

Kirsty had noticed the man the moment he walked into Joe's, recognition sending shivers down her spine. She had expected him, but not so soon after his sister's recent visit.

Kirsty couldn't help but notice Iain Young. At six-foot-three and well-muscled, he was an impressive man. He looked a lot like his father, Drew. If you didn't know any better, you would have thought he was a professional athlete. He had the build for it.

That was not what made Iain stand out from the crowd. It wasn't those arresting blue eyes. It was far more than that. Iain Young had a presence, an intensity about him that suddenly made Kirsty uncomfortable.

If ever a man looked like he could mean trouble, he was now standing at the entrance of Joe's Coffee House, surveying the shop with an almost disdainful expression on his face and his hands confidently resting on his hips. His hands pushed his coat and the suit jacket under it open, revealing the muscled, sculpted chest, underneath a crisp white shirt.

Of course, that expression on his face immediately made Kirsty's hackles rise. There was nothing wrong with Joe's. Well, Joe's might need a lick of paint, but otherwise there was nothing wrong with it. Painting, however, was a project on the following year's to-do list.

Gorgeous or not, that clearly unwilling customer could turn around and go back to where he came from if he wasn't happy. Her regulars loved Joe's and they were more important than a city boy who only dropped in here to stir trouble.

Iain hadn't moved. He was still quietly scanning the crowd inside the restaurant as if he was searching for someone. Kirsty had no doubt he was searching for her, even though he might not know that yet. She, on the other hand, had the advantage of knowing who he was. She had recognized him from the day of his father's funeral just over eight months ago but he, being Iain Young, had not even known Kirsty had attended the funeral with her grandfather. He didn't know who her grandfather was, and therefore Iain didn't know who Kirsty was.

Kirsty's first instinct that day was to feel angry when Iain had walked past them, so close they could almost have touched, without speaking to her grandfather. Did he care so little about his father that he didn't know that Joe was one of Drew's best and oldest friends?

A few minutes later Kirsty had changed her mind when she saw Iain's face. The expression was fleeting, but she had witnessed the sheer and utter desolation when Iain fixed his eyes on the casket. She guessed that he had to possess strong willpower, allowing him to bury his own grief, because he almost immediately pulled himself together in order to help his younger siblings to deal with their grief.

That one moment, Kirsty had wondered who would take care of Iain. Her only consolation was that he was not alone in his grief. They were three siblings who could help each other.

Kirsty, on the other hand, only had her grandfather's loyal friends, the staff at Joe's and long-term customers, who helped her through her grieving when her grandfather passed away not even four months later. There were no family left on either side of her and as her godfather, Iain's father, also passed away, Kirsty had no one else.

Eventually Iain's eyes drifted to Kirsty where she was standing behind the counter. For a brief moment, their eyes met and held, before Iain broke eye contact and continued his perusal of the interior.

Kirsty took her time to study him, again noticing the dark brown hair, shortly cropped but somehow messy on top, as if he had pushed his hand through it several times. He kept his beard and moustache neatly cropped, leaving only stubble that did nothing to hide his slightly fuller lower lip and the high cheekbones.

She didn't know much about men's fashion, but Kirsty could almost bet that Iain's whole outfit, from his designer suit and tie to the expensive Italian shoes would cover her expenses for several months.

Her breath hitched when she realised that Iain's eyes had returned to her, and he was studying her for much longer than he had a few minutes earlier. Kirsty couldn't look away from those blue eyes, her heart beating faster.

Iain broke eye contact first, and she could breathe again but then he started moving, taking slow yet measured steps to where Kirsty still stood with shaky legs. He took a seat at the end of the counter and picked up the menu. He studied it with a frown, his eyes returning to her every few minutes.

Had he recognized her, Kirsty wondered but she doubted that. There was no reason why he should.

The other barista were busy, so Kirsty had no choice than to approach him to take his order.

"Morning, have you decided on what kind of coffee you would like?"

Iain looked up from the menu and stayed quiet for so long Kirsty thought he didn't hear her. He suddenly frowned and said in a deep, gravelly voice that sent another ripple down her spine, "I don't drink coffee."

Kirsty almost gaped at him but managed to pull herself together just before her chin hit the counter. She did, however, roll her eyes and asked with barely veiled sarcasm, "You know that this is a coffee shop? We have other drinks, but we primarily serve coffee."

He scowled at her, "I know. Unfortunately."

Unfortunately? Kirsty knew her earlier assumption about Iain was correct. He was trouble. She wished she could just tell him to leave, but her grandfather had told her never to be rude to her customers even if you don't like them. Their customers were their bread and butter, and coffee too, her grandfather had always chuckled.

Kirsty could hardly see Iain Young becoming one of her customers. She knew

why he was here, but she would not make it easy for him and rather pretended she didn't know him.

Iain's sentence sounded almost clipped, and his local Edinburgh burr was softer, as if he spent some time away from the capital.

He had been, of course. Kirsty knew that too because she had heard so many discussions between her grandfather and Drew Young over the years. Even if Drew lamented the fact that Iain didn't join the family business as his younger siblings had, Drew was proud of his eldest son, boasting about Iain's legal career to everyone who was prepared to listen. Iain had been a barrister in London, and apparently a very good one if Kirsty had to believe his father's proud boastings.

Kirsty briefly wondered about Iain's statement and decided to ignore it and his surliness.

