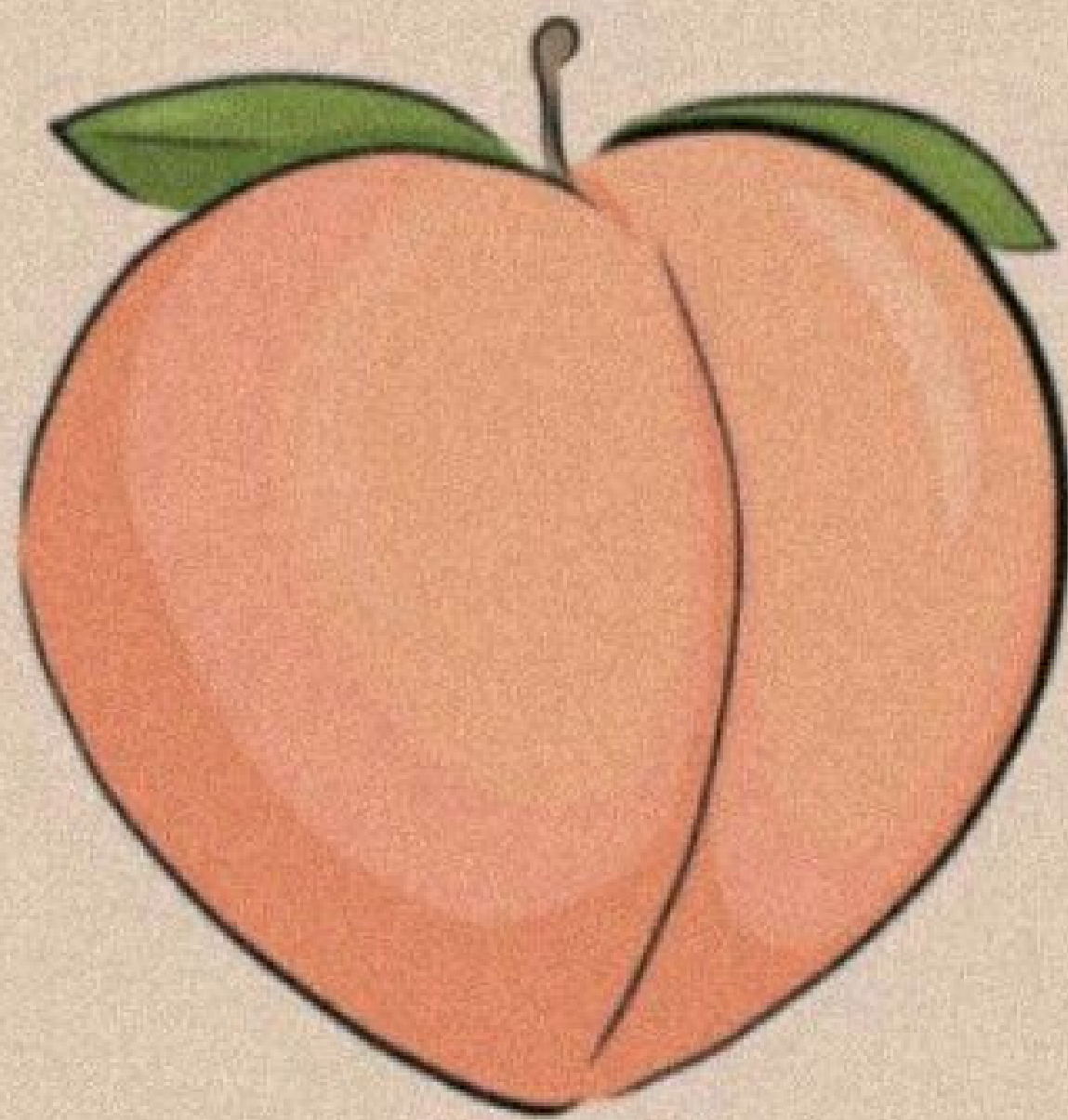


Peach

Grace



With enough encouragement from Maya, Joaquin, and Rafe, I had finally decided to go see Peach. It took a lot of thought, but I couldn't avoid it any longer. I walked into the park, which seemed bigger than usual. From a distance, I saw Catalina and Daniel. Catalina waved at me, and I walked over. I was immediately embraced in a huge hug. "I'm so glad you could come!" Cataline said. I hugged her back. I felt relieved to know that Peach had someone to hug her like this every day. I looked over and saw Daniel crouched down, babbling something. I walked over to him. That's when I saw her.

