

She hoped he sensed her approach from the doorway to the bar. She hoped the cadence of her footsteps or breath—even from afar—would summon something from deep within him.

Having come within three feet of the man, she saw his hands, the enticing strength of them, holding a glass of scotch.

He could do anything with those hands, and once she thought he would. Now she knew better. He could grope and press but couldn't caress or hold. He wouldn't really touch.

She paused behind him and knew he knew it was her, as sure as she was of the weakness in her knees from his scent: mild cologne, hair product, laundry soap.

*Jesus, she thought. Help me stay in this.*

She placed her left hand on the bar as her hips shoved into the seat next to him.

The bartender took her order for a gin and tonic. In her peripheral vision, Chris's right hand twitched. She'd always been Jack and Diet Coke. She was proving her commitment to this.

She dropped her credit card on the floor as agreed, and he went to get it for her. After looking at it instinctually, Chris corrected himself by flipping it over so her name was on the underside.

She took the card, careful not to touch his fingers.

Her bare left knee was three inches from his blue-jeaned right one, and she knew even the slightest graze would annihilate them both. And it would be her to do it—he was fully cooperating with the plan.

Oh, the newness of *him* needing *her* action, of *his* restraint and eagerness for *her* to proceed, of *her* being so good at making *him* wait.

All she had to say was the prearranged line, *I've never seen you here before*. The words were somewhere on her tongue and almost formed until she pushed the privately-planned phrase out instead: "Excuse me, I'm in the wrong place."

A flash of anger crossed his face. Her cold demeanor and change of words had broken the rules.

"I don't know how I wound up here, but I shouldn't be." Her voice was even and moderately-volumed; still, a few people looked over. She stood. "See, I don't care for narcissistic men, and I made an error sitting next to one. I am better than this—meeting in a bar—being part of your hobby of picking up women, then spitting them out. Unfortunately, you had me all wrong."

Chris clenched his jaw, hoping she'd feel threatened.

Instead, she gave him a half-smile, pulled out enough cash to pay for their drinks, and turned. She intentionally swiped her hip against her bar stool—touching him could still spell her ruin—and left the bar.