

ONCE LIVED BY

Grace's descent into bitterness was gradual, like water eroding rock over time. Each day at her job chipped away at her once vibrant spirit until all that remained was a shell filled with resentment and loathing. The daily prayer she once held dear now felt hollow, its words mocking her as she trudged through each monotonous day.

As she entered her workplace, the facade of civility she wore crumbled, revealing the true depths of her disdain. 'Fuck my life,' she muttered under her breath, a mantra that echoed in the empty caverns of her soul.

Despite her inner turmoil, Grace maintained a facade of diligence, her outward actions a stark contrast to the turmoil raging within. But beneath her carefully constructed mask, a storm brewed, fueled by the injustices she perceived around her.

The toxicity of her workplace, the endless cycle of complaints and backstabbing, gnawed at her sanity like a relentless predator. With each passing day, Grace found herself consumed by dark fantasies, visions of retribution dancing behind her weary eyes.

What was once a prayer for blessings and protection had morphed into a plea for release from the suffocating grip of her reality. The boundaries of her territory, once defined by hope and optimism, now seemed confined by the walls of her own despair.

In her darkest moments, Grace found solace in the thought of causing pain, a twisted reflection of the kindness she once sought. The line between victim and perpetrator blurred, and in the depths of her despair, she found herself teetering on the edge of a precipice, poised to descend into the abyss of her own making.

But even in the depths of her despair, a flicker of humanity remained, a tiny ember amidst the encroaching darkness. As she grappled with the demons that threatened to consume her, Grace clung to the fragile threads of her fading faith, a beacon of hope in an otherwise bleak landscape.

And so, as she stood on the precipice of despair, Grace uttered a prayer not for blessings or protection, but for deliverance from the abyss that threatened to swallow her whole. 'Amen,' she whispered, the word a bittersweet symphony of resignation and defiance, a testament to the fragile resilience of the human spirit.

As the day progressed, Grace found herself lost in a labyrinth of discontent, her mind wandering through the corridors of her imagination in search of an escape from the relentless monotony of her existence. The images that flickered in her mind's eye offered glimpses of freedom, tantalizing possibilities that beckoned to her like distant stars in the night sky.

She couldn't shake the nagging question that plagued her thoughts: How could people endure such profound misery yet maintain a facade of normalcy, pretending that life was but a whimsical wonderland? It was a paradox that gnawed at her sanity, a puzzle with no solution in sight.

Amidst the chaos of her inner turmoil, Grace's workday trudged on, each passing moment

weighed down by the burden of unspoken grievances. But just as she began to resign herself to another day lost in the abyss of mediocrity, a glimmer of hope emerged in the form of her boss, Brad.

'How are you doing, Grace?' Brad's voice cut through the haze of her thoughts, a beacon of warmth in the cold sea of her discontent.

'Doing just fine, boss. How are you?' Grace replied, her words a practiced facade masking the storm raging within.

'Living the dream as always, aren't we. You sure you're okay? You don't look like you're feeling that good. I can see it in your eyes,' Brad's concern was palpable, his words laced with genuine empathy.

Grace hesitated, the mask slipping momentarily as she wrestled with the urge to confide in him, to unburden herself of the weight that pressed upon her weary shoulders. 'Yep, I'm fine. Just have a lot on my mind, Brad,' she replied, the words tasting bitter on her tongue.

'If you need anything, just let me know, Grace,' Brad's offer hung in the air, a lifeline tossed amidst the tempest of her despair.

'Trust me, I will. And thank you,' Grace murmured, her voice a fragile echo in the vast emptiness of her workroom. And with that, she retreated into the solitude of her thoughts, the promise of salvation lingering like a wisp of smoke in the stillness of the air.

The hate festered within Grace like a malignant tumor, its tendrils winding their way through the recesses of her soul, poisoning every thought and emotion with its toxic influence. Trapped in the suffocating confines of her small, solitary room, with only the mechanical hum of her machine for company, the weight of her misery bore down upon her like an oppressive blanket.

