

GROW UP ALREADY!

Written by Anira Baker

A wave of Nostalgia washed over me when memories of him and me together flooded my mind.

There, Galen and his girlfriend were quite close and happy as they talked to one of their best friends amidst the crowd in our hometown's Municipal Park, Tildaria.

It was obvious from a few meters away that they made a good couple.

"I think you're ready to tell me what happened between you and Galen," said a deep, grave voice that I recognized instantly.

I tensed up and turned sharply in his direction.

Era Niall.

She gazed at me with her intense blue eyes that seemed to pierce my soul as if it were an open book.

My best friend was outrageously attractive. He was wearing plain black trousers and a black blazer. Underneath, he wore a dark navy blue crop top which concealed a muscular body that must have been incredible because of our self-defense training. Niall and I always we put together to practice the way we fought and because of my six foot eight and my innate talent, I was a very good opponent for him.

There I wore a black battle uniform, which is what I wore before coming here, and now I've brought a fussy navy blue jumpsuit that contrasted with my dark brown hair.

I looked at his face again.

She had messy light brown hair and a smug smile that said, "I know I am Well", adorned her face.

I rolled my eyes, feigning annoyance to hide a smile, and cursed loudly enough for him to hear. Niall chuckled as he walked over to the chair in front of me.

As we got closer, I noticed that his expression became more serious.

I swallowed hard, feeling a tight lump in my throat, and focused my attention on Niall.

"It was one of the hardest decisions I've made to date," I murmured.

He gestured with his hand to encourage me to keep talking.

Then, automatically, the memory of the last day Galen and I spoke alone came to me, and I told him about it.

I left through the back of the Bastro bar, desperate for some air.

It felt like I was being strangled and half-opened the mouth with the hope of regaining its former state.

I needed to get out and away from the crowd gathered inside the bar. Suddenly, my head started to spin, and I felt like I was going to faint at any moment.

The therapist advised me to go outside to calm down if the attack I felt anxious in a place like this.

And that's what I did.

I snatched the back and head resting on the wall with eyes closed.

I took deep breaths, paying attention to the cool breeze and how, despite the chills that sent it transmitted to my bones the calm I needed to achieve.

I smiled in relief as I noticed my breathing slowing down until that peace was replaced by a jumble of nerves due to the noise of the door where I glimpsed. Beside her was the silhouette of a man whom I recognized immediately.

Galen.

"Are you okay?" he asked, looking at me with obvious concern.

- Vete, Galen - I blurted out Even with my eyes closed - I want to be alone right now.

"I'm not leaving until I tell you what I came to say," he said, adding later, "I want to spend more time with you, Yelena."

I was so stunned that I opened my eyes wide to look for any sign of a lie.

I only found sincerity in his face.... No. Could it be... decided?

He never openly expressed his feelings for me, he never even spoke to me with that conviction, and now that he was... I was speechless. I never saw this coming. Although, I had hoped he would make the first move. I wasn't one of those women who communicated their feelings without think about it. Or at least before she began to distrust people. If she had a choice, she would choose the option that meant not getting hurt: running away.

But that no longer tempted me, and instead I said:

"We can't, Galen," I shook my head. "I still need to improve as a person and I'm not ready to start a romantic relationship with you."

I watched him approach, my eyes fixed on his every move. I've always been aware of him. I never had to turn around to know if he was nearby; my body already knew him. In fact, it was as if a magnet drew me to Galen.

"You didn't say you didn't want to," he insisted.

I gave him a small smile.

"And it's true, I want to do it. I won't deny it," I paused. "Even so, it doesn't mean I can."

He approached me again and took my arms with his hands just inches away.

"I've only just begun to step out of my comfort zone and regain hope of having friendships and romantic relationships," I told him honestly. "Niall, Stacy, and Will encouraged me to see more of the world on my own. I still have so much to discover."

"We'll do it together!" he exclaimed excitedly, reaching out to cup my cheek with a gentleness that shook my heart. "I could show you the places I've been and we could go to restaurants just the two of us," he continued, his eyes smiling and dreamy. "Don't tell me that what we have is impossible."

"That's how it is, whether we like it or not. I want to have fun with sex with a man without commitments and focus on healing the wounds of the past." I swallowed, noticing my throat was closed, and took a deep breath to gather my courage. "I can't give you what you want, Galen."

He winced in pain and lowered his eyes as reality hit him right in front of his nose.

"I can't give you what you want either, Yelena," I nodded understandingly. "If I did, it would be forced, and I just want you to be happy."

"I know," I admitted with my eyes closed. "I want the same for you."

I wished this was just a nightmare.

That when I woke up we'd be in bed kissing like a happy couple, and my lower lip wouldn't be trembling, my stomach wouldn't be churning, and I wouldn't be thinking that those lips would be tasted by another girl. But when I opened them again, the sharp pains cracked my soul into tiny holes as I saw her glassy eyes, and that's when I remembered that this was reality.

