

I stumbled into Kieran as a tremor moved through me, the hairs on my arms stood at attention like tiny lightning rods. “Do you feel that?” my voice sounded breathless, even to me.

He glanced sideways, “Feel what?”

“Look.” I held out my arms to him, “I feel strange. Like someone...” I rubbed my slightly numb hands over my forearms and sucked in a breath, as he hooked his head around. I fell into step beside him. “Never mind. It’s probably nothing.”

*This happens when lightning’s about to strike, right?*

The heat from the sun radiated off the few cars parked along Boutique Row, their owners engaged in mid-afternoon shopping. Store fronts displayed the new and trendy ‘must-have’ dresses, shorts, and shoes for the spring season. I paused to see my reflection. Not a hair was out of place. Thank God.

The Coffee Grind’s signature cinnamon dessert scent wafted through the air and my teeth hurt with the memory of sinking them into it time and again. What I wouldn’t give to be able to park my back end on one of their leather wing-back chairs and crack open a book, while the fire crackled next to me in the original stone hearth.

“Earth to Zoe,” Kieran’s gentle voice broke my trance. He poked my shoulder. “Are you going to order or what?”

My face flamed. “You could’ve ordered for me.” I rummaged through my purple backpack. “You know I get the same thing every time.”

Kieran watched me rub my arms, as he told the cashier, “She’ll also have an ice water.” He tilted his head toward the menu board. “Anything else?”

“Did you order me a chai?” I asked.

He nodded.

“Cause you know I can’t function without a good cup of—”

“You can’t function with it, either.”

Then I turned my attention toward the clerk, unsure if I recognized him or not. *I hope he doesn’t know me.* “Nothing else. Thanks.” I handed him some bills.

“How’s track going, Zoe?” the clerk asked.

*Damn.*

“Think you’ll make it to State?”

I realized he was a sophomore on the team. Our paths crossed during several meets. He looked thin in his black polo shirt, and I knew a mirror would reflect a similar physique in me, though my lavender sundress tried to disguise it.

I shrugged. "I have fast times, but we'll see. If I don't make it this year, there's always senior year."

My fingertips skimmed the glass display of mammoth muffins and assorted pastries as we moved down the aisle to the 'Pick-up Here' sign. A heavy coffee aroma hung in the air.

A figure in dark clothing with yellow-tipped, spiked hair stared at me from outside the glass entrance door. His eyes narrowed on contact with mine.

Chills rushed through my body.

"Order for Zoe."