living my life but I believe it's not possible here." I shrug. "that's why I booked a one-way ticket to France. I will enroll in a school there. I have enough money coming from the shares and I will be able to fulfill my dreams."

"You...are leaving?" His grip on my fingers becomes painful.

I turn on my side to finally face him. My eyes take in the frown on his forehead and then the surprised look in his eyes.

"Yes, Tristin. I need to leave. That's the only way I can heal. I can not stay in this city...or this country or I will always find myself involved in

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the conflict between Lily, Ethan, and you. I don't want that. " I shake my head, watching as the surprise in his eyes disappears behind a hint of hurt.

If I stay, I might even get accused of killing Lily in some twisted turn of events. I can not stay here and wait for that to happen. I will never find myself in that interrogation room again in my life.

" After what happened between us tonight— "

" It won't happen again. " I whisper, pulling my hand free of his tightening hold. " I decided I won't deny myself anything I want, Tristin. It's true that I wanted you...but it's also true that if we stay together in some messed up relationship...your family will get hurt. You can not be with me. I am the sister of the girl who killed your brother, remember? "

" I don't care about that, Grace. I don't give a fuck about the blood that runs in your veins. All I care about is you. And I can handle my family, I can do anything to make sure that we— "

My hand cups his cheek, and he stops. A moment passes between us, our gazes locked and breaths mingling.

" I don't want to be here, Tristin. " I whisper, stern and firm.

" You don't want to be with me? " He leans into my palm and holds his breath.

" I don't want to suffer for wanting to be with a man again. That's what it is. Right now, I am not...a woman who can fight alongside you, Tristin. I don't want to. I don't want to be your girlfriend or your

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wife. Now...I just want to think about myself. I am sorry. " I turn my back to him and close my eyes.

" Grace... " His arms wrap around me and pull me into his body. " Please I— "

" If you choose to force me, you know I won't be able to defeat you. Then there will be no difference between you and Ethan. But if it comes down to fighting you, I will, Tristin. I won't settle for something I don't deserve now. I will not make myself suffer. So please...let me go. " I melt into his arms, saying each word with difficulty.

I know I need to leave before I grow weak for Tristin Roberto, the same way I grew weak for Ethan Calder once. I know how that turned out and I know I can not let it happen again.

Ethan could do everything to me because he knew we were not equal. He was an all-powerful man and I was just a housewife, with no family to back me or no backbone of my own.

I understand all that now and if I knowingly end up in an unequal relationship with Tristin, I can not guarantee that he won't use his power against me one day.

" Will you ever come back to me? " His lips feather my neck, his arm squeezing around my waist.

I memorize the sound of his breath, and the thumping of his heartbeat in my back. I think...I am already growing weak for him because he...treated me better than anyone else did in my life, even if it was for his own gain, even if our whole partnership was messed up.

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Tristin was the man who told me that I meant something. He told me I was strong, brave, and talented at times when I was losing hope in life.

Now, I must leave him to become what he thinks I am.

"I don't know, Tristin. Maybe...I will never return." I whisper.

"Will you be happy?" His voice sounds soft and low as if he has lost the energy to be stern.

"I don't know. But I will try to be." I say, and then silence reigns over us for a long time.

When I find myself drifting off to sleep, while cradled in his arms, I think I hear him whispering.

"If I didn't love you, I would have caged you in here for the rest of your life. But the thought of making you unhappy and pushing you to the brink of death one day scares me more than not having you by my side does. So make sure to be happy without me, my Little Butterfly, or the next time, I will not let you go no matter what you say to me."



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Ethan

The pictures lie on my lap.

She kissed Tristin and spent the night at his place.

She told me she didn't want to be with any other man after me.

And she lied.

"Where is she now?" I ask Josh.

"She was last seen at the airport, Boss." He reveals, standing beside me.

I nod, taking the pictures and dropping them on the side table. My head should be hurting enough to make me sick, but I can not even feel it.

It's because my heart is bleeding.

The door to the hospital room opens and Noah, the new man I hired from the professional secretary team at the office, steps inside.

"Mr. Calder." He nods respectfully and comes to stand by Josh's side.

Josh looks at him but doesn't say anything.

"Step out." I turn my head towards the ceiling-to-floor window in my hospital room.

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"Noah, step out—"

"I am talking to you, Josh. Get out and close the door on your way." I state, narrowing my eyes.

"Uh—Yes, Boss." Josh nods and leaves us alone.

"What did you find?" I keep my gaze on the towers outside as I address Noah. 1

"There are no records at the pharmacy, Mr. Calder. The footages are edited. Mrs. Calder never frequented those clubs, never met those men, or went to the pharmacy. But..." He pauses, waiting for me to ask him to continue.

