

## Behind the Neighbor's Door - Part 15

Grace had been staring at the same estimate for nearly ten minutes before she realized she hadn't read a single number on the page. The spreadsheet sat open on her laptop, neat columns waiting for decisions she normally made without thinking. Instead, she leaned back in the chair and stretched, a dull ache pulling through her hips and lower back. Landscaping did that sometimes. Long days, heavy lifting, too many hours bent over soil and stone.

But her wrists were complaining as well, something that wasn't entirely explained away by work.

Eventually, she forced herself to finish the estimate, though she knew she'd have to double-check it later. Damn it. Office work was her least favorite part of running her own little company. She preferred working outdoors.

But even that was tainted.

As the work on her laptop concluded, Grace emerged from her little shed to tackle the day the best way she could, and the best day she would. Life among plants, fences, flowerbeds, and old oaks was what gave her work meaning, which gave it pleasant tranquility. Here, nobody could boss her around, not in such an intimate way anyway.

Though she felt her body ache.

Grace noticed it the second she had bent down to pick up the coil of the irrigation hose. A tight, unfamiliar soreness that ran, once again, through her hips, deep enough so that she froze for a moment before straightening again. Grace argued that landscaping could do that after a long job site, and she kept reminding herself that brushing dirt and thoughts of her hands and mind. Nothing unusual about any of this. It was just work.

It was such an annoying nuisance to be distracted like this time and time again. She had lost so much time to bullshit yesterday morning. And now, yet again, she had to deal with her mind drifting, not being able to focus.

*'Fucking Nate,'* she thought to herself.

Grace could just picture his smug face, standing over her, staring at her, going about his day as he left her cuffed to his bed. It was such a violation, and Grace was thoroughly pissed at him. Not only did he waste her time, but he had also violated her trust and boundaries. He had simply taken.

Taken her without asking, without permission, without concern. Without ceremony, pounding her, bestowing ownership and... and...

Grace tried to focus on the task at hand, digging up a trench to make way for a new bed of tulips and daffodils. She was kneeling in the grass, dirt in her hands, thinking of him. It was infuriating.

Her arms ached. Her wrists, still red. Her back sore. Her whole body was sore from Nate's rough fucking, from the way he had used her asshole as a fucking reward for how his meeting had gone.

Maybe Grace had to hire that second hand after all. She had been putting it off for an eternity, once and once again trying to argue for and against while not making any significant decision in either direction.

But one thing was for sure.

Grace hated losing time. It didn't matter whether it was a late delivery, a missed call from a supplier, or ten minutes wasted staring at a screen when she should have been working. And yet, she'd been sitting at her desk doing exactly that for more than she'd like, fingers resting on the keyboard, the morning slipping away like her entire Tuesday had. Though without any sort of restraint.

Grace rubbed her wrists. They were bruised, and it was mere luck that Nolan hadn't noticed. She had worn a long-sleeve tee, and Nolan would only notice what she wore and didn't wear if it was from the waist down, but that would only last so long. Luck and circumstance had saved her so far. And it felt dishonest.

Her phone buzzed in her back pocket as she carried the hose across the bed of small, cute flowers. It had before, and it did again. Grace huffed and puffed, but not from the hose; she was thoroughly annoyed with Nate and his fucking distractions. She put the hose aside and pulled out her phone, staring at it with disdain. She had to, and not because of Nate. It could just as easily been a customer.

Nope.

It was Nate.

With an irritated sigh, Grace swiped away the notification and shoved the phone back in her pocket with a huff. She went back to the hose, coiled it up. Her eyes flicked over to the garden next door. A few days ago, that had been her biggest worry.

Now, it wasn't even on the list.

Wallowing in second-guessing herself was something she swore to avoid; she didn't want guilt over exploring her sexuality with Nate, so Grace let herself re-experience the events of yesterday as she worked. Not just the physical aspects of being cuffed to a bed for hours, that in itself had been dehumanizing and humiliating... no, it had been far more than that. It had been the fact that Nate had pushed boundaries in such a way that he had never done before. He was never this brash, this forward... or maybe he was, and she was willfully ignoring it.

But Grace could still feel the handcuffs cutting into her wrists as she struggled against them. The hours of waiting.

What the hell had Nate been thinking? What if she needed to go to the bathroom? What if he crashed and died?

Grace threw out the hose, uncoiling it with a snap, and started digging the trenches she needed to bury the hose. It was kinda annoying as there wasn't room for her excavator, thus she had to dig by shovel and pick. At least it wasn't an extremely long trench, just a few yards. Her wrists were burning and she didn't even care.

The fact that he had done what he did without asking, and then fucked her tight asshole after leaving her helpless for a couple of hours, was both infuriating and also humiliating. It wasn't perhaps meant that way, but it served as a reminder of the difference between them.

*'Fuck him. Fucking piece of shit. Fucking asshole!'*

A woman like Grace was used to getting what she wanted, and for a guy like Nate to treat her like that just really got to her. She was proud, confident, and independent. Nate robbed her of that sense of self for hours.

She shouldn't have allowed that.

But, on the other hand... Grace was sore and her ass still aching, but that made her smile, remembering the intensity of her orgasm and how incredible his cock felt inside her. And it was her first anal experience outside a birthday night...

No matter what Nate's motivations were, he had done a good job. She didn't cum easily from anal like that. Grace wasn't used to a man treating her... how he had done it. Without any ceremony, any warning. Rough and raw. How her boyfriend had been left completely in the dark as his neighbor ravaged his beloved hard and thoroughly.

Grace tried to stay angry; she was still annoyed at the way she'd been handled, but the memory of what had transpired, his strong hands holding her down, his thick cock driving into her helpless body with full, rough thrusts, that strange power in how he fucked her. Something had been unleashed within her, and that bothered Grace more than anything.

She was not a weak woman, neither physically nor mentally. She didn't get steamrolled easily by anyone or anything. Grace liked being in control and, at times, dominating. That was her. No question asked. The idea that a guy could take her over like that was a new experience, and Grace felt more vulnerable than ever before. And she hated that.

Nate didn't just fuck her, no. He made her question everything. He didn't have the right, or the authority, to make her question her strength. Who she was. Her confidence and capability.

Grace was suddenly very tired, like the morning's work had been more taxing than it usually would be.

But no one had ever pushed her boundaries that far, either. At least not sexually. It had always been her pushing. And when that had gone beyond her, Grace hadn't allowed it to happen. Not ever.

There was no denying that.

And there was no escaping it. Throughout her day, Grace kept replaying those thoughts, trying to find the right way to explain them to herself. It was more difficult than it should have been, though.

Grace wiped sweat from her face, dirt on under her fingernails, her white tank top clinging to her chest with both sweat and dirt.

One thing was for sure: the shovel dug into the soil harder with each thought, every thrust as the ground resisted her efforts. Nobody would hold agency over her. Nobody would hold any kind of power over her.

A trench had never been dug as ferociously as that day.

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"Are those the basil plants you've grown out in the corridor?" Nolan asked, leaning over to see what Grace was making for dinner later the same day. "Damn."

"Yup, the corridor herbs are now dinner herbs."

Nolan chuckled, drawing in the scent of herbs and garlic, of meat simmering in its own juices, and a rich, full-bodied aroma of something. It was mouthwatering. They were in the kitchen together. Grace was making the late evening dinner, handling the sauce, Nolan cutting and washing the salad, and the rice cooking slowly.

Dinner was often Nolan's domain, despite his initial hesitance of being the one in the kitchen, but he found himself wanting to impress Grace, to take care of her and her needs, so he had worked hard, and quickly became a great cook in no time.