- Are you sure about this?

Her voice sounded trembling, and I smiled, waiting. transmit a serenity that I knew false when in reality my chest was tearing apart.

- I do. It's the best thing to do, and when you meet someone who trusts you more than I did, you'll understand.

He sighed in defeat, and that's when I realized that I had finally convinced him, but only just.

- Okay - she focused her attention on me, looking distressed - I didn't think it would end like this.

I felt sorry for him and so many tears accumulated in my eyes that they clouded over from the effort of holding them back.

- I didn't think so either - tartamudeé noticing that this was a farewell.

Galen hugged me tightly and I almost burst into tears because of the unspoken words I carried inside and understood as if they were my own.

I wasn't ready to say goodbye yet.

But I had to do it.

Because we couldn't be friends. At least not right now.

Not when what we felt went beyond simple friendship.

Friends didn't notice each other the way we did.

The only thing we could do was enjoy the rest of the night without we move away from each other until we had to leave from the Bastro bar at dawn, reluctantly.

When it was over, Niall came over and wrapped his arms tightly around me, which I gladly reciprocated.

"You did the right thing, Yelena," he rubbed his hand affectionately along my back. "You were strong to let him go and you showed how much he means to you," he said, proud and admiring.

I smiled at him tenderly.

- Thank you for talking to me, Niall.

He gave me a genuine smile.

"No, thank you for telling me in the end," he said gratefully. "It means a lot to me that you did."

A comfortable silence settled between us at the same time as we were giving off from the hug close enough that our noses almost touched.

My close friend and I don't we were moving away their eyes on each other.

I promised myself that it wouldn't happen again so as not to lose the friendship that had formed between the two of us and the one I had with Will and Stacy.

And there we were again.

He pointed out of kissing We were like the last few times, with my gaze fixed on his lips and my skin burning from the trace left by his hot caresses.

I still had the memory of his lips pressed against mine, devouring me with an experience I lacked.

"I want to spend more time with you," Niall said with determination and without fear.

That?

- And not only that - he continued - I'd also like to fuck you - he paused - I wanted it from the first moment I saw you and I held back because you were Stacy's best friend and you liked Galen.

THAT?

"I haven't had sex with any woman since you came into my life," Niall told me on one of those days when we were unable to control the latent appetite we had for each other.

A smile spread across my face at the memory, but it vanished almost immediately. He noticed it, and his brow furrowed in concern.

- Something wrong?

I exhaled to try and calm my main concern about going out with Niall.

- What if we hurt each other without knowing it?

"Listen to me carefully," he asked me firmly. "I will never hurt you, Yelena, and I won't let anyone else do it, ever," he swore with passion and determination. "If there's one thing I learned in therapy, it was to be a good communicator with others, and that's what we're both going to do."

His eyes became sweet, as did his voice.

"Do you remember the day I dragged you out of bed two days after you and Galen broke up?" he asked, lost in thought and with a tender smile.

"How could I not? You were so persistent you became unbearable," I teased, amused.

- And you were quite a wild one and you still are - he smiled amusedly - It's one of the qualities I love most about you and that's why, and for everything else, I'm never going to hurt you.

I nodded.

I know, somehow I've always known. You showed every time we were staying at your house or mine to watch a movie, and when we go out, just the two of us.

As I recalled those memories, my body trembled with the desire that coursed through my veins to the place between my legs.

Niall and I never kept our distance if the opportunity arose. It was as if we were tied to a rope that pulled us together. stretch as we moved away from each other. When we were preparing dinner. Or when watching a movie, we always...we were pressing to seek physical contact between the two of us and more than half the time we looked at each other with a flame that seemed like it was going to burn the house down.

Unconsciously, my gaze shifted to Niall, who had a mischievous smile plastered on his face that said, "I know what you're thinking."

I bit my lower lip and he gasped excitedly at the sight of that movement.

What could I do to hear that sound again?

"Don't look at me like that, Yelena," he said, fixing his gaze on my lips and then on my eyes with lust and desire.

"Like what?" I teased him in a seductive voice.

- As if you wanted to eat me.

There you go.

I blinked I was shocked by his words. I never got used to Niall saying things bluntly, and I imagine he'll continue down the same path in the future.

"Go out with me, Yelena. Whether as boyfriend and girlfriend or just friends with benefits," he continued, "The only thing that matters to me is being with you because I like you a lot and I know that feeling is reciprocated," he said gently. "I'm not going to judge you and I'm not going to demand anything you don't want," he finished.

For the first time in two years, I considered having a deep relationship with someone other than Galen.

I have to admit, the idea thrilled me. Niall always turned me on so much that I felt like I might explode at any moment because of how intensely I wanted him.

It was time to let go of fear and grow up, just like I did with Galen, although this time I had to dare to explore the beautiful and intense connection that was growing with every beat between us. So, I cupped his cheek and said firmly:

Yes, I want to go out with you, Niall. As much as I'd like to kiss you right here and now.