

First Date

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Grace

The soft glow of candlelight bathes the elegant dining table, casting a warm glow over Tristin's face.

Tristin has chosen a cozy restaurant with a view of the city lights, and it feels like the perfect setting for our first date because I have never visited this place before.

We are sitting across from each other, and for the first time in a while, I feel a sense of peace.

I admire the city view while Tristin's eyes remain on me, causing my cheeks to heat up every time I have to look at him.

I haven't felt this giddy in a long time and it is making me dizzy.

Tristin looks relaxed, almost too relaxed as if he is trying hard to make the evening perfect. His efforts show...but the way he keeps moving cutlery around once in a while gives away some kind of unease.

As we start our meal, he speaks up for the first time. "Do you like it here, Little Butterfly?"

I chew on the juicy piece of steak in my mouth and nod quickly. "It's... perfect."

"You won't mind coming here with me every week, right?" A lazy grin stretches across his lips, almost making me choke on my breath.



" You want to come here every week? Isn't it better to go somewhere else or— "

" So you don't mind a date every week. " His grin widens. " Great! I will take you to all the good places I know. "

I blink, then sigh, then roll my eyes.

I fell for his trick.

" You are really...something. " I stab my steak and narrow my eyes on him.

" I am not into taking risks. Now you have committed so you can't go back on your word. " Tristin shrugs playfully.

I find myself smiling before I can even register it, genuinely enjoying the moment.

He starts talking about all the places he knows and I ignore the fact that I have never visited them before. He must be a great detective to know every place I visited with Ethan before and is now deliberately avoiding talking about it.

I hum along, silently staring at his hands as he gestures while speaking. They are strong and veined, the kind of hands that speak of power and control.

Yet, they are gentle when he touches me as if he is afraid of breaking me. The memory of his hands on my skin sends a shiver down my spine. His touch is something I crave, even if I won't admit it out loud.

And it's still a little strange for me to feel this need for a man.

I shake my head and look up. Tristin pauses, and picks up his wine glass, taking a small sip.

Something seems off with him. It is still subtle, but I can not ignore the way he fidgets around anymore because...

Tristin Roberto never fidgets.

It is like he has something on his mind, something he wants to say but can't find the words for.

I sigh. "Tristin, is something bothering you?"

He looks up, surprise crossing his face just for a moment before he composes himself. "No...what can possibly bother me?"

"Is it about...your Mom or...Ania?" I wonder, biting my lower lip.

Something has happened. I want to know what it is even if it's something small.

Tristin leans back in his chair and regards me with a gentle look. "Mom is angry. Really angry. But her anger is directed towards me. And Ania is in shock. She is not talking to Mom or me. But...I believe she will come around."

I nod slowly and mindlessly move the fork in my plate. "Judging by the way you are talking...I don't think that is what's bothering you."

He tilts his head to the side and shoots me a heated glance. "I have

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been thinking about taking off that dress and—”

“No!” I yelp, unconsciously pointing my fork in his direction. “No dirty talk, Tristin Roberto. We are not at home.”

“So it’s fine when we get home?” His lips curl into another stupid smirk and I groan.

This is so not him. It’s another tactic he is using to hide whatever is bothering him.

“Fine. Don’t tell me.” I mutter, shifting my focus to my food.

“I do have something to say to you, Little Butterfly but we can talk about it after dinner.” He sighs when he notices me sulking.

I shoot him a curious glance but don’t push him on it. Instead, I ask him what I have been wanting to ask for a long time.

“Why do you call me Little Butterfly? I am not little and I am not as colorful as a butterfly either.” My nose scrunches.

The grin on his lips disappears as he stares into my eyes, just still and intense. My heart starts drumming in my ears, blood rushing through my veins faster than usual.

“When I was...gathering information about you...” Tristin trails off and averts his gaze towards the beautiful view but I keep my eyes on him, noticing the way his eyes soften. “I realized what you could have done if you were not...kept in Lily’s shadow or forced to marry Ethan in Lily’s place. You would have broken out of your cocoon, and become a beautiful butterfly, attracting success, love, and admiration

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—everything that you deserved in life, Grace. "

My heart which was beating like a drum a moment ago has fallen silent. I hold my breath and listen to his velvety voice, mesmerized by the way he talks about me.

" But they forced you into a dark place and then...Ethan took you and hid you from the rest of the world. You were never allowed to break free. But I wished, even when I didn't know you, that you would realize. You are not a scary insect, Grace. You are a Butterfly. You deserve to be admired and loved, and to fly as long as you want. " He whispers, his voice softening just like his eyes.

The lights fall on his face, highlighting the small curve of his lips, making him appear Ethereal, almost untouchable.

If I reach over the table, will he disappear?

