

Day 1 of Plan

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Grace

I feel like I am burning, literally boiling in a pot. I huff, trying to shift but the arms around my body pull me back to the warmth, refusing to let me go.

Annoyed, my sleepy eyes snap open and land on the familiar face. A scream almost spills out of my mouth, but I press my lips together at the last moment and go silent.

Tristin is staring at me. His eyes are droopy and look dead but he is watching me from so close.

My gaze runs along his exhausted face, his disheveled hair, and the redness in his eyes.

What's...happening?

I wonder as I slowly start to recall waiting for him last night. I sat on his bed and fell asleep but he didn't come back.

Now, he is here, holding onto me like I am going to disappear if he lets go.

A frown etches between my brows, anger bubbling to the surface. "Did you not sleep?"

Okay. That's not what I was trying to say. I wanted to ask why he was suffocating me.

" No. " Tristin finally blinks, before his eyes close.

Curious and a little worried, I lean closer and cup his cheek. " are you alright? "

" Yes. " He mumbles, his droopy eyes opening to find my gaze again.

" Why are you not sleeping? " My frown deepens, the warmth of his frame clinging to my body.

" Because I want to look at you. " He answers, numb, unmoving, and sleepy.

I blink, heat rising to my cheeks. This is not what he should be saying.

Tristin's hand rests on my cheek, and he lazily runs his thumb along my cheekbone. " Pretty. "

" Hm? " My heart jumps to my throat.

" You are so pretty that I can't look away. What if you are unreal? " He whispers and leans in to rest his forehead against mine.

The cheesy lines should have made me cringe, but instead, I find my heartbeat skyrocketing.

" I am angry at you. " I tell him, trying to diffuse this situation. I don't want to melt like a puddle and give in without any effort from his side.

" I know. " Tristin's hot breaths ghost my lips. " I am also angry at myself. How could I deceive a pretty girl like you? "

" Sweet talking won't get you anywhere. " I sigh, and close my eyes momentarily.

This...feels nice when I am supposed to be burning with anger.

" I know that too. " His thumb traces my cheekbone again.

" If you know, you should— "

" I am sorry. " His voice sobers up, the hint of sleepiness disappearing.

My eyes snap open and meet his light eyes. They are soft, almost indulging.

" But words don't mean anything, Little Butterfly. " He continues, his thumb pressing against the corner of my mouth. " I can say I am sorry for the rest of my life but it won't be enough until I treat you better, until I prove that I will never do the same to you again, until I treat you like the sweet angel that you are. "

His eyes...are so clear now. They are almost sparkling. It's like he has found his treasure and he plans on holding onto it forever.

My stomach fills with butterflies. My heart misses a beat with each breath. I lower my hand to his chest, feeling the similar rhythm of his heartbeat under my palm.

My gaze drops to my hand. Emotions overwhelm me enough to make my head spin.

" I promise. " Tristin lifts my face, coaxing me to look into his sincere

Day 1 of Plan

eyes once more. "I promise to never hurt you again. I promise to do everything in my power to make you smile every day. I can promise you that and I promise I will convince you to marry me. "

My lips part, and no voice comes out of my mouth. My eyes burn with the intensity of emotions that I am holding back.

"I will ask you to marry me every day. And the day you finally believe that you can trust me, the day you realize I can fulfill all my promises, you can say yes. Until then, you can reject me all you want. " He smiles, his eyes crinkling because of how genuine that gesture is.

The sunlight filtering through the windows falls on his face, making him appear like a glowing statue, like someone you are not supposed to touch.

My heart will burst open and I will bleed to death right in his arms. That's what it feels like. And the fact is...I am not minding it as much as I should.

So, I try to slip away from him, because I can't bear this warmth. "What if I never forgive you and never say yes? "

Tristin's smile doesn't waiver and he doesn't let me go. " then... "

My heartbeat slows until I can hear nothing in my ears but his breaths, as I wait for his next words. My skin feels ticklish, my insides flush with heat.

"Then I can keep asking you for the rest of my life. " He states, as a matter of fact, his eyes appearing like an endless ocean.

Day 1 of Plan

A lump forms in my throat, my vision blurring with tears. " Life is too long, Tristin. People fall in love and out of it all the time. "

Who am I trying to convince?

Him? Or myself?

" Maybe, they do. " His smile falters, his forehead coming to rest against mine. " but they never forget their one true love. You are that for me, Little Butterfly and for me, this life is not long enough to fall out of love with you. It is...not even nearly long enough for me to love you right. I am still learning to love you like you deserve. "

People like me—people who never felt the warmth of love before... always think they will remain cold.

I thought the same.

When even my parents didn't love me, how could anyone else do?

When I was not deserving of my family's love, how could anyone else see any worth in loving me?

But here is this man, offering to bath me in that warmth until I can feel my skin burning, and my old self perishing.

I can not take my eyes off him. I want to burn readily, to accept the slow death of my insecurities, to let his love scorch me until I can burn to ashes and rise like a phoenix.

" This is the day first of my plan. " Tristin grins. " will you marry me, Little Butterfly? "

Day 1 of Plan

The answer is at the tip of my tongue, but my throat is burning too much. And he understands. That's why he shoots me a playful look, and lowers his body, his head disappearing into my chest.

"You can think it over and refuse when I wake up. For now, let me borrow your cute body so I can fall asleep." He murmurs, his lips moving across my neck with each word.

I try to breathe but find my lungs too constricted for it. My body is buzzing with the warmth he is forcing down my veins, the warmth that makes me feel alive.

"Don't leave me until I wake up." His voice becomes sleepy.

And despite feeling so many emotions at once, I stay still. I refuse to leave him until he wakes up, and falls asleep again, until this life is spent and he finally makes me happy like he promised.

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