However, Grace wanted him to relax and she seemed to want some control.

Nolan had noticed that something was amiss. He didn't know what exactly, but something was different.

They ate slowly, talking about small things. Work, a client that Nolan had argued with, his pitches for the Tex-Mex restaurant landing well and them finalizing a long-term contract, them both musing over the herb garden Grace had been tending in the corridor, the resourceful woman that she was.

She hadn't been upset, no, nothing like that. More as if something was preoccupying her and he wasn't aware enough to catch what it was. So even after dinner, which turned out amazing indeed, he did the dishes without protest and made coffee. Made himself busy in other words while his girlfriend sat in the couch and zoned out.

But it was a nice night. The sun was still up, setting slowly in the distance. The windows were open, allowing a breeze to sweep through the apartment. There was the sound of traffic, yes, but the sounds of birds as well.

It was good.

Nolan put two cups of coffee down on the table, smiling at Grace as he did. She smiled back.

"So," Nolan said, settling down in the couch next to her. "How was your day?"

Grace looked up, as if the question took her by surprise. "Oh, yeah. Good." She sipped from her coffee, then frowned faintly. "I guess. I don't know."

Nolan waited a moment. He knew once upon a time he'd shrug it off and not be attentive. But he was older now, and this was Grace, and they were on a journey. "Everything okay?"

Grace gave him another smile. "Yeah. Just... I don't know."

"Is it Nate?" Nolan asked, hitting the nail on the head.

"He's being an asshole," Grace said, seeming to wince at her choice of words.

"Want me to beat him up?" Nolan asked, though with humor.

Grace chuckled and shook her head, leaning against him. "No. Just... he's being... annoying." Grace sighed heavily, as if the evening was finally letting her relax a tiny bit. "He just pushed too far yesterday..."

Nolan slumped down next to her. "Well, if Nate's smart, he'll give you some space."

Grace smiled softly. "I'd like that."

Nolan nodded, sipping his coffee. He was trying to play it cool. "You wanna talk about it?"

Grace shrugged. "I don't know, honestly." She sighed, then leaned her head on his shoulder. "Just... I need a break from him, I think. And, yeah, he's being annoying."

Nolan fell silent, as if trying to remember something. Or, to remember the right words or how to present his next thought.

"Well... Do you have lots planned tomorrow and Thursday? At work, I mean?" he asked, suddenly feeling unsure of himself.

"No, I don't think so," Grace replied. "Why?"

Nolan tried to make a casual shrug, then took a breath. "Maybe we could do something, just us? I mean, I talked to Josh about this penthouse we could borrow. It has a bubble bath, even a small pool, and there's a spa with a nail salon nearby."

Grace looked up, studying his face. "Oh. You wanna go there?"

Nolan nodded, feeling confident again. "Yeah. Just us."

Grace studied him for a bit longer, then smiled. "Okay. Sounds fun."

"We'll be back by Friday morning," Nolan said. That left the weekend open, but Nolan didn't think that far ahead. Two days away with Grace was already more than enough to look forward to.

"Why, you already took the initiative and booked everything then?" Grace teased. Nolan smiled sheepishly.

"Maybe. Maybe I did."

"Wow." Grace shook her head, still smiling, then gave him a small kiss. "You're really spoiling me."

"I know. But I love doing that. I want to do that."

"You're such a gentleman."

"I know." Nolan chuckled, sipping his coffee. "That's what you like about me, isn't it?"

"I do. You spoil me all kinds of ways, letting me do what I do, letting me have my career, taking me on trips," Grace began, and Nolan could tell something was troubling her as she went on. Not really upsetting her, but Nolan could tell something had happened for sure. Maybe Nate had done something, but Nolan knew if it was serious, she'd tell him when he asked. She knew she could trust him. But Nate pushing boundaries was his appeal.

"Hey, I'm not letting you do anything," Nolan said. "Nobody is letting Grace Harris do anything; she simply does things because that's what she wants. And it's cool that you do."

Grace moved her hand to gently cup his cheek. "Oh, you silly man," she muttered, leaning into kiss him. Really kiss him. "I'm sorry I couldn't be on the bed naked yesterday, like you wanted me to. How you commanded me... but... if you want, I might be tonight," she whispered, almost purring against his lips, and Nolan felt his heart beat faster.

"Yeah?" he asked, a bit dazed.

"Naked and ready for her *man*," Grace muttered, kissing him again.

"Oh, I like the sound of that," Nolan said, almost stuttering. He could feel her lips curving into a smile against his.

"You better get ready, then."

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It didn't take long for Nolan to get ready. He gave Grace a headstart of about five minutes until he couldn't wait any longer. As he entered the bedroom, he saw her lying prone on the bed facing him, with only a white thong covering her ass. It was such a nice, shapely ass, and the sight alone was enough to make him instantly salivate.

Grace had positioned herself with her head up towards him and he could see how her ass was high in the air and he could barely keep himself from taking a dive right at the morsel of an offering. Her petite breasts were lying against the mattress along with the rest of her slender, yet shapely body. Her blue eyes, a steel gray at that point, held his stare, and Nolan smiled. Damn, she was beautiful and she was all his... only she wasn't. Only she wasn't entirely his anymore.

But fuck that. Nolan didn't waste much time before climbing up onto the bed with her. Grace was his tonight. He loved this sight of her. The position, and especially the look of desire in those pale eyes. She wasn't even wearing any make-up, but Nolan didn't really mind that. In fact, she looked extremely sexy just as she was. His Grace...

As soon as Nolan approached, she raised herself onto all fours and kissed him hard. He responded with equal ardor and soon they were rolling around on the bed, entangled and caressing each other as the kissing became more urgent, the caressing and groping more fervent. They were the best of friends, but also a couple, and tonight they were nothing but.

Nolan was in her somewhere along the way, pushing and thrusting, groping and devouring as Grace's body received him. And the whole thing was so hot that Nolan could hardly believe it. He had a girlfriend, an extremely sexy one, and she was letting him do this to her. She was giving him a chance to live out a dream. And he was going to make the most of it.

But then Nolan grabbed her wrists, wanting to guide her in some way, but his plan fell short when he saw that Grace winced slightly. His eyes shifted up. How had he not seen it before? When had that happened? Bruises?

Nolan stopped in his tracks, pushing himself up slightly so he could see.

"What—" Nolan began.

"Handcuffs," Grace explained. Nolan looked down at her, understanding the implication, and it drove him... mad? Jealous? Full of lust? Grace bit her lip. "Didn't know I'd like it either." Nolan suddenly got a piece of the puzzle of what about Grace had been different, how Nate had been annoying.

"Oh shit," Nolan grunted. He wanted to ask questions, to demand an explanation.

But Grace suddenly pushed with her incredibly strong thighs, and suddenly Nolan found himself on his back, Grace holding his wrists instead as she rode his dick.

"Tonight it's just me and you."

"Just me and you," Nolan said.

Grace leaned down, her blonde hair falling to the side, her blue eyes steely. "Good," she whispered, her breath warm against his face, then her soft lips found his as they kissed hard while she took over. Her strong thighs were moving and gyrating, flexing and squeezing his waist. "Good boy," she grunted.

Nolan was putty in her hands as she rode his cock.

She was in charge, as she liked to be. She liked that he was giving in to her, surrendering to her as she took control and used his body for her pleasure. Grace was moaning, her voice a low, throaty sound that went straight to Nolan's cock. He was so hard. So fucking hard. She was moaning, and he was moaning, his hips bucking up to meet hers. His whole body was on fire, and he was in an agonizing heaven. He wanted to flip her back on her back again and give it to her, but no, they were doing this at her pace, the way she wanted it done.