As she gazed at the flickering orange light dancing mockingly in the darkness, Grace felt herself being drawn into its hypnotic embrace. Time lost all meaning as she stared, transfixed, the lines between reality and illusion blurring into a hazy oblivion. Minutes stretched into eternity, and before she knew it, nearly twenty minutes had slipped through her fingers like grains of sand.

But as the tendrils of panic began to coil around her chest, Grace's fragile grasp on reality faltered, and with a sudden rush of terror, she was consumed by a tidal wave of fear. The room spun around her in a dizzying whirlwind, the heat of her own breath suffocating in her lungs as she struggled to draw air into her constricted chest.

Desperate to escape the suffocating grip of her panic, Grace stumbled from her workstation, her vision swimming with dark spots that danced mockingly at the edges of her sight. With each faltering step, the world seemed to tilt on its axis, her limbs heavy and unresponsive as though weighted down by the burden of her own despair.

And then, with a sickening lurch, Grace's world collapsed in on itself, the ground rushing up to meet her with bone-jarring force. As she lay crumpled on the cold, unforgiving floor, her mind a whirlwind of chaos and confusion, a single thought echoed in the darkness of her consciousness:

'I'm going to die.'

The director of the company, Director Brighton, emerged from the fray like a guardian angel amidst the chaos, his steady hand reaching out to lift Grace from the cold, unforgiving ground. With gentle yet firm hands, he guided her into his private office, settling her into a plush chair with an air of practiced calm.

As Grace sat trembling, her vision still clouded by the remnants of her panic attack, she couldn't help but feel a pang of embarrassment at the spectacle unfolding before her fellow coworkers. Their concerned gazes bore into her like a spotlight, stripping away the last vestiges of her composure and leaving her feeling exposed and vulnerable.

'Call 911, Grace does not look good at all,' Director Brighton's voice cut through the tense silence, his tone laced with urgency and concern.

'Sorry, I don't know what is wrong with me,' Grace mumbled, her words barely audible above the din of panicked whispers that filled the room.

'Just relax, Grace. The paramedics will be here soon,' Director Brighton's voice was a soothing balm to her frazzled nerves as he pressed a cool towel to her clammy forehead, the sensation offering a fleeting moment of respite from the turmoil raging within her.

As the wail of sirens pierced the air, signaling the arrival of the paramedics, a wave of relief washed over Grace. With practiced efficiency, the paramedics swooped in, their trained hands moving with precision as they assessed her condition and prepared to transport her to the waiting ambulance.

As Grace was escorted through the bustling work plant, she couldn't help but notice the curious stares of her coworkers, their eyes following her every move with a mixture of concern and intrigue. In that moment, amidst the chaos and uncertainty, a spark of realization ignited within her: she was destined to stand apart from the crowd, to forge a new path and make a name for herself in a world that had thus far seemed indifferent to her existence.

At the hospital, Grace's husband materialized at her side, his presence a comforting anchor amidst the storm of uncertainty that raged around her. Word of her incident had reached him through the grapevine of workplace gossip, and he had dropped everything to be by her side in her time of need.

Hours passed in a blur of tests and examinations, each moment stretching into eternity as Grace waited anxiously for answers. And finally, after what felt like an eternity, the doctor emerged with the results: all tests came back negative, confirming that Grace had indeed suffered nothing more than a severe panic attack.

With the weight of uncertainty lifted from her shoulders, Grace felt a flicker of hope begin to stir within her weary heart. Perhaps life wasn't as bleak as she had once believed. Perhaps there was still a purpose to be found amidst the chaos and confusion of existence.

As she lay in the hospital bed, her husband's steady presence a reassuring reminder of the love and stability she had in her life, Grace resolved to look on the bright side. Yes, it had been a terrifying ordeal, but it was just a panic attack, after all. Things could always be worse. And with that thought, she closed her eyes, allowing herself to drift into a fitful yet hopeful sleep, the promise of a new day awaiting her on the horizon."