

Manhattan, New York, September 2014.

“YOU’VE BEEN AVOIDING ME.”

Aisling started at his voice, but didn’t move away. There was no place to go. He could find her anywhere. “Take a hint.”

She resisted the urge to roll her eyes. Was it too much to ask to have a few minutes to herself before Rori showed up for a latte? Apparently it was since her supernatural stalker tracked her down again. If only she could stab him with his own athame...

Slipping gracefully into the booth, the nightmare tossed a satisfied smirk at her annoyance. Eternally striking and beyond arrogant with it, he was cleanly shaven with the faintest of shadows just forming along his jaw. Mirrored aviators hid those magnificent green and gold eyes which were sure as anything locked to hers. Always searching, always probing, he missed nothing. Ever. Mr. Radar Love himself. So he wanted to know what she was thinking? She focused on sending her most pissed off thoughts straight to his brain. *Dick!* Demon! Dick Demon. How do you like that? Too bad the worst insult she could come up with was *demon*. She needed to find a better word. ‘Asshole’ just didn’t adequately express her loathing.

Trapping her hand, he stroked her palm, smiling tightly, the expression filled with all the warmth of Antarctica. “He was at your house. What did I tell you about that?”

She tried to snatch her hand back, but he simply ground her knuckles together. She tugged. Nothing moved. Two could play this game. Pasting on a fake smile, she dug her nails into the back of his hand, pressing against the corded tendons until the skin popped and blood flowed, or what passed for his blood anyway.

“I haven’t been *seeing* him. I couldn’t even if I wanted to thanks to your little shock collar.” She jabbed her thumb at her neck just in case he forgot where he’d marked her. “He wanted to talk about visitation. We have a son together. I can’t avoid him completely. Surely even you can understand that?”

Leaning across the table, nearly overwhelming the small space, he lowered his voice so it barely vibrated over her skin. “Oh, I do understand. I understand how important Sean Michael is to him.” Without taking his eyes from hers, he flicked the salt shaker with the tip of his finger. It exploded in a snowstorm of crystals. “And to *you*, little mother.”

Gasping at the impact of glass in her cheek, she swallowed hard and pointedly withdrew her nails from his hand. The crescent-shaped tears knit together instantly though the blood dribbled onto the tablecloth. Clearly satisfied that he had her full attention, he relaxed against the back of the booth and crossed his legs.

“His girlfriend is dead. Consider her a warning.”