But I can't speak. The knife stuck inside my heart digs deeper.

"...But I found that the housekeeper in your mansion frequented the pharmacy and often bought morning-after pills. She got the bills in Mrs. Calder's name, using her card." He finishes. "You didn't ask me, and I apologize, but I looked deeper into this matter. I checked the bank and call records of the housekeeper and...Josh...They have something in common, Mr. Calder."

Fool. Useless. Idiot. I can suddenly hear my father's stern voice hissing those words in my ears.

He always knew I was a fool.

He was right.

After everything I did to prove that I was not that fool...

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After everything I did to become as powerful as Sebastian Roberto when I thought Lily left me for him...

After everything I did to make myself believe that I was not weak anymore....

Here it comes.

The truth.

" They were apparently paid by a common account, and I traced it back to— "

" The Whitlocks. " I finish for him.

Noah sighs. " Yes, Mr. Calder. Mr. Whitlock paid them to manipulate everything. But...after looking into the housekeeper, I found another footage from in front of her house. She met Ms. Lily Whitlock many times. "

The knife slices everything that's left of my heart, and I clutch my chest.

That old geezer and his old bitch put on such a good act when they revealed my wife to be a cheater in their party. They condemned her like some righteous parents disciplining their child when in reality...

It was all their plan.

And Lily...

I close my eyes. Lily fooled me as easily as you can fool a three-year-

Payback

old child.

They turned my most loyal man against me and then made me dance to their tune.

What was it that made me so gullible to her? I have realized I don't love her. Then why? 1

'She left you for more money. You fell short.' It's because of these words I heard standing at the altar...

The words kept taunting me and ringing in my ears. Desperately, I wanted to prove that I didn't fall short, and when she came back, with that sob story, I instantly believed her more than the taunting words.

Yes, it was because of Grace that I was abandoned.

It was not because of me.

Grace could take the blame and I could finally sleep in peace.

But I couldn't.

To get rid of my nightmares, I pushed the woman I loved into hell.

As they plotted against her...

As they hurt her in front of me...

As she kept begging me to believe her...

I left her alone every time. I killed our child, held her down when she was in pain, and kept protecting the woman who was pulling the strings.

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I clutched my chest harder. It felt like my heart was about to explode. And I wish it did.

'Did you love me?' I recall what I asked her before she walked out.

She took her time, and I couldn't take my eyes off her back. 1

She never took that much time to tell me yes before.

She was always telling me that she loved me. She always called me and told me that she missed me. She always waited for me around every corner and never turned her back on me.

But she was not that Grace anymore. I know she lied when she said she never loved me. But I also know that she wished she never loved me.

"Mr. Calder, are you alright? Do you want me to call the doctor?" Noah asks worriedly.

I take my hand off my chest and swallow the lump in my throat. In the back of my mind, I could hear her scoffing at me, calling me a fool again.

"Mr. Calder..."

"Pull out all the investment from the Whitlock Corporation and Blacklist them. Whoever collaborates with them will face the same fate." I tell him and glance his way. "and did you send someone to keep an eye on Grace?"

"I did, Mr. Calder. Our man will make sure Mrs. Calder is protected at

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all times. He will keep an eye on her from the distance and she will not discover his presence. " He nods, pushing his glasses on his nose.

" Whoever tries to give her a hard time, get rid of them. " I mumble, my chest tightening at the mention of her.

She won't forgive me now. Maybe, in a year, I can appear in front of her, get on my knees, and beg until she can look at me again.

I will wait even if it takes decades.

And I will never let my lie turn into the truth.

I will never let Grace go.

The door to the hospital room opens with urgency and Josh comes inside in a hurry. " Boss, we located Ms. Whitlock. "

" Roberto has her? " My lips morph into a cold smirk.

" Yes, Boss. Mr. Roberto's men are transporting her to another location. Give me the order and I will go with my men to save her. " He acts like a desperate man, itching to save her.

For the first time, I see him in a new light. Maybe, it was never even about money for him. I give him more than what Whitlocks can ever offer.

" You are fond of her. " I conclude, my heart growing cold. " she must have worked her charm on you. Did you sleep with her? "

Josh freezes in his place, his eyes drifting towards Noah who is

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staring at him. "Boss—"

"Get him, Noah." I blink lazily.

"Boss, I—"

"I am going to have your tongue and break your legs, Josh. That's a fitting payback, don't you think?" I close my eyes and rest back. "and then I am going to do the same to your little lover if Tristin ever lets her go."

Everyone who hurt her, who made me hurt her...They will pay a price.

And in the end, I will hand her my life. She can kill me if she wants because that's the only way to be free of me. 

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