A wave of emotions suddenly hit me. With her curious brown eyes and button nose, she resembled both Maya and Joaquin. Her hair was curly and brown, which reminded me of how Melissa looked while holding Joaquin. I wonder if she had looked down at us and admired us like this before having to let us go. What was she feeling? Did she feel the same wave of emotion I did at that moment?

I couldn't say but I'm sure she felt something similar. The feeling that is to be a mother is like nothing I've felt before. I don't think I can explain what I'm feeling. I don't think any word in the world could explain this feeling. Seeing Peach like this makes it hard to leave her. How could I not visit her until now? Why was I trying to forget about her?

Peach is a part of me, she always will be. I have decided. I won't run anymore. I'll stay right here, with Peach, and make sure she never wonders about who her birth mother is. Never has to go through what I did just to find the woman that gave birth to her. I want Peach to know who I am and know why I had to give her to Catalina and Daniel. I want her to know that I love her very much and would never abandon her.

I looked at Peach again. She's so beautiful. It's weird thinking that I created her. I reached out to her. Peach grabbed my finger with her tiny hand. I don't know why, but I suddenly started crying. Tears were dripping down my face and onto Peach at one point. She kept smiling though. She deserved the world and I'm going to make sure she gets it. I notice that Catalina is calling out to me. "Oh- yes?" I say. "Daniel and I will go grab some ice cream for everyone. Will you be okay with taking care of Milly while we're gone?" Catalina says.

"Oh, we'll be fine...you two can go ahead"

"We'll be back soon, sweetheart" she says and heads off with Daniel.

It wasn't too hard to figure out that she was just giving me some alone time with Peach. But I didn't mind that.

I looked down at Peach once again. I wiped the tears off of my face and smiled at her. I slowly leaned in, and at first gently caressing her cheek. She was so beautiful, and she would grow up with two loving parents, and she would have a good life. I wrapped my arms gently around her, one hand supporting her head and the other around her back, as I picked her up. Her curious eyes wandered my face as I rocked her back and forth in my arms. Did Melissa hold Joaquin in her arms like this? Were the same questions I'm asking myself going through her head? I held Peach until Catalina and Daniel came back. Peach was playing with my hair and I heard a car door open and close. I looked up and Catalina smiled and waved at me. I waved back at her and smiled. Once they got the bags out of the trunk and came back to the porch, I put Peach back in her baby carrier basket.

"Are you going to stay for ice cream?" Catalina asked.

"Ah, I would love to, but I should be getting back home soon," I said.

"Oh that's fine, here, take some with you," She said, pulling a small tub of vanilla out of the bag. She handed it to me and I accepted it. "Our treat," she smiled.

Later, Catalina walked me to my car with Peach in her arms.

Daniel was taking things from their car into the house, and eventually walked over before I left.

"Thank you for visiting, Grace." Catalina said, and I nodded. She looked over at Daniel and nod, handing Peach to him. He smiled down at her, and look up at us and say, "I'm going to go feed this little one. & yes, Grace, thank you for visiting."

"O-Of course, it was nice to see you...and Milly," I smiled. Daniel headed back inside after the three of us had a small chat. Then it was just me and Catalina.

"It was really nice to see you, Grace. You can drop by any time, alright?" She said.

I nodded and smiled slightly, saying, "Yeah, and it was nice to see you too."

"You have us on Facebook, right? Do you need my number? We can stay in contact and I can send you updates about her," she said with a smile.

We exchanged numbers after that, and then I unlocked my car. Before I got in, she hugged me tightly and said, "You are so strong, and so brave. Thank you, again, for bringing this light into our lives, and visiting today."

I nodded and saw there were tears in her eyes. And soon, I realized tears starting welling up in mine as well. She wiped hers away and said, "Have a safe drive home, Grace, and we'll stay in touch?"

"Thank you, I will, and yes, of course.." I said.

Then, I got in my car, and started on my way back home. That was that, and I felt...good. I felt reassured. I wiped away my tears and arrived home. I got out and walked up to my door; unlocking it. My parents were sitting at the dining table and looked up when I walked in.

"Sweetie, how did it go?" My mom walked over slowly. I just looked up at her, and I smiled.