Nolan was not about to deny her anything. He was going to give her whatever she wanted. Looking up at her amazing face as it tensed up from using him for her pleasure satisfied his mind and body on such a deep level. He wanted her to use him, to take her pleasure from him and he wanted to see her beautiful face contort as she did.

Nolan's own pleasure was almost secondary to that. Almost. He felt her hot pussy contracting around his shaft, and he knew she was close. Grace's breathing was becoming ragged, and she was moaning louder. Her whole body was trembling with the effort of fucking him, and he could see the pleasure written on her face. It didn't take long before her tongue pushed into Nolan's mouth, followed by muffled, heavy gasps as she came.

Nolan wasn't able to hold back and followed right with her, cumming as hard as ever, emptying himself into her body. He loved every part of her and every minute he spent with her. This was heaven.

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Nate checked his phone again at the red light, though he already knew there wouldn't be a reply. Grace wasn't the kind of woman who answered messages when she was angry, certainly not when she was angry with him. The city traffic crawled forward, engines humming around him, but Nate barely noticed it. Silence was information. If she had been truly furious, she would have told him. Nate would certainly know. Instead, she simply ignored him. Nate could work with that.

He had taken a great risk. A gamble. The cuffs and leaving her alone were impulsive. Taking her ass certainly was, especially in conjunction with those two. Any two of those might have played differently. All three had been reckless. But that was neither here nor there.

Grace had spent most of her time since yesterday afternoon ignoring him. She didn't reply, and Nate suspected she didn't even read his texts. But she was neither blocked nor had she indeed confronted him. She gave him a stern talking to after he had helped himself to her ass, but that was it.

Nate had pushed far indeed. Too far, and he had been reckless, and it was a possibility he would've ended everything. But he remained in her sphere. Nolan was none the wiser, from what Nate could tell.

And Grace was busy. Work alone consumed most of her days. Nolan filled the rest. That wasn't unusual. People's time was always divided between things that mattered. People lived by routines more than they realized. Everyone thought their lives were too busy for anything new, but routines always had gaps in them if you looked closely enough. Nate could be patient. Time had a way of redistributing itself.

Control and assertiveness over her own life, master of her own agency, were the virtues that built Grace. Nate had taken that away, challenged it. But nothing had truly broken. So it was flexible. Instead of ending her relationship with Nate, the boundary had moved.

Now he knew how far Grace would let the boundaries be bent. When challenged, Grace instinctively engaged instead of retreating. She pushed back. Grace being challenged so thoroughly, opting for processing it rather than rejecting, told Nate that perhaps Grace enjoyed control, but she was also open to experimenting losing it.

Perhaps that was why he excited her in a way Nolan didn't. And yesterday told Nate that if anything, she didn't mind losing control either as long as she believed it was her choice.

Next time would simply require patience.

Nolan was an interesting part of the equation. Nate had written him off a long time ago, the moment he understood what kind of man he was dealing with. Nolan trusted. Trusted Grace, trusted their arrangement, trusted that whatever they were doing together somehow made their relationship stronger. To Nate, it looked less like strength and more like a refusal to see what was right in front of him.

But that refusal, and that trust, was useful, and it made Nate value Nolan in some skewed way, at least as long as he served his purpose. Most men would have blown the whole thing apart by now. Suspicion alone would have done it. Nolan never let jealousy end it; no, instead, it made him want more. Never an accusation against any wrongdoing on Grace's part. Nolan trusted. Trusted his relationship with Grace, trusted his and Grace's "journey" together. He believed in Grace's control over the situation, believed she would hold whatever line existed between them. And as long as Nolan believed that, the door stayed open.

But the line certainly had been moved. Not far, but far enough to see where it bent. Grace was proud, stubborn, and territorial about her autonomy. But she hadn't slammed the door. Grace didn't walk away when she was challenged. She pushed back, sure, but pushing back meant engagement. Engagement meant the door stayed open.

Some people rushed things when they sensed resistance like this, but Nate had learned the opposite worked better. Pressure meant nothing without patience.

Grace believed she was in control of the situation. Nate had no reason to argue with that. People rarely noticed how slowly control changed hands. Hence patience.

Satisfaction faded quickly. People forget good moments faster than they forget the ones that unsettled them. Grace could have walked away from yesterday if it had simply been a good time between them, something pleasant to remember and easy to place among others. Instead she would replay it. Over and over. The waiting, the cuffs, the moment he came back, the way he

had taken her without warning. She would turn it around in her head, trying to decide whether she had allowed it or whether he had taken something from her.

That was the nature of anger. Anger demanded explanation. It demanded resolution. It circled the same memory until the edges wore smooth from repetition. Grace would spend the day telling herself she was furious with him, telling herself she had been pushed too far. But every time she thought about it, she would end up back at the same place: the moment he had taken control, had made her lose control. And as long as she was replaying that moment, she was still thinking about him.

And yes. Grace was angry. That was fine. But anger meant that she relived the same moment from yesterday over and over again, all without breaking their little dynamic. Grace would need time to process what had transpired. Silence would help with that. He just needed to give her space and let that silence do the work. He wasn't out yet.

Grace's time was already divided. She just hadn't noticed it yet.

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Folding the red nightdress she had bought for Nolan, Grace still felt Tuesday lingering in her body. That experience wasn't a walk in the park. What had transpired was more intense and... different than that. Rougher.

Nate persisted somewhere in the back of her mind, whether she liked it or not. The memory of him had a way of slipping in between thoughts when she wasn't paying attention. As much as he was a jerk, he was also part of the journey she had decided upon. And it had been her who had initiated it in the first place.

But Nolan was gonna sweep her away, whisk her off to a romantic penthouse up in Chicago, and it wasn't going to just be an escape to enjoy alone with him; this was an escape for the both of them to spend quality time together. It was a good feeling. Even as Grace double checked her work schedule for the next few days before leaving, making sure all her jobs could easily be handled over the weekend when she was back, a small smile spread across her lips.

It was a welcome escape from Nate. She just needed a break, a distraction. And Nolan had provided that.

Nolan had a knack for doing just that. Nolan had always been like that. Attentive. The kind of man who noticed things before she said them out loud. He had an empathy for others that was a rarity these days, and Grace found it to be a huge asset. And she could count on him, even when Nate had gotten a little out of hand.

The thought made her smile grow. She loved that about Nolan. And his ability to make her smile, which was exactly why they were doing this trip. Just a quick getaway, a very Nolan way of showing that he sensed just what she needed when she didn't even know it herself. He had even let her sleep in a bit this morning, her body getting the rest she needed.

Putting the dress neatly into her little suitcase, the sleeve on her sweater caught on the zipper, pulling up so that she saw her bruises. Grace looked at them and blinked. They were faint, but still there. Grace sighed, pulled the sleeve down, and went to find a black thong she knew Nolan liked.

As she zipped up her small suitcase and pulled the handle up, Grace found herself thinking again how different Nolan was from a certain lecherous neighbor, and honestly, she was so glad to have a guy like Nolan. Not a guy *like* Nolan. Nolan. He was easy to be around; that had always been his gift to her. He could sit and listen to her problems without interruption, offer sage advice when she needed it most with that smooth, sexy voice of his. He was always quick to respond with an honest smile, one that she hadn't seen nearly as much in recent weeks, not even during this special week they had arranged. One smile, one of those genuinely happy Nolan smiles, that would light up his entire face and make his eyes twinkle.