"Do you want me to brew you a coffee or would you prefer tea or hot chocolate?"

"I'll try a coffee," he grunted.

Kirsty couldn't help but tease him.

"You know they say that if you had one taste of this ambrosia, you'll be a converted soul."

Iain snorted, "Don't be ridiculous."

Kirsty had to suppress her smile when she turned away. Iain was obviously reluctant to try the coffee but for some or other reason he was forcing himself to do it. Turning her back to him, she tried to figure out what to give him. She always believed that the less you add to a good roast, the better.

A latte might be the best option for him, seeing that he was not a regular coffee drinker. It consisted of a creamy, velvety foam milk and Iain could add as much espresso as he wished. It was also quick to prepare and easy to drink which meant she could get Iain out of Joe's before he scared away her customers with his surliness.

If Kirsty had to judge Iain's dark mood, she should probably give him two or three shots of espresso, but she stuck to one. She still had her pride and a reputation. If she could convince him that coffee was not the drink of the devil, she might be able to convince him to keep Joe's.

No, Kirsty decided. She didn't need to convince Iain of anything. She had a valid contract and he couldn't do anything about it.

She knew why Iain was here. Aileen and Graeme couldn't convince her to move, so finally Iain came to take care of business himself. What Iain Young didn't know was that she was not going to give up Joe's. This was her home, her family and her past. Too many of her childhood memories were locked in this place. She couldn't give it up. If she did, it would feel as if she had failed her grandfather. She shook her head imperceptibly. That wasn't going to happen—not as long as she could help it.

She sighed briefly and then concentrated on the task.

Kirsty started by frothing the milk to get the velvety, creamy texture she wanted,

then proceeded to pull a shot of espresso. The golden crema of the espresso still sat on top of the water when she finished. Automatically Kirsty breathed in the aroma. She would never tire of it, the rich aroma immediately calming her. As her grandfather had also said, “coffee was like a hug in a mug.”

She served the espresso separately, so Iain could add just as much as he liked.

Her eyes briefly met Iain’s when she slid the latte in front of him. His eyes dropped to black brew, the milky latte and studied it dubiously. She silently sighed and explained to her mutinous customer.

“Coffee is an acquired taste. If you’ve tried before and you didn’t like it, it might be because you haven’t tried the right brew.”

She ignored his frown and continued, “This is a latte. It is one of the simplest coffee drinks. It is your choice how much of the espresso you want to add.”

Kirsty watched as Iain lifted the espresso to smell the aroma. He moved it away from his face, but then brought it back a second time for an even deeper sniff, his eyes closing as if he enjoyed the aroma. Kirsty watched fascinated as Iain opened his eyes again and studied the espresso in his hand. He added only a small amount to the milk then brought the mug to his lips to take a tentative sip. He rolled the liquid in his mouth, as he would’ve done when would taste a good whisky or wine. He then went back, added almost half the contents of the espresso to the mug, and took a second and third sip. He slowly nodded and took another sip.

Finally, he put the mug on the counter and stared at it. Iain looked surprised, as if he didn’t expect to enjoy the experience. He looked up at Kirsty again, and this time she could even hear the surprise in his voice when he admitted, “It’s good. Thank you.”

Kirsty suppressed her smile and turned away to attend to other customers. When she was finished, she noticed that Iain was still sitting there, sipping his latte while he studied the coffee shop with a frown. She could only hope that with that attitude Iain would not stay too long.

When he finally put the mug down, Kirsty resignedly stopped in front of him asking, “Would you like anything else? Another cup of coffee or maybe something to eat?”

He shook his head, his gaze sliding once more over the shop before he said, “I’m looking for a Miss Kirstine Brown. Is she here?”

She studied his face for a moment, trying to ignore the uneasy feeling. Kirsty pulled the now empty mug away from in front of him before she admitted, “I’m Kirstine Brown. What can I do for you?”

She noticed his surprise, as if she was not who or what he expected. He tried to hide it, of course and held his hand out towards her, “Iain Young. I would like to speak to you. Privately.”

Kirsty ignored his hand. She slowly wiped her hands on the cloth she kept underneath the counter. She studied his face and at the same time tried to ignore

the hypnotic eyes and the effect it had on her. She stepped back and turned to walk around the counter.

Iain stood up when she neared him, but Kirsty didn't stop. He wanted to speak to her, so she was convinced Iain would follow her even if she told him not to. She didn't want her patrons or the staff hearing what she had to say to him, and she definitely would not be able to cope with Iain's close proximity in her office.

Kirsty signalled to Morag, the floor manager to take over and stepped outside. When she felt Iain's presence behind her, she turned around to face him. She hoped her voice sounded cool and calm even though she felt anything but.

"Mr. Young, I've made it clear to your minions that I'm not interested in moving. I have a valid, legal contract which my lawyers assure me is non-negotiable. Stop harassing me."

"Miss Brown..." Iain started, but Kirsty immediately stopped him, "I'm not interested. Goodbye."

She stepped around him and entered the coffee shop without a backward glance. She heard when the door shut behind her and holding her head up high, she walked towards her office. Only when she was alone in her office, she let out the breath she had been holding. Closing her eyes, refusing to let the tears that threatened slip out. She had promised her grandfather to keep his legacy, and if it meant fighting her landlord, she would do it.

As long as she didn't have too much contact with Iain Young.