

I need you

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Grace

—5 Days Later...

Alma didn't come inside that day. She left after hearing what I said and it satisfied her—I just knew it.

Tristin, however, went silent. He didn't say anything to me, but he didn't leave me alone either.

The doctors said that I had to stay for a week in the hospital and during that time, Tristin refused to spend any night at home. He would go to his office, get the work done, sometimes Luca would even bring his clothes and files to the hospital room and he would work from here. I was annoyed at him most of the time, but I didn't break the silence between us.

I told him all that and he didn't say anything at all. His silence felt like a challenge that stated 'Get me away from you if you can' and it made me frustrated.

At night, Tristin slept on the couch and haunted me all the time. I didn't know how to get him off my back anymore.

"How are you doing today, Grace?" The doctor enters the room and breaks me out of the trance.

"As usual, Doctor." I whisper, taking my eyes off Tristin who is sitting on the couch, signing some papers.

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" Anything bothering you? "

I sigh and shake my head. I am so done with this.

When I don't reply, he continues. "You are doing great, and we will be discharging you tomorrow. Just one more night of rest and you will be back to your normal self. "

Relief washes over me like a cool breeze. I manage a weak smile, trying to focus on the positive side of things. Everything will be back to normal soon and I will get away from this stubborn man.

The doctor leaves after a few formal questions and I find myself smiling.

" You must be flying over the clouds right now. " Tristin's voice grumbles from the corner.

So, this is how we break the odd silence?

" Of course, I am happy. " I nod quickly.

Our eyes meet briefly, and it sends a warm sensation down my body.

I have been watching this man sleeping on the couch in an uncomfortable position for the last five nights and it had been impossible for me to not call him to the bed with me or get him out of my sight.

I have been having a hard time keeping my eyes off him or my heart from beating too fast when he helps me do the smallest of tasks with the utmost care, like helping me move around, eat, or even drink

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water.

It's like he pretends to be angry and oblivious but he has all his senses tuned into me.

No one has looked after me like that. I feel like an affection-starved animal and it doesn't help my situation at all.

"Tristin." I say softly, trying to steady my voice. "I..."

He looks up from his spot on the couch, his eyes meeting mine again. "What is it?"

"I am leaving for France with Celine right after I get discharged." I reveal, my tone firm despite the lingering pain.

Tristin's expression hardens instantly. His jaw clenches, and a storm brews behind his beautiful eyes. "You are not going anywhere. You are still recovering."

The words sting and I feel a surge of frustration. "I don't need you to make decisions for me, Tristin. I am perfectly capable of deciding what is best for myself. I am leaving and I am telling you in advance."

Why am I even telling him? I stiffen when the question crosses my mind.

He rises from the couch, a hint of frustration on his face just like me.

"Do you actually believe I am making decisions for you?! I am just telling you that can't leave right now."

I feel my anger rising. "That's the same as telling me what to do. You know what? I am not even asking you, Tristin. I am simply telling you."

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And I—I don't even know why I am telling you when I should leave quietly. I owe you nothing! "

Tristin's eyes darken as he smirks. " Of course, you owe me nothing. "

It feels like a taunt, and my eyes narrow on him. " I am done with this top— "

" Do you really think that running away will solve anything? You think going to France will magically make all your problems disappear? That I will not come after you or find you if you hide there? " He hisses, approaching my bed.

" Why would you find me?! I told you I feel nothing for you and I want you to leave me the hell alone. " I hiss, the annoyance leaking from every pore of my body.

His gaze is intense, and he takes a step closer, his voice low and fierce. " How easy it is for you to just walk away after everything... "

I look away, unable to meet his piercing gaze. " I don't know what you want from me, Tristin. I need to focus on my recovery and my future. I can't get entangled in more drama right now. "

Tristin's voice drops. " You are not being fair, Little Butterfly. Remember the night we spent together? You enjoyed it. You can't pretend it didn't mean anything. You can't pretend that you don't think about me or you don't feel anything for me. "

My face warms up as I huff. " That's not the point, Tristin. This is not just about us. "

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"Then who is it about?!" His voice rises, making me frown.

"Don't shout at me." I purse my lips.

Tristin closes his mouth, stares at me then turns around, giving me his back. I watch his muscles flex under the crisp white button-down shirt as he runs his fingers through his hair.

I feel a pang of guilt but I can't go back now. "I am trying to move forward. I need to do what is best for me, Tristin and right now, leaving is best for me."

"You left before. What did it bring you?" When he speaks, his voice is calm.

I press my lips in a thin line and stare at my hands. I have nothing to say to that. He is right. Running away is not a solution, but at least, it's a temporary relief.

"I was ready to drop everything for you, Grace. Everything." He whispers, his back still facing me. "and...you don't care about me even...a little. This—This is...stupid."

"I am sorry." I murmur. "but I can not force myself to feel anything for you."

It's a lie. After having him around me for a week in my most vulnerable moments, looking after me, and caring for me...my feelings for him have become stronger.

Tristin's shoulders slump and he doesn't say anything. In silence, I sit here, and he stands there, the distance between us growing.

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The argument leaves me feeling hollow. I lay back on the bed, feeling the weight of the past week catch up with me.

If I stay with him a little longer, if he shows me this side of him for a few more days...maybe, I will be ruined beyond salvation.

I will fall in love with Tristin Roberto and it will not be an impulsive teenage love or a desperate love. It will be...something explosive, something I will never stop feeling.

After a while, I see Tristin moving. Rather than going to the couch as he usually did the past week, he does something unexpected.

He moves closer to the bed, his eyes glaring at me. "Fine. If you are going to be stubborn, go on. Suffer for a lifetime!"

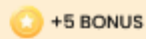
A pang hits my heart as I look away but surprise makes me gasp the next moment.

Tristin climbs into the bed beside me and pushes me onto the other side.

"What—"

"I am not letting my back hurt for you anymore. I have been sleeping on that little fucking couch for a whole week, for what?! For you to tell me that I mean shit to you?!" He murmurs and pulls me closer.

His arms wrap around me, his words not matching his actions at all. My heartbeat skyrockets as he turns me around and presses my back to his front, spooning me from behind.



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My jaw slacks, hanging low. I don't even find the words to tackle him yet as he nuzzles into my hair and lets out a heavy breath.

The proximity between us is a mixture of comfort and sexual tension.

Despite the lingering tension between us, his closeness provides a moment of solace but I need to get him out of my bed.

"Let me go. I will sleep on the sofa." I twist to free myself but he only tightens his arm around my waist and tugs me back.

"I don't care what you have to say or do, just like you don't care about what I feel." Tristin's breath hits my nape, making me stop squirming and gasp softly. "I need you. And I am going to stay right here."

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