Grinning to herself, she rolled her bag out to the living room, finding Nolan standing by their small bookcase with his phone in hand. "All ready?" he asked, handing her a cup of fresh coffee, excited about life and its possibilities. "I just checked if there were any delays. We're good!"

"Yeah," Grace replied, setting the bag by the door before making her way toward Nolan. He smiled when she approached.

"Are you excited to get away for a few days?" He reached a hand up to run a strand of Grace's blonde hair through his fingers. The sensation was a welcome comfort from her tumultuous thoughts. His hand settled on the side of her face. He rubbed her cheek and chin and she couldn't help the warm feelings that bubbled through her chest.

He had put off work for a couple of days to surprise her like this.

"I think I needed it more than I even thought," Grace confessed as she leaned her face into his warm touch.

"Good," Nolan responded as he let his hand trail down the back of her neck. Grace instinctively moved closer, his fingertips leaving a tingle of heat where he had touched. "You've just seemed really busy lately. I wanted to be the one to do something nice for you, instead of vice versa," he admitted and smiled.

Grace smirked. "Well, that sounds like the perfect plan to me."

Grace took one last look around the apartment before they left. The light from outside fell across the couch, the small kitchen table, through the small hallway. Everything looked exactly the same. And yet, the last two days had made it feel slightly different.

As they walked past Nate's apartment a few minutes later, Grace felt something tighten in her chest. But she didn't stop to name it.

Nolan's fingers slipped through hers, clasped them tight in that comforting way he did, and the momentary distraction passed. It was just her and Nolan now. Her man, her love, and she was determined to put everything else out of mind.

Nate's antics had already dominated her head for far too much.

A couple of days away was gonna be perfect. Away from work, away from Courtington. Just Nolan and her.

And everything they still were to each other.

The routines of travel followed. Nolan took over the luggage and put in the back of his Equinox, letting Grace throw a glance across the morning sunlight shining down. Grace drew in long and deep, the fresh late summer-almost fall air filling her lungs. Courtington was waking up. The

town was already moving at a brisk pace, people driving to work, a jogger passed by, and the school busses honked. Everything was a rhythm.

At times, the simple fact that she and Nolan had spent the majority of their relationship there made Grace feel like the town had become part of their love story; a place of endless opportunities, and every day was a chance for adventure with him. From a young age Grace had been drawn to the easy-going small town feel.

"You're going to love this place," Nolan said as they drove their merry way.

"You sound confident," Grace said playfully.

And thus the car ride began. Maybe Nolan was right. Maybe a couple of days living the life they lived before Nate entered the picture would do them good.

"Of course I am," Nolan shot her a sly grin, reaching across to run his fingers down her bare arm and causing goosebumps to erupt across her skin. His eyes roamed back up to her face. "You know what they say, it's not the place that makes the vacation but who you go there with," he said, and his words had a bit of that corny movie line about it, but his meaning behind it was real.

"That sounds about right to me," Grace replied. "As long as you don't drive us into a ditch or something."

Nolan grinned and nodded. "I'll try my best!"

Grace chuckled, settling deeper into the passenger seat, watching the trees blur past the highway. For the first time since Tuesday, her shoulders loosened. She hadn't realized how tense she had been, but finally being underway, Grace felt herself relaxing.

The miles slid by with nothing but the quiet music playing from the speakers. When Nolan reached across the console and squeezed her hand, Grace noticed again the faint tenderness in her wrist. Nolan withdrew shortly after to focus on the road. The sun was bright outside, and the car was warm. The last couple of days were slowly fading from Grace's memory, replaced by the thought of the coming few days.

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Chicago was beautiful. It had its own kind of charm, and it wasn't the first time they'd visited the city. There was a lot to do there, and Grace loved that about it. It was the perfect place for a getaway. Nolan had always wanted to be a part of this city, but so far, he seemed to have settled in Courtington. Grace was glad of that.

She let her gaze follow the tall buildings as they approached, seeing the river off in the distance, and the lake glimmering behind them. Chicago had never looked better than it did in that moment, and she couldn't wait to explore it once more.

"I've missed this," Grace admitted, looking over at Nolan. He smiled as he parked the car and cut the engine.

"Me too," he replied.

Not long after, they arrived. Grace had sort of assumed it was a hotel, but if they borrowed the penthouse from Josh, he surely didn't own a hotel. The reception was a warm place, with nice decor and a few people milling around the lobby. Grace had to admit she was impressed.

"Damn," she muttered.

"Not bad, right?" Nolan replied with a grin.

The elevator doors slid open on the top floor, Nolan stepping out first as he was fishing out the keycard from his pocket with Grace following behind her. When the door opened, the first thing she noticed was the view. Chicago stretched out beyond the windows, sunlight glinting off the lake in the distance. Calm on the surface, deeper than it looked. It was a breathtaking sight.

And Nolan, the ever gentleman, held the door for Grace, letting her in first, smiling broadly as he was so excited to show what he had arranged for them two. He was proud of his effort. And why wouldn't he be?

"What do you think?"

Grace stepped inside and turned to him with a smile. "I love it," she said. She truly did. Even if she hadn't seen anything but the view, it would be amazing.

But as she stepped into the apartment, under the slightly nervous gaze of Nolan, she knew she'd fallen in love with the place before she'd even finished exploring it. The kitchen was spacious, the appliances state-of-the-art, and there was an enormous, plush couch in the living room. Through one of the doors, she could see the king-sized bed, and she smiled to herself. They were going to have some fun in there later, that was for sure.

"Well?" Nolan asked.

Grace slowly turned in a circle as she ventured into the living room. "This is amazing," she said. Her eyes fell on the patio and the view of the city below them, and she crossed to the French doors that led outside.

Grace kicked off her shoes and walked toward the doors. The city felt far away from Courtington. Far away from work and everything else.

She felt Nolan come up behind her and his arms around her. Grace rested her head back against him, letting the warmth of his chest settle her, feeling almost like a character in a movie, perhaps one of those noir flicks her dad used to love.

Nolan's hand slid down to her wrist, and she felt that faint tenderness again. She didn't comment on it, nor did she have to linger with it as Nolan's hand moved to the waistband of her jeans, pushing down under the fabric. Grace sighed softly as he found her bare ass. No doubt he wanted something.

She knew that if she let him, he'd devour her, and part of her wanted that, but she wanted to wash off the stink of travel first, and then explore some more. And eventually they'd have to find somewhere to eat as well, or at least order something.

"Down, cowboy," Grace teased, putting a finger on his chest and pushing him back.

Instead of abiding by her law, Nolan pulled her into a kiss and dug his tongue into her mouth with a groan. Then he let her go, gave her a light slap on the ass, and turned her toward where the bathroom was, giving her a gentle nudge.

Soon after, Grace stepped into the bathroom. For a moment, her heart dropped; she hadn't packed any towels, but her worries were laid to rest as she noticed two plush, white towels neatly folded on the edge of the sink.

Grace shed her clothes and stepped into the shower, letting the hot water rush over her. The tiles were warm and smooth under her feet. The shower stall itself was huge, the water pressure amazing. It looked to be one of those showers with massage settings too. She could stay in there for hours.

The warmth loosened the last bit of tension in her back. She let it run across her body, down her beautiful features, and it made her wince ever so slightly when it ran over her wrists. An ache that was still dull, but faint. Grace cupped one of her butt cheeks, still feeling some tenderness. She sighed, letting her eyes fall shut, and she stayed that way for several minutes.

