

## Grateful

I'm forever grateful for the day we met, it was the start of us and we didn't even know it. He, who has comforted me every time I have fallen, the times I go hysterical, he who has watched me make progress, congratulating me. He's there for the greatest parts of my life, as well as the complicated bits. He saved me in every way that a person can be saved.

### *New York (age 21, October 15, the day of the meeting)*

The fresh wind swirls around me as I step out of the doors, wrapping me with the cold. I shiver, blowing on my hands, wishing to have brought my gloves.

As I reach the lunch place of the day, Subway, I grab the ripped notebook paper that holds the beloved orders for everyone at work.

I approach the long line, checking my watch every second. I can't stand just waiting for barely an inch to move ahead. It's dreadful. Patience has never been a virtue of mine.

I grimace and try to focus on anything but the line. My hands start to shake, and I hide them behind my back.

A finger taps my shoulder.

My whole body fills with warmth from the touch. Something so simple shouldn't feel like the way it did. I turn around to face the person.

A tall, bronzed man greets me. His eyes, a rich honey color.

A warm smile reaches his face, "Hi, excuse me. I was just wondering what's good here, what do you recommend at one of the most beloved sandwich places ever?"

My eyes solely are set on him.

"Oh! Hi, sorry," I check my pants, rubbing the wrinkles left. "Sorry, yeah. I would say it depends on your mood. I love the Philly, and also the supreme meat. I love meaty things, but it depends on what you like."

His grin widens. "I'm sorry, I just wanted to find a way to talk to you, I noticed you from when you came in. I'm Roman, what's your name?"

My cheeks turn flush, "I'm Isabella, it's nice to meet you."

"Nice to meet you too. Do you think we could talk after, maybe after you order your sandwich?"

By the way, I love the Philly too." Roman added, still with the stupid smile.

I nod, and make my way up to the counter. I ask for the orders of my colleagues, checking each one off, just in case I forget one. After the workers at Subway finish the sandwiches, I gather a few bags of subs and make my way over to Roman.

His smile returns once he meets my eye. Roman rises and pulls the chair in front of him.

I smile, and then freeze. It hits me that I'm supposed to be at the office right about now.

"Oh my gosh, I'm so sorry. I totally forgot that I had to actually come back to work." I rise from my seat quickly. "I lost track of time, and-"

"Can I get your number? I just really enjoyed talking to you, and I want to get to know you better." Roman grins, that stupid smile.

My stomach rumbles with butterflies, "Of course, here."

As I leave, I swear that eyes are poking at me. I turn around just to see him looking at me, still smiling.

***New York ( age 21, second encounter)***

My phone rings.

**Roman**, it says.

My heart swells. Even though I've only met him once, and at a subway. I still long to know more about him.

I picked up, "Hi Roman."

"Hi, Isabella." He grins through his phone.

I pinch at my cuticles, "So, what are you up to?"

"Nothing much, I just wanted to know more about you."

Oh. "Okay, fire away."

He questions me about everything, it feels. From my family, to how's the dynamic with them. Do I still talk with them, no? He asked if I've always lived in Chicago. My beliefs, hobbies, pastimes, passions in life. He wondered what I thought about the mysteries of life. He got to know me in just an hour or so.

Although, he never asked if I suffered from anything, what I'd be like if you lived with me, or how long you can put up with me. He didn't ask, and I want it to stay that way. I want him to know the best parts of me, I want him to like me.

"Hey, do you want to hang out tomorrow or some time soon?"

I hesitate. Knowing my faults, knowing how I get when I get myself in too deep. And I know that I fall, and I land hard.

"I would love to."

***Rockefeller center , ny (age 21, December 31, new years eve)***

The lights before the ball drop shined beautifully.

Roman wrapped me in his arms, his warmth radiating. Even layering was not enough for New York.

The cold air blew, wrapping us in its cold blanket.

"I know I told you this, but I'm so happy you came with me." Roman smiled, his nose red.

I kiss his cheek, smiling. "Me too."

I was nervous, coming here. I was never too sure if my emotions would peak out that day, if they would scare him away.

Never mind that, I fixate my focus back on the drop for the new year.

"It's starting, babe. Look."

The crowd begins to count down.

Everyone chants: **5, 4, 3, 2, 1**

"Happy new year!"

The couples make their way closer to each other, and share a New years kiss.

