

At 6:55, a rap sounded on the front door.

Despite Danica's best intentions, her heart raced as she went to answer it. Titus stood on her front porch with a bouquet of mixed flowers, a bright blend of daisies, asters, sunflowers, and carnations. It was so adorably old school that her heart quivered. She hadn't planned on inviting Titus in, but she couldn't dump such a thoughtful gift on the side table where they stashed their mail and keys. Belatedly, she realized he was staring at her, like full-on gaping.

"Are you all right?" she asked, instead of a more conventional greeting.

"I...think so?"

"You don't sound sure."

"It's because I never realized beauty could be a blunt object before."

"Are you saying that you've been assaulted by my attractiveness?"

"A little? In a good way," he added quickly, with a smile so bright that she considered fishing sunglasses out of her purse.

"Did you want to come in while I put these in water, or will you be pressing charges?" She tried to mask the smile, but it pulled at the edges of her mouth and got clean away from her until she felt it tugging at the corners of her eyes.

"I'll let it go this time, ma'am, but I need you to stop dazzling others with such a complete lack of regard for their safety. How many people must have driven into poles because of you?"

"It's a lot," she said somberly, placing a hand over her heart in mock remorse.

His gaze followed her motion and glanced over the curve of her breast. Well, that was why she'd worn this dress in the first place, but damn if she didn't love the color glazing his cheekbones. Danica fought a frisson of pure desire. For some reason, she wanted to touch Titus more than anyone she'd ever met. Her other hand drifted toward him like they were literally magnetic, but at the last minute she plucked the bouquet from his grasp.

"I have no doubt."

For a few seconds, she had no idea what they were even talking about. Right, the joke about her hotness putting drivers at risk. Smiling, she hurried to the kitchen and prepared a vase with water, adding sugar and vinegar to keep the blooms fresh longer. When she came back, she found Titus still standing in the foyer, studying the candid photos she and Clem had collected over the years.

“This must be your cousin,” he guessed.

“Correct. Her name is Clementine, Clem to her friends.”

“Waterhouse, as well?”

Danica nodded. “Our mothers didn’t change their names when they got married. It’s a...unique family quirk. Waterhouse women were feminists long before there was even a word for it.” That was the closest she could come to explaining their witch heritage, but he seemed to take it in stride.

“That’s fascinating. Would you keep your maiden name as well?”

“If I ever got married? Definitely.” She flashed him a teasing grin. “But you’re pushing ahead again. At the park, you were all about your bed and meeting your dog. Now you’re asking about my wedding plans.”

Titus went rigid, eyeing her with tangible fear. “I’m sorry, I didn’t mean—”

“Relax, I’m teasing you. One moment...” Danica went into the front room, visible from the foyer, and set the flowers on the coffee table, adjusting the magazines so the arrangement looked as if it had always been there. “How does that look?”

“Beautiful,” he said, but he wasn’t looking at the bouquet or her impromptu efforts at interior design.

Butterflies fluttered in her stomach. Though she was trying to control her reaction to him, there was no doubt that *he* was gorgeous. Beard perfectly trimmed, hair tousled in gentle curls, long lashes, thick brows, and a jaw so chiseled that statues would be envious. That didn’t even account for his broad shoulders, defined arms, and the soft brown eyes currently gazing at her with so much warmth that her toes curled.

Her magic sparked a little and she felt it in her veins, like when she tried to cast after downing too much champagne. Not a mistake she made anymore, but she’d been young and reckless once. With effort, she sealed the fluttering current of her magic and walked toward him. She could tell that he’d dressed carefully for their date, ironed his pants and shirt. Really, she was more interested in dragging him upstairs and stripping him *out* of those clothes than in finishing this date properly, but it was too soon for that. Titus didn’t seem like the sort of man who was looking for a hookup, and she couldn’t have anything serious with him. *Ugh, why is he so delicious?*

“You’re staring,” he said huskily.

“So I am. Should I apologize?”

“It depends on why.”

“Shall I be tactful, or do you prefer the truth?”

He flinched, as if he secretly suspected there must be some terrible reason. “The truth is always best, even if it’s disagreeable.”

She took a step closer. “I was thinking that your clothes would look better on my floor. We’d better go to dinner if you want to get out of here with your virtue intact.”