When she finally opened her eyes, she heard Nolan shuffling around outside in the apartment, probably unpacking; the wheels on her suitcase being a giveaway. He would probably be ordering food soon. Cabinets opened as Nolan hummed his way around out there, probably pouring drinks. Wine, probably. Grace found herself wondering if it would be from some of Josh's stock, but let that thought trickle away.

After drying off, Grace put on one of the bathrobes hanging on the back of the door. She dried her hair and brushed it, looking into the mirror. Her face was flushed from the heat, and she felt relaxed.

A smile spread across her lips, and Grace thought she might take Nolan to the bedroom, to repay him for the wonderful surprise he had arranged for them. He deserved that much.

As she pulled open the bathroom door, she moved through the living room to those French doors leading outside. A soft breeze came through the glass and settled her damp skin. It was a warm day, even warmer than expected. Grace stood there for a few moments, just breathing. The city spread out before her, dark but glittering in the lights from the buildings, and the sun was low in the sky, casting a pinkish-orange glow over the lake and the surrounding land.

"Still like it?" Nolan asked, handing her a glass of wine as she stepped onto the balcony.

"I love it," Grace said again, taking a sip. It was crisp and rich on her tongue, and she smiled.

"This place is amazing."

"I'm glad you like it," Nolan said, setting his own glass on the railing. He drew her into his arms, and Grace put hers around his neck, holding the glass up and away so they wouldn't accidentally spill it.

Nolan kissed her then, and she kissed him back. There was nothing urgent about this kiss. It was sweet, the kind of kiss that could last forever. It was the kind of kiss that spoke of affection, of love, and Grace sank into it, feeling it settle in her bones, feeling herself relax against him. She felt safe with him. Safe, and cared for, and loved.

It was the kind of kiss that said everything they were supposed to say to each other. The kind of kiss that told her exactly what she meant to him.

He was still the man she had always wanted. That had always loved.

"Why don't you let me relieve you of some of that tension?" Nolan muttered. He cupped her ass again and squeezed, groaning as he did. Just hearing his reaction to her body, one that she worked so hard to maintain.

"Someone's eager to please," Grace replied, arching an eyebrow and taking a small step back. "Tell you what, since you've been such a good boy for me; this trip, being Nolan, everything, I have a reward for you."

Grace took another step back.

"Yeah?"

"Something you like..." Grave began, her voice low and sultry. "Something you love... to eat," she almost whispered, her eyes locked to his as she rested her ass against a small coffee table.

Nolan licked his lips, and Grace could see the lust in his eyes. Without further encouragement, he sank down to his knees in front of her, scooting forward as she parted her strong thighs, revealing his prize. His beautiful, pink, deliciously wet prize.

Grace took another sip of her wine and leaned back, letting him get closer to her pussy. "Go on," she encouraged him. "Taste it."

Nolan dove in with a groan, his tongue sliding between her folds. Grace sighed and ran her fingers through his hair, guiding him toward her clit. His hands slid up the backs of her thighs, pushing the robe up and out of the way. She felt his fingers digging into her flesh, squeezing her.

Grace's eyes fell shut, and her head lolled back as Nolan ate her pussy. His tongue was strong, and he lapped at her juices, his stubble scratching her skin in the best of ways. His fingertips pressed into her, and he groaned when she tightened her grip on his hair.

Her orgasm built slowly but surely as she rode his face. Grace knew how to draw it out, to tease herself, to tease him. Nolan was eager to please, and he was so damn good at it. But Grace didn't want to let him off the hook that easily. She wanted him to work for his treat, to make her feel like a goddess, like a queen.

She tried to hold back, to prolong the pleasure. But Nolan was insistent and relentless. His fingers tightened around the soft curve of her ass. Grace's head rolled from side to side, and she moaned, feeling that delicious tingling building inside her.

The tension in her body began to coil, to tighten, and she bit back another moan. "Don't stop," she gasped. She was close. She was so very close.

Nolan doubled down his efforts, working her clit until her thighs started to tremble, and Grace cried out. Her orgasm washed over her and she arched up, pressing harder against his face, his lips on her. His fingers bit into her as she rode her pleasure.

"Oh fuck," Grace groaned as she came down, finally letting go of his head. "Fuck," she breathed again, pushing his forehead back as Nolan tried to continue. He looked up at her with eager, excited eyes. "No, babe," she said, panting, reaching down for her glass of wine. She needed a second to gather her composure and to bask in her own euphoric bliss.

Nolan sat back, his lips and cheeks glistening with her juices. Grace felt a wave of affection roll over her. "Good boy," she praised him, stroking his cheek, running her finger over his swollen bottom lip. "Such a good boy."

He turned his head, nuzzled at her palm, and Grace smiled, her blue eyes meeting his dark ones.

"Okay," Grace said, her fingers digging into his locks again. "Round two."

"God, Grace," he murmured, but he dove in all the same.

Nolan was as eager to please the second time.

Grace closed her eyes, letting him work. Careful, attentive, the way he always was. For a brief moment, Grace wondered what it would feel like if he were the one to escalate. He'd be there on his knees, eating and worshiping her. But what if he simply decided to pick her up and carry her over to the bed, then throw her down, and have his way with her. Nolan was known to do a version of that, but never anything that would really take the reins from Grace's fingers.

But the thought drifted from Grace's head as she continued riding his face, the warmth of her climax building in her lower stomach, her grip tightening on his head, and she came a second time with that thought lingering at the front of her thoughts.

He didn't disappoint her. Not at all, and her body felt like a warm blanket as her orgasm finished, her hand gently cupping his face, her chest heaving as she took slow breaths.

She stroked his cheek again, smiling as his tongue darted out and licked his bottom lip.

They sat there in silence, Grace's breath slowly coming back to her.

Then the bell rang, making Grace jump slightly and Nolan laughed.

"I ordered food," he said, standing up. "Stay here, I'll get it."

And he left, leaving Grace sitting on the coffee table, her robe barely hiding her modesty. Thank god they were far up. Grace looked out on the city. What a scene... getting eaten out on the balcony overlooking Chicago.

She looked at Nolan as he walked away, and she smiled.

This was gonna be a great little holiday.

\*

"No work calls?" Nolan asked.

It was the morning after, a Thursday that felt and acted like a Saturday. It was odd how the whole week shifted just from what you did and how you distributed your time. Grace noticed how easily time could rearrange itself depending on what you decided to do with it.

"Not for a couple of days," Grace said, glancing at her phone before setting it face down on the small table beside the couch. "Everything is lined up for the weekend. The actual weekend."

Nolan grinned. "Then you're officially off duty. Finally I get you for myself for a few days."

Grace chuckled and leaned back into the cushions. She liked things organized. Work had its place. Time with Nolan had its place. When she gave her attention to something, she preferred to give it fully. No half measures.

"What, do you want an appointment?" Grace chuckled, earning one from Nolan as well.

"So. What do you want to do first?" Nolan asked.

Grace smiled. The question felt oddly refreshing. Not that she would expect anything different from Nolan.

"Well," she said slowly, glancing toward the windows where the morning was creeping in, almost similarly to how it did yesterday at their home in Courtington. Grace always loved mornings.

"There's the hot tub. The pool. And you mentioned massages and a spa, didn't you?"

Nolan nodded eagerly. "Josh said the place downstairs has one of the best spas in the city.

Grace hummed thoughtfully. That sounded like pure luxury.

"But I also feel like we shouldn't just stay inside the whole time," she added. "Chicago's too good for that."

Nolan leaned forward, resting his elbows on his knees. "So what's the plan, boss?" he asked.

Grace tilted her head slightly, considering.