Roman cups my cheeks, pulling me in.  
 His lips are soft, despite the cold. He's warm and enchanting. He thrills me.  
 Roman smiles as our lips depart, longing for more.  
 "Do you wanna move in together?" He breathed.  
 My heart grows with warmth, and I begin laughing.  
 His eyes gaze at me, grinning.  
 "Of course I do! I love you." My cheeks hurt from smiling so much.  
 Roman's eyes grow wide, a fire lit within him.  
 He brings me closer to him, and our lips crush with each other. He bewilders me, leaving me breathless.  
 "I love you too," He proclaimed, his eyes never leaving mine.

***New York (age 22, April 5)***

"Babe, do you know where I put my credentials? I need them to show that guy, the boss."  
 Roman chuckles, shuffling through a stack of papers on the counter.  
 I smile to myself. "I found them," I handed them to him.  
 He sighs, relieved. "Thank you so much."  
 Roman kisses my lips, still the same as the first time.  
 I wrap my hands around his waist, leaning into him. "I wish you didn't have to go, you could stay here with me," I sing.  
 He laughs, his hot breath on me. "Me too, but you can focus on your work now. As well as presenting them at the showcase."  
 I sigh. I've been promoted, meaning now I dictate a lot of what goes out on the runway. I choose to pick and pull from everyone, seeking an opportunity for someone's ideas to shine.  
 "You're right, I'm still gonna miss you." I kiss his neck softly.  
 He grins, kissing me one last time.  
 "I love you, Isabella." Before he rushes out the door.

***New York (age 22, May 20)***

My mind is getting the best of me, is what I tell myself.  
 Of course he wouldn't cheat, he's not like that. I remind myself.  
 But then again he loves to go to work every second it feels like. To please someone? To pleasure someone? Working his way to the top?  
 I think of every possible way, and it drains me.  
 My legs are shaking, vibrating me as I rock in place. I attempt using my breathing tactics that they taught me.  
***Breathe in, breathe out.***  
 Nothing.  
 I try to remember if I took my pills today. I did, I breathe.  
 I'm just overthinking it, like I often do. He wouldn't do that, he loves me.  
 I've fought with this since he's gotten the job.



It's my fight, really. I blow up with him, my feelings gathering throughout the day, curious about what he's doing. My mind soon wanders to places I don't want it to, it scares me.

A few hours pass, the time being 6:00 pm.

The door opens.

"Hey Isa, how are you?" He sets his case on the stool.

I nod in reply.

Roman smiles softly, his eyes weary.

He sits next to me on the couch, caressing his hand on my thigh. "I love you."

My eyes gravitate toward him, no matter how much I want them to stay away. I don't want to be the problem, I don't want to hurt him.

"Your voice is soothing, you calm me down." I scooch towards him.

His grin widens, and he wraps me with his arms and hugs me tightly. He kisses my hair over and over, almost as if he's afraid I'll leave. Although, I'm the one afraid. Frightened, maybe, if he would ever leave me.

### **New York (age 22, May 30)**

There's water running, and glass shattered on the floor.

My mind is running a million miles, my eyes dazed.

I sit bare by the bathtub, not quite ready to go in.

I haven't taken my pills in a few days, and it destroys me.

My thoughts eat me alive, gnawing at me every second they can.

I cover my ears, praying for a moment of silence.

The water begins to trickle out of the tub, reaching my butt.

I smile.

Footsteps lead to the bathroom, silence follows.

I don't have the courage to lift my eyes to him. He's my favorite person, the best one I know. I'm scared to disappoint him.

He clears his throat, "Isabella, what happened?"

My throat bobs, I mumble. "I don't know, maybe you should tell me."

Roman raises his eyebrows, his forehead strains. "I didn't do anything. What were you doing?"

I glance at my feet, the broken glass glistening, "I was trying to kill myself, Roman."

His eyes widened in disbelief. His legs tremble, "Isabella. I don't think the pills have been working, maybe if-"

My eyes scraped to him, my voice harsh. "I haven't been taking my pills, Roman."

Roman swallows, nodding. "Okay, we can get you other help. Therapy maybe? Whatever it takes."

I cover my eyes, afraid to let him see me cry. I refuse to let him see the worst in me, how I really am. I don't want him to regret pursuing me. Tears ran down my face.

"Okay, thank you. I don't know what's happening to me. I've just been having these thoughts, I'm sorry. I trust you, even if it's hard."

**SGE, 9th Grade, RESA \_\_**

He bends down, careful for the pieces of glass. He grabs the towel on the counter and wraps it around me.

"Isabella, you're my home, I will never leave. Don't let those thoughts ruin you."  
I hug him, grateful for how much support he shows me, each time. He still shows up. He chooses me.

Word count:1877