

I've been seated among the dozens of other passengers for the past two hours, watching the gate times change a number of times before I see the plane actually arrive. Just as I'm powering my phone down, preparing to board, an awful stench burns my nose from a few inches away. A middle-aged man with greasy black hair and a thick lip-covering mustache who smells exactly like the inside of a port-a-potty has found a reason to sit directly beside me in a row of empty seats. When my eyes unfortunately meet his, he takes the opportunity to speak to me. "Heading to Boston?" he asks. I raise my eyebrows and force a tightlipped smile. I simply follow that with a nod and give him a *no shit* look. "I heard winter's coming early this year," he continues.

"Cool," I mumble with a sigh. I pull a magazine out of my bag and open it in front of my face, hoping to block my vision of the man's blackened-stained grin. But it's only seconds before I'm taken back when his finger sweeps down the bare skin of my collarbone.

"What does that mean?" he asks, pointing to my tattoo.

With a smooth motion, I lay my magazine down onto my lap and place my hand over his, giving him the false notion that I'm a gentle person. I take the opportunity to offer him a slight smile before I twist his forefinger backwards as far as it will go before the expectant snap. "I'm sorry," I say sweetly. "Did I tell you it was okay to touch me?" I pull down a little harder, and he smiles in response to the pain. But as I hold my hand there, I see the smile begin to fade.

"It's a free country, chicky," he sputters as his tongue knocks around between his bare gums.

"Why would you think it's okay to touch me?" I ask again, keeping my voice calm, yet stern. He licks his lips and looks me up and down, responding with only a look. "Do you go around touching girls half your age because you feel it's okay?"

He clears his throat and looks around to see who's watching or listening, but I don't move my eyes from his. "Why not?" he says, shrugging his bony shoulders. "Besides, you're *definitely* asking for it."

He thinks I'm asking for it? I'm wearing a fucking scoop neck, black long sleeve shirt, jeans, and combat boots. "The only reason it's okay, is because no one has ever probably told you no. But it occurs to me that after I snap your finger off your hand, you won't be able to touch people inappropriately anymore, will you?"

He hoots with laughter, dragging in attention he probably shouldn't want. "You think you could break *my* finger, little chicklette?"

I pull his finger a little further, and his smile grows. "Ow, stop. You're hurting me," he puckers his lips and winks at me.

"Oh, look, it's your right hand. You a righty?" I turn his hand over and see deep callouses bubbling on his palm. "Yes, you are. So, if I rip this thing off, you wouldn't miss it, right?" I turn his hand back over and glare into his beady eyes. He's questioning my words. He's unsure of my capabilities. And that's fine. "Sound okay to you? Or are you going to leave and stop touching people?" His smile fades and his eyes widen. I release his hand and offer him a smart-ass smile. "Oh, and the tattoo means death. It's a Maori Warrior symbol. They used to eat their enemies once they slaughtered them. Cool, huh?"

I see his Adam's apple struggle to move. He lifts his bag from the ground and nearly trips over his own feet, darting away.

I reopen my magazine to the page I was reading and refocus my attention on an article as I hear a soft chuckle coming from the other side of me. I turn to see who was enjoying the free entertainment and I'm faced with a man who looks to be either a wrestler or in the military—black shaven hair, stiff jaw and bulging muscles on every inch of his arms. His eyes are currently focused on a book, and I suppose he could have been laughing at that, rather than me. But as I

question it, his large shamrock green eyes lift and look right at me. A slight grin tugs on the corner of his lips, and he winks so quickly I'm questioning whether it was me who might have blinked. Before I can react, he stands up and walks away.

I swallow hard and refocus my attention on the magazine once more. Stupid attractive man causing a moment of feebleness. I didn't react, though. He winked at me. I think. And I didn't make a snide comment or scowl. Weakness.

I let out a few short breaths, regaining my composure. He's gone. It's fine.