"I don't know yet," she said. "That's the nice thing about this." She gestured vaguely around the apartment. "A couple of days where everything else just... takes a break. We're on holiday."

Nolan's face broke into a warm smile. "That means that you deserve it," he said. "We should do this more often."

Grace chuckled.

"Don't tempt me. I'll start putting it on the calendar."

"You already run half your life like a calendar," Nolan teased.

"That's because I don't know how to half-do things," Grace replied with a grin, earning a knowing nod from Nolan. "If I focus on something, that's what I do. I focus on it completely."

"Yeah," he said. "You definitely do."

Grace stretched her arms over her head and stood, wandering toward the kitchen with her plate from breakfast. It had been a slight worry if they had to run out and shop for breakfast, but like with the towels, there was food in the freezer and the fridge. The penthouse was probably used frequently.

"But yes, that's why breaks matter," she added over her shoulder. "A couple of days away... then you go back and handle everything again. You return to routine."

Nolan watched her move around the kitchen, stealing a glance toward her flawless curves, remembering how she had appreciated him thoroughly in bed after dinner last night, a smirk lingering on his face at the memory.

"You're weirdly philosophical this morning," he mused as Grace poured herself another cup of coffee.

Grace shrugged. "Maybe Chicago does that to people."

"Or maybe you're just finally relaxing."

"Maybe that too," Grace agreed.

She took a sip of her coffee and walked toward the windows, still mesmerized by the view, looking out at the city. Maybe Nolan wasn't so wrong in wanting to live here. Though, this was a holiday. Grace knew it was a nice place to remove yourself from everything, but living out of such luxury would lessen the value of it.

Grace rested her shoulder against the glass.

"I like knowing we can step away from everything for a bit," she said quietly, voicing her thoughts rather than just keeping them for herself.

Nolan joined her.

"And then step back into it. We rarely take breaks."

Nolan slipped an arm around her waist, affectionately, protective.

"Well," he said, giving her a quick kiss to her temple. "Today we're taking a break, stepping away."

Grace smiled, looking at a bird passing the window.

"So," Nolan continued. "Spa first? Or do you want to go explore the city?"

Grace turned to look at him, her eyes bright with the kind of excitement she hadn't felt in days. Maybe longer even. A very different one from the kind of excitement.

"Let's explore first."

Grace nudged Nolan to move, earning a pat on her butt, and went to get changed. She hadn't packed anything fancy, but all of it was flattering. And for once, as weird as that was, it was all for Nolan's eyes. Sure, others might look, but none of that mattered.

Grace settled on a simple, but sexy pair of black pants. As she pulled them on, she felt her wrists' tenderness linger. It was almost gone now. She also found a tight red top that she could slide a jacket over. She put her hair up into a ponytail, put on some light makeup, and when she looked into the mirror, Grace smiled. She felt good. She looked good. She could tell Nolan liked what he saw as she walked out of the bedroom, grabbing her bag.

"What do you think?" she asked, twirling around for him.

Nolan let out a low whistle. "I think I'm in trouble."

Grace laughed and grabbed his hand, dragging him toward the elevator. "Let's go!"

The streets were bustling with people, and it was busy. There was no real direction to their walking, and Grace enjoyed the chaos of it all. They walked past shops, restaurants, museums, and she even caught a glimpse of the river they had seen from the penthouse. The day was warm, the sun shining, and the air felt fresh. Grace realized how much she needed this, especially after the week she had.

She also noticed that the city could use some of her horticulture skills. So much potential. Except for the Clarence Buckingham Memorial Fountain. It was a massive water fountain that

sprayed water into the sky, making a spectacle of itself. The surroundings were a bit bare, though, in her opinion.

After a bit more wandering, Nolan took her hand and pulled her toward a cafe. Grace didn't protest, and she welcomed the initiative from her man. And she could definitely eat. The walking and the light breakfast had her stomach rumbling already. Or perhaps her and Nolan's night had burned enough calories.

As it was barely afternoon on a regular Thursday, they got seated easily, and took their time enjoying each other's company and the food. Grace even ordered Nolan a beer. She knew he wanted one, but she didn't dare, knowing her dislike of him drinking too much. Even yesterday he had been very careful about the wine. But one beer couldn't hurt.

\*

After a stroll along the river, it was off to the spa. It was coincidentally located right below the penthouse, though knowing Josh, there were no coincidences when he got something. But it was convenient and nice for Grace and Nolan not having to go far to get there.

Stepping inside, Grace felt herself slow down. It was quite the change of atmosphere as well. From the busy city energy, to calm, quiet lighting, eucalyptus and lavender in the air. The place looked like a tropical retreat, with a lot of greenery everywhere. Grace was impressed.

Nolan went and booked them a couple's spa and massage. Again, it being a Thursday afternoon, they were able to get a spot right away, with minimal waiting.

Grace went into her locker, Nolan his. As she changed into a robe and slippers provided by the establishment, she once again saw her wrists, but gave them no reaction.

Grace joined Nolan at a table out in the waiting room, where they were served tea and face masks while the massage room was getting prepped.

"See? A total break from what's at home," Nolan said.

"Only for a couple of days," Grace responded, but let herself relax. She could certainly live like this. Go all in for a while, then step away for a bit.

When they were finally at the massage tables, Grace lay down, feeling the smooth, warm massage table beneath her. The scents of lavender and eucalyptus filled her senses, and she felt herself drifting off. It was the kind of place you didn't want to leave. She heard the door open and close, and a moment later, she felt a warm, firm hand on her back.

As she felt the massage therapist dig into her muscles, Grace sighed, letting her eyes fall shut. The sensation was heavenly, and she found herself wishing she could just stay there forever. She was aware of how her body relaxed into the table, the tension seeping out of her as the massage therapist worked her over. Muscles loosened, her breath slowed, her body truly unwinding.

Especially when the therapist pressed into her lower back, pressed into her hips, she realized how tight and sore she had been there.

When the therapist pressed deeper into her hips, Grace inhaled sharply. For a second, the pressure reminded her of something else, a different kind of intent, control. The thought drifted away as quickly as it came.

Grace realized how her body had been carrying strain in a way she hadn't truly understood. She responded to the therapist's careful touches and when the touches were more forceful.

Next to her, she heard Nolan groan. She wondered if he had ever had a professional massage before. Probably not. Nolan never did that much for himself, and Grace made a mental note to change that.

Opening her eyes, she saw how relaxed he looked, which honestly made Grace smile a little.

The next part of the spa trip was spent lounging in the sauna. The sauna was warm and inviting, the heat soothing their tired bodies. Grace sat on a wooden bench, her head resting on Nolan's shoulder, the air thick and steamy around them. It was nice. The whole spa thing was nice, but Grace didn't want to make it a habit.

"Better?" Nolan asked as they both lay on lounge chairs, recovering from the heat.

"Much." She could almost hear the cute, proud smile on Nolan. "Maybe I should do this once a month."

"We'll schedule it," Nolan chuckled.

Some time later, they were off to the hot tub where they got their nails done, and a scalp massage that was so serene and relaxing it should probably be illegal, soaking up the luxury that came with being wealthy enough to afford this. Nolan had gotten the hang of it, too. He ordered Grace some more tea, and they relaxed together, letting the therapists work out any remaining kinks in their bodies.

The therapists then told them that the session was over, but to relax and take their time, and that refreshments were available while they enjoyed the facilities at their own leisure.

Grace felt loose-limbed and relaxed, resting on Nolan as they remained in the hot tub for a bit longer. The spa experience had been nothing short of amazing, and she was glad to have been given this luxury.

"You seem... different," Nolan said.

"How so?"