I lift my hand and it hangs above the table. Tristin senses it and faces me at last.

Our eyes meet and I gasp. " Take my hand. "

His brows lift, but he doesn't ask me anything. Silently, he reaches for me, and grabs my hand, his thumb beginning to trace my knuckles.

My heart settles, and I feel its beat again. He won't disappear.

For a few moments, we stay like that. He stares at me, and I try to breathe again.

" I think...I will never want to leave you, Tristin. If you keep being like this...I might never... " I swallow.

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I was right. If I decide to fall in love with him, I will never forget about it.

Because with him, I don't have to suffer for a little attention. With him, I am not a substitute. With him, I don't starve for affection.

He gives me everything I have been giving others for ages. And he does it in the most unimaginable ways.

The words almost stumble out of my mouth. I think I feel something for you, Tristin, and those feelings are becoming stronger.

But before I can say anything, his phone starts ringing.

He glances at the screen, and his expression changes right away. Tristin eyes the screen for a moment and decides to disconnect.

"You can—"

"I don't want to leave you. Not when we are on a date." Tristin says and squeezes my hand before I can tell him to take the call.

My heart misses a beat, then becomes warm as I sigh.

His phone buzzes again, hinting at a text. Tristin releases my hand and opens the message. Worry etches into his features, his eyes widening just a little.

"What happened, Tristin?"

"Ania...she's in the hospital." He says, his voice strained as he looks up.



"What?" My heart sinks.

"I don't know what it is about but I..." He trails off, glancing at the table, then at me as if he is desperate to say the words but is reluctant to hurt me.

How can he still care about me when it's about his sister?

"You need to go. Right now." I clench my hands into fists.

"You should come with me. I will drop you home or maybe you can come to the hospital—"

"Are you serious, Tristin? I can go home on my own or you should send a driver. You need to leave." A lump lodges in my throat, as he runs his fingers across his hair and picks up his phone.

"I am calling Luca over. Until he comes, you will not step a foot out of here, Grace. Do you hear me? Not even a step." He says, getting up and walking towards the exit.

I watch him, feeling a pang of sadness. I want to be there for him, to support him in any way I can. But I also understand that my presence will only hurt Ania and Alma right now.

Tristin is right.

If I was not forced to marry Ethan back then, maybe, I could have found my way to Tristin after all. And if he had come into my life somehow, I would have forgotten about Ethan and the painful one-sided crush that I harbored.



A weird feeling settles into my gut as I stare at the spot where he left. I haven't felt fear like this for some time—the fear of losing someone I care about.

What if Ania is in danger and Alma convinces Tristin to let me go in this situation?

I can't shake off the feeling that something is about to change, that tonight will be a turning point in our relationship.

After waiting a few minutes, I see a familiar figure approaching the table. My heart skips a beat as I stare at the man walking towards me.

Ethan.

He takes Tristin's place at the table, without asking for permission, and turns to me, his eyes dripping with arrogance.

"Hello, Grace."

Anger bubbles in my throat and I grit my jaw. "I don't remember telling you that you can sit there."

"Come on, Gracie. It's not like you will ever tell me to sit here. I have to take the first step and let go of my ego. I have to do this for you." Ethan's voice lowers.

I stare at him and don't say anything for a long time. I just...try to feel any hurt or lingering emotions for him but I can't find any.

"You look good." Ethan leans in, looking at me from close, his eyes displaying different emotions.



But I can't comprehend them. I don't want to, anymore.

I lean back and fold my arms across my chest. "If you came here to kidnap me somehow, that won't work. Luca will be here any moment."

"Do you think that lap dog can protect you if I decide to take you away?" A sad smile touches Ethan's lips.

But I am not fooled. This is another one of his tricks.

"I am not here to hurt you. I just want to talk—"

"About what?" I interrupt, never taking my eyes off him.

Ethan's eyes linger on my face, then drop to my wrists. "I was... worried about you."

Memories flash before my eyes. Memories of him chasing that man and shooting him. I think he died, but I don't want to register that in my mind.

The truth is, Ethan is a scary man for me now. Maybe, Tristin is too. But for some reason, my heart says that I should trust Tristin more than I have ever trusted Ethan even if I someday find out that he is a monster.

"And I wanted to tell you something." Ethan's eyes meet mine and he smiles again. "It's about what you said before."

The fear of the unknown makes my heart pound inside my chest. "What threats do you—"

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" You said I cheated on you. Did Tristin tell you that? " Ethan's smile drops and the look I know him for—the dangerous, cold glint—returns to his eyes.



~S.Y



Author

“Hey Lovelies,

So my 1 day rest became 2 days. That's why you get a big chapter for waiting :) Hope you like it.



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Comments

AD is coming



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