

## Grace Calder

Grace

The whole night, I twist and turn in the bed, finding it hard to fall asleep under the new roof.

When I shut my eyes, nightmares plague my sleep. Ethan is chasing me in all those dreams. I do my best to get away, but no matter where I turn, he is right there, so close, his arms almost closing around my body to cage me again.

When he grabs me, he pushes me away. The car hits me, and blood splatters on the road.

I wake up with a startled cry, my chest heaving up and down rapidly. My wide, panicked eyes take in the room before landing on the woman standing in the doorway.

Instantly, I gasp and push my sweat-stricken hair away from my forehead. "Alma. Did I disturb you?"

She has a strange look on her face. I gulp, clasping my trembling fingers together to stop the motion.

"I came to call you for breakfast." She whispers, a forced smile playing on her lips.

She could have sent any servant in the mansion. But she came herself and saw me in such an embarrassing state.

"Are you alright, Grace?" She approaches me steadily and presses the back of her hand to my forehead.



A lump clogs my throat. " I am alright. Absolutely alright. "

" You don't have a fever. " She pats my cheek softly. " Come on. Freshen up and come down for breakfast. I am waiting for you. "

I glance up. Kindness has returned to her eyes.

" Come on, Grace. Don't keep us waiting. " She smiles and steps away.

I nod reluctantly and get down from the bed.

Without asking questions, she turns away and leaves the room. " I am sending someone up with clothes for you. "

" Okay. Thanks, Alma. " I whisper from behind.

After she leaves, I grab the cell phone from under my pillow and search for the video again. My fingers clench around the screen, as I watch their faces.

Ethan will only ever get me in my sleep now.

Shaking my head hatefully, I drop the phone on the bed and stroll to the bathroom. I shouldn't keep Alma waiting.

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Half an hour later, I am dressed in a white knee-length dress and following the Butler downstairs.

The interior of this place still amazes me—it's not just about luxury—everything in this house has a touch of warmth as if someone carefully picked up every color, every painting, every picture frame.

It doesn't feel like a house at all. It feels like home.

Glancing left and right, I don't notice when we enter the dining room. The butler steps away, leaving me standing in the doorway.

"Is this the one? Tristin's girlfriend?" An enthusiastic voice asks.

"Ania." Alma's voice follows.

Surprised, I look ahead to find the three people already seated on the other side of a big dining table. The breakfast is already served and Tristin sits on the head chair, sipping on coffee and reading something on a tablet.

"Good..." My gaze flickers to his right where Alma sits and to the left where an unfamiliar girl is making round eyes at me, "Morning?"

"She is pretty." She says, smiling widely.

"Don't make her nervous, Ania." Alma scolds lightly, then turns to me. "Come, sit here, Grace."

She points to the chair beside her and I quickly nod, moving across the dining hall to reach her.

"This is Ania. My spoiled daughter." Alma introduces as I take my seat.

"Seriously, Mom? I am the only sane person in this family." She huffs, popping a cherry in her mouth.

Instinctively, my gaze is drawn towards her. She looks like the female version of Tristin, just a little more petite and feminine.

“ Hi. I am the only daughter of this family and your soon-to-be sister-in-law if everything goes alright with Tristin. ” She grins carelessly, making me shudder. 1

“ Ania. ” Tristin’s warning voice draws my attention to him.

Momentarily, he looks up from the tablet. Our eyes lock, and my breath catches in my throat. His gaze lowers to my clothes, taking in my upper body before his eyes find mine again.

“ You look better than last night. ” He says, detached and cold before he goes back to reading on the tablet.

“ Oh, did you see the chemistry, Mom? There is definitely something going on here. ” Ania snickers, causing my cheeks to catch flame.

I suck in a sharp breath and sink into the soft chair. Her eyes remain on me, wide and light.

“ Ania, no more teasing. ” Alma says, flipping my plate up. “ Ignore this child and eat Grace. You didn’t eat much last time so you must be hungry. ”

I open my mouth to tell her that I am not hungry but she doesn’t wait for that. She starts piling food into my plate. Bacons, egg, toasts, croissant...

“ I don’t know what you would like so you should try everything. ” Alma says lovingly.

“ I can eat anything. Thank you. ” I mumble, grabbing the fork.

Under the scrutinizing eyes of Alma and Ania, I might start choking

on my breath instead of eating.

Awkwardly, I take a bite of the egg and smile at both the ladies. They smile back, refusing to look away.

"How do you expect her to eat when you are looming over her like this? Do you want to make her choke?" Tristin's busy voice rings in the dining hall, sending me into a fit of coughing.

How does he know what's going through my head all the time?

"Grace." Alma pats my back worriedly and hands me a glass of water.

I take a sip, my eyes finding him over the rim of the glass. He is not looking at me but his brows are furrowed.

"Take in a deep breath." Alma urges, sounding concerned.

"She is fine, Mom." Ania chirps.

I nod too. "I...am fine."

"Eat slowly. No one is after you, Grace." Alma clicks her tongue and takes her hand off my back.

I nod again quietly.

Silence falls in the dining hall. Alma averts her gaze, not wanting to make me uncomfortable but Ania is still staring.

The carefree look in her eyes is slowly disappearing. A frown pinches her forehead as she places her chin in her palm.

"I feel like I have seen you somewhere, Grace. Even the name sounds

familiar. " She whispers.

Instantly, my shoulders stiffen. I swallow the bite in my mouth and glance at her curiously.

Her eyes widen, her chin dropping from her palm. " You are Grace Cal \_ "

" Ania. " Tristin interrupts before she can say anything.

Bewildered, Ania looks at Tristin. Her jaw hangs low, as her face slowly starts to turn red.

My hands shake around the fork. Grace Calder, that's what she must want to say.

" Tristin. " She lowers her palms to the table, staring at her brother.

A silent conversation happens between the two. Alma's gaze switches among her children as she questions.

" What is going on? "

" Nothing, Mom. " Tristin answers before Ania can.

Frustrated, Ania slams her hands on the table and rises. Her enraged eyes move to my face as she grits her teeth.

" You can't stay here. Get up! And get out right now! " She screams, startling me.

Like a spring, I jump up from my spot and turn away. I can't stay. I knew I couldn't.

" Ania, what is this tone? How can you shout at a guest?! " Alma

scolds.

" Mom. " Her voice softens. " You don't know who she is. "

" Who is she? " Alma inquires.

The walls seem to be closing in on me. I have no fault. I wronged no one. Why must I suffer this?

Clenching my hands, I rush out of the dining room and towards the main gate. I have to leave. I can't get insulted again.

" She is Grace Whitlock! Now Grace Calder! " Ania's loud voice follows me as I find my way out.

Reaching the main door, I pause. After her revelation, silence falls in the dining hall. No one asks questions anymore.

My heart sinks. With shaking hands, I pull the door open and step out.

Alma's kindness was limited to Grace. Grace Whitlock doesn't deserve any respect or kindness.

I walk away, moving across the driveway alone.

After reaching the metal door, I suddenly recall leaving the phone behind. My feet grow heavy as the guards at the gate watch me.

Slowly, I turn back to the mansion. My heart twists, embarrassment painting my cheeks red.

I will have to go back and face what awaits me.