"Not so... stressed. Like you've let go of something," Nolan said.

"Perhaps I have. Or maybe I've learned a few things. Or both," Grace mused, eyes resting on a beam without really looking at it. "But yeah. I needed this."

"I'm glad I got you a bit for myself," Nolan said, not needing to elaborate further than that.

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The sun was already dipping behind the skyline as they emerged from the spa. Chicago had softened, the rush of afternoon settling into evening lights, and quiet conversation drifted from restaurants and bars nearby.

Grace slipped her hand into Nolan's hand as they walked, on the prowl for a place to eat. After exploring all day, they were hungry, and wanted something delicious to end the evening. They found a small Italian restaurant. It was narrow and smelled of garlic and red wine. The interior was dark and warm, with candles on the dark wood tables.

A waiter guided them toward a table near the window. Outside, Chicago moved in soft waves of headlights and people going about their business.

Grace slid her jacket off and draped it over her chair, Nolan holding it out for her. He watched her with that quiet, appreciative look he had never quite managed to hide.

"What?" she asked, smiling as she reached for the menu.

Nolan took his seat as he shook his head slightly. "Nothing."

That only made her smile wider. "No. Tell me."

He leaned back in his chair, opening and folding the menu without even looking at it.

"I was just thinking," he said, "that I got pretty lucky."

Grace raised an eyebrow. Nolan was never hard-pressed about compliments, but she liked to indulge in a bit of cat and mouse.

"Lucky?"

"Yeah," he said simply. "You."

Grace scoffed softly, though the warmth in her chest betrayed her. Even after all the admiration and downright worship Nolan gave her, she loved it when he was so truthful about the simplest compliments. She picked up the wine list and scanned it, with no clue what to look for.

"You say that like I just wandered into your life one day."

"Well, you did," Nolan chuckled, fond of the memory. "College greenhouse, remember?"

Grace laughed.

"Oh god. You were trying to keep that cactus alive."

"I was keeping it alive," Nolan said, feigning indignance.

"Until you didn't," Grace said. "You drowned it."

Nolan shrugged. "It was thirsty."

"God knows why you were even in that greenhouse to begin with..."

Grace shook her head, still smiling.

Nolan ordered them a red wine, which the waiter returned with moments later, along with two glasses. He poured a small glass for Grace to taste the wine, and when she approved, they got a curt smile and a nod. Grace took another sip, letting the warmth spread across her chest, refilling the heat from Nolan's compliments.

For a moment, they simply sat there, the candlelight soft between them.

Grace watched the street outside.

"Funny thing about routines," she said after a moment, swirling the wine absentmindedly in her glass.

Nolan looked up.

"What about them?"

"You think they're fixed," she said. "Then suddenly they aren't."

Nolan smiled faintly. "That's life."

Grace tilted her head slightly, moving her gaze from the street to him, studying him.

"You're very philosophical tonight," she teased.

"I'm sitting across from you in Chicago, drinking good wine after a wonderful day," he said. "Hard not to be."

Grace laughed again, widening Nolan's smile as a result.

Their food arrived not long after. Pasta, bread, and something rich with garlic and butter. The smell alone made Grace realize how hungry she actually was. It had been a long day with lots of excitement and experiences after all.

For a few minutes, they ate in comfortable silence. Music and chatter surrounding them, good food filling them.

Then Nolan reached across the table and brushed his fingers lightly over the inside of her wrist. The tenderness there had almost faded entirely now, but she still felt it faintly.

But it got no reaction from Grace any longer.

Instead, she leaned forward slightly.

"You know," she said quietly. "You've been very well-behaved this trip."

Nolan looked up, no doubt liking the sound of what she said.

"Is that a problem?" he asked, though one could almost say it was rhetorical.

"Not a problem," Grace said, sipping her wine slowly. Her eyes lingered on him over the rim of the glass. "Just something I noticed."

Nolan narrowed his eyes slightly. "I feel like I'm being set up."

Nolan was taking the bait, and Grace smiled slowly. She could swear she saw a shiver go through her man.

"Maybe."

He leaned forward a little. "What does *well-behaved* get me?"

Grace didn't answer right away. Instead, she reached across the table and took a piece of bread from his plate. Their fingers brushed. His so incredibly warm, her deliberate and strong.

She held his gaze once again.

"That depends," she said softly.

"On what?"

Grace tilted her head again while she considered him. Nolan had a half-crooked smile on his face, sensing something he couldn't put his finger on.

Then she leaned forward, like he had, and dropped her voice low and seductive.

"How the rest of the night goes."

Nolan blinked once.

Then he laughed quietly. "My, you're dangerous tonight."

Grace smiled. "Am I?"

For a moment, they simply looked at each other. Nolan looked at her like she had become a familiar, yet unsolved puzzle, intrigued and full of adoration. Grace looked at him... like one looks at meat.

Then she leaned back in her chair again.

"You know what's strange?" she said.

"What?" Nolan asked, surprised by the change of topic.

Grace glanced down at her wine glass. "I feel like I've been... different versions of myself lately."

Nolan frowned, a bit unlike before. More studying. He was gauging her, wondering if he was on the same page as her.

"In what way?"

Grace simply shrugged.

"I don't know," she said. "Work version. Holiday version. Normal life version."

She took another sip of wine, making a mental note to perhaps slow down.

"It's like life rearranges itself depending on where you are."

Nolan studied for a moment. Then he smiled, grounded in what he knew to be true.

"I just like seeing you happy." Grace looked up at him. "However that happens," he added.

For a moment, she didn't answer. He was saying more than he was letting on to, and so was she.

Then she smiled softly, reached across the table again, this time stealing his hand for a tender squeeze.

"You make me very happy, Nolan Bickle," she said, her tone once again soft and sensual.

Biting her lip, she slid her foot slowly along Nolan's calf beneath the table, and she had to stifle a giggle at his reaction.

"I'm glad," he said, his voice hitching as her foot reached his knee. But not higher.

"Good boy," she whispered.

The waiter arrived again, interrupting their moment. Grace let go of Nolan's hand and sat back in her chair again, but kept her foot on his knee.

"Is there anything else I can get for you?" the waiter asked as he collected their empty plates.

Nolan got the bill, and not too long after, they were out and about again, the couple meandering down the street, Grace with her arm through Nolan's. The air had cooled slightly, and the city lights now reflected in the river as they walked. For a moment, the two just enjoyed the quiet.

They didn't say much, but each was giggling slightly, playfully nudging each other as they drifted down the sidewalk, both with a buzz going on. Grace even more so, bumping into Grace with her hips, teasing him and letting her fingers run along his arm as they walked.

When Nolan leaned against a railing, Grace picked up her phone to take a picture.

Nate.

*'You disappeared?'*

She stared at it for a second. Then, without responding, Grace locked it and slid her phone back into her purse, rolling her eyes.

The two walked on for a bit, the message lingering in her mind longer than she wanted it to. Grace glanced at Nolan beside her. The steady way he walked, the warmth of him as he pulled her closer when they crossed the street, the easy confidence in his voice and in his general being.

Different. But good.

"So... what do you wanna do next?" she asked as they reached a quieter street.

Nolan pulled her into an alley, the noise and people fading away as he pushed her up against a wall, and kissed her. It was hungry, his hands on her ass, her own going around his neck, pressing him into her.

Grace could hear her phone vibrate, but didn't even consider checking it this time.

"Let me take you back to the penthouse," he muttered.

Grace raised an eyebrow.

"That eager?" Grace asked. "Careful that, you might think you're in charge tonight."

"To taste you again?" Nolan asked. "Always."

