

Starting to hurt

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Grace

"Tristin." Alma releases me right away and turns to the man behind me.

I swallow, and grip the hem of my dress, unable to do the same as Alma.

"I told you to leave her alone." His voice becomes low and cold.

My stomach flips, as I lower my gaze to the floor. How hard is it to do things the right way? He can...come to me and tell me that he is sorry instead of giving explanations.

"I was not—"

"Mom, this is enough. I don't want you to—"

I turn around. He pauses. Our eyes meet, and a shudder runs down my back.

A week. How can I miss someone in a week?

I was away from him for three months before. Whole three months with no word, no meetings and I survived.

Because I didn't know what it was like to truly receive his affection back then.

And now when I know what he has to offer...I keep wanting more.

Starting to hurt

I have become greedy for his attention.

"Alma didn't say anything to me. I am fine." I whisper, averting my gaze to the flowers.

The greenhouse is beautiful, no doubt. But it's starting to look otherworldly now.

"Yes, I just called her to talk. I thought she would be lonely at the penthouse." Alma sighs in a tired voice.

I can sense Tristin's gaze on me, sharp and piercing. It makes me restless and exposed.

Suddenly, I feel him getting closer. He snatches my wrist and drags me away from Alma without a word.

"Tristin!" She huffs from behind but he pays no attention to her.

I frown, watching his hand wrapped around my skin. Is he going to drag me to the door and throw me out now?

I jerk free in the corridor and step back. Tristin whips around, his eyes finding mine again.

"If my Mom made you uncomfortable—"

"She didn't. Why do you always assume the worst?" I cut him off, my frown deepening.

He takes a deep breath and runs his fingers through his hair. He is wearing another of his expensive suits, and his hair is perfectly styled

Starting to hurt

—not a thing is out of place in his exterior.

But the dark circles and the redness in his eyes give away his exhaustion.

For a moment, we stay there, in silence. He continues to avoid my eyes, and I can't look away from him.

"Why are you here?" Tristin asks, releasing another breath.

I glare at him. "why? Do you hate to see me that much?"

Tristin's gaze snaps up, finally meeting my eyes once more. A heavy tension hangs in the air, making me hold my breath.

"You know that's...not what I mean." He swallows, his eyes softening on me.

"How do I know what you mean when you don't say anything clearly?!" I shake my head, anger burning my eyes.

"Grace—"

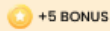
"Grace?" I scoff. "so you think you should call me Grace now?"

"I..." Tristin seems speechless before he recovers and sighs. "Yes, I do think it's appropriate to call you Grace right now."

It's my turn to be speechless this time. He was saying and doing everything right a week ago. How did he suddenly become so dumb?

"What do I make of it?" I wonder out aloud.

Is he letting me go? Is he...telling me that we should end this here



Starting to hurt

now?

Tristin stares into my eyes, searching for God knows what. My heart sinks at his silence, at the way he just stands there like a statue and does nothing.

I nod to myself and wrap my arms around myself. "The least...you could do was to apologize sincerely, Tristin. Is it that hard to just... say that you are—"

"Is that what you want?" He interrupts before his hands grip my arms and pull me in. "If I say I am sorry, you will forget everything... just like that?"

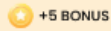
I pick my head and look into his eyes. A mixture of surprise and anger swirls in there. My thoughts drift to the memories I have made in the last six months.

It's the worst time to be recalling everything, to think about how half a year can flip everything upside down and turn me into someone else—someone I don't recognize.

"I fell in love with you. It feels like love because...it's starting to hurt and I am ready to continue to get hurt." I mumble, pulling free of his hold. "That's why...my mind keeps screaming yes. Yes, I will forgive you. It's a scary thought...but I can't control it. My head keeps saying that I gave so many chances to the wrong people. Maybe, just maybe...I should give a chance to the right person too. What do I have to lose anyway? What do I have that you can take from me?"

My gaze lowers to his chest—it's still—too still that I find it hard to believe he is breathing.

Commented [Ma1]:



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" Perhaps, I am being led to another...harsh ending and I will never learn. " I whisper, before I turn and sprint away from him.

Why must he stay silent?

Why didn't he say something to me even after I said so much?

Is he really...letting me go like I thought?

I wanted to get out of the Villa right away but Alma held me back. I made her a promise to stay so I couldn't do anything but stay put.

However, I couldn't help feeling salty over how Tristin just kept his mouth shut all that time and continued to call me Grace.

That's such a childish reason to be angry, and I didn't really care anymore.

But...I did look forward to seeing him around.

How very...stupid of me!

And very smart of him, because he didn't come for dinner. He didn't show up even when I lingered in the lounge until midnight.

So it was clear...

He was really letting me go.

It didn't make me sad. It made me furious. So furious that I gathered the courage to barge inside his room in the middle of the night.