He kissed her again, and she kissed him back. He tasted of red wine and garlic, but she didn't mind it, especially when he dug his fingers into her ass, grinding against her. It wasn't overwhelming, but it was hungry, passionate, and desperate. She loved it. She loved him.

Then he pulled away, looking at her. His eyes were dark and full of desire.

"Take me home," she said quietly.

Nolan took her hand, and they made their way back toward the penthouse. They stayed close, their hands brushing.

\*

The elevator seemed like it took forever to rise to the penthouse. When the doors slid open, Grace pushed Nolan out, laughing as they stumbled inside. He grinned and kissed her again, pushing her toward the bedroom. They bumped into a table and knocked over a vase of flowers, but neither cared. They were too wrapped up in each other.

"I love you," Grace murmured, reaching behind her and fumbling with the doorknob. She failed. Whatever, Nolan pressed her up against the door instead, kissing her neck as he groped her breasts.

"I love you too," he muttered. "Are the jeans expensive?"

Grace turned them around, and pushed him against the wall instead. "You're not ripping them off," she laughed. "I'm not going to walk around without pants in Chicago."

Nolan frowned for a second, then laughed as well. "Fine. Let me get us inside."

He opened the door and Grace pushed him through, kissing him again as she kicked the door closed. Her hand dropped to his belt and she started working on his belt. Nolan kicked off his shoes and tried to pull off her top. Grace laughed as she tried to wrangle off his clothes.

"You're so eager," she teased, finally getting his belt off and unbuttoning his pants. She shoved them down and sank to her knees in front of him, taking his cock in her hand. She looked up at him with a smile. "I like that."

Nolan grinned down at her. "I'll be whoever you want me to be."

Grace smiled. That was what she had wanted to hear all night. Not that she'd tell him that.

"Good boy," she said instead, and leaned forward. She wrapped her lips around the tip of his cock, sliding her tongue along the underside of his shaft. He groaned, his hips twitching forward, trying to push deeper into her mouth.

She knew how much Nolan loved her blow jobs, it being a gift from a woman with no immediate reciprocation. And as he stood there, naked from the waist down, Grace could feel his cock growing harder in her mouth. She took him deeper, her tongue swirling around the head of his cock, her hands sliding up his thighs.

He groaned, his fingers digging into her hair, trying to guide her. She let him for a moment, letting him believe he had control over her. Then she pulled off with a pop and looked up at him again.

"Do you want me to keep going?" she asked, her voice low and seductive.

Nolan nodded eagerly. "Please."

Grace smiled. "Well... since you asked so nicely..."

She took him back into her mouth, bobbing her head up and down, her tongue tracing the length of his shaft. She worked his cock, listening to him moan and groan, his breath coming quicker. She could feel his body tensing up, the anticipation and desire building.

"God, I love watching you do that," Nolan muttered.

She sucked hard, hollowing her cheeks and using her hands to stroke his base. A low moan escaped her throat as she enjoyed the weight on her tongue and the sounds coming from him. Him, she could take all the way, and did. She took him deep, until she could feel the head of his cock sliding into her throat, until she couldn't go any further.

"Jesus, babe," Nolan said, and tightened his grip on her head, holding her still. For a moment, she didn't resist, but then she pulled off and gave him a pointed look.

"Be patient," she said, and continued stroking him, teasing him as he stood there panting, wanting her to return her mouth to his cock, and she could see it in his face.

Instead, she ran his cock all over her face, feeling so dirty with that big, wet hog painting her cheeks and chin. He groaned, and she felt his hips twitch, his cock throbbing in her hand.

"Grace..."

She smiled and took him into her mouth again, her tongue swirling around the tip of his cock. She tasted precum leaking from the tip of his cock, and she swallowed it down, savoring the taste of him.

She knew how close he was. She knew that she could push him over the edge right then if she kept up at it. She wanted him to cum. But it wasn't time for that yet.

So she slowed her pace. Instead, she trailed her lips up his length, and kissed his stomach, then settled back down to run the tip from across her lips, up her nose, smearing out toward her cheek. Her breath grew heavier as she did so, as that was something that never failed to turn her on.

"Such a nasty girl," Nolan said, looking down on her, his eyes dark.

"Maybe," Grace giggled. "But you seem to love it."

"I do," he agreed.

Then he grabbed her and lifted her up and against the bedroom door, making Grace yelp, caught off-guard for just a moment before she smiled into another kiss.

He reached for her shirt and lifted it over her head, her bra coming off next. She took care of her jeans herself, as they were indeed not on the cheaper side. His hands slid down her body and grabbed her ass again, lifting her and wrapping her legs around his waist.

He was so hard and ready for her. Grace couldn't resist him anymore, and he slid inside her, stretching her with that wonderful length, the friction and pressure driving her to moan against him. His lips found hers, and they kissed desperately as he began to fuck her, holding her up against the door. Grace rolled her hips, riding him, his cock rubbing her in all the right ways. Her clit, rubbing against him, was aching, ready to give in, but Grace wanted it to last a little bit longer.

Nolan's fingers dug into her skin, pulling her closer, trying to drive his cock even deeper into her pussy. She bit into his neck, muffling the moans coming from her.

"You're such a good boy," she whispered against his skin.

Nolan thrust his cock deep inside her, hitting that sweet spot inside her pussy again and again. The familiar tension of pleasure was building, like that delicious ache. The pent-up desire from the trip so far was finally boiling over. Grace felt her whole body tighten, felt like her skin was tingling with the heat of his body against her.

"Nolan..." she moaned, tightening her legs around his waist. "Harder..."

"Fuck," Nolan groaned, but he did as she told him.

He pounded her, fucking her hard against the door, their bodies thudding against it. She couldn't stop herself from crying out, from writhing against him, feeling the pressure of her impending climax growing. It was right there. Just there.

Right... fucking... there.

"I'm..." Grace moaned, the last shred of control leaving her as the wave of pleasure began to wash over her.

"Cum," Nolan groaned, thrusting hard and deep inside her.

Grace arched up against him and came, her body shuddering and trembling as the pleasure crashed through her. She held onto him, digging her fingers into his back as he fucked her, chasing his own orgasm. Her breath was coming in quick pants, her whole body trembling and shaking as she came. She clenched around him, milking him for the load she wanted to receive so bad. It would be so perfect to feel her man release himself inside her, for him to feel like such a stud as he filled her up with his cum.

"Give it to me," she moaned, her voice strained. "Give me your cum, baby. I want it so fucking bad."

"Fuck!" Nolan groaned, burying his face in her shoulder. He thrust hard and deep, his cock throbbing as he emptied himself inside her.

They stood there for a moment, panting and gasping, their bodies pressed together. The cool wood of the door felt good against her skin, and Grace shivered, a smile spreading across her face.

"Oh my god," she breathed, her chest heaving.

Nolan chuckled softly and kissed her neck. "That was incredible."

Grace giggled, the sound escaping her involuntarily.

"Yeah, it was," she said, and leaned her head back against the door, closing her eyes.

She felt her body go limp, the afterglow washing over her. Nolan was still holding her up, his strong arms keeping her secure and safe. It was perfect. Everything about the trip was perfect.

"You're such a good boy," Grace repeated. He hadn't reacted negatively to it earlier.

Nolan smiled, and gently let her down, his cock slipping out of her, making her gasp.

"Damn, cowboy. You didn't hold back," Grace chuckled. "My legs are wobbly."

"Glad I can give you what you want," Nolan responded.

Grace smiled.

But somewhere in the back of her mind, she wondered if that was entirely true.