



You saw me before I saw you. In the airport, that day in August, you had that look in your eyes, as though you wanted something from me, as though you'd wanted it for a long time. No one had ever looked at me like that before, with that kind of intensity. It unsettled me, surprised me, I guess. Those blue, blue eyes, icy blue, looking back at me as if I could warm them up. They're pretty powerful, you know, those eyes, pretty beautiful, too.

You blinked quickly when I looked at you, and turned away, as if you were nervous . . . as if you felt guilty for checking out some random girl in an airport. But I wasn't random, was I? And it was a good act. I fell for it. It's funny, but I always thought I could trust blue eyes. I thought they were safe somehow. All the good guys have baby blues. The dark eyes are for the villains . . . the Grim Reaper, the Joker, zombies. All dark.

I'd been arguing with my parents. Mum hadn't been happy about my skimpy top, and Dad was just grumpy from lack of sleep. So, seeing you . . . I guess it was a welcome diversion. Is that how you'd planned it — wait until my parents had a go at me before you approached? I knew, even then, that you'd been

watching me. There was a strange sort of familiarity about you. I'd seen you before . . . somewhere. . . . But who *were* you? My eyes kept flitting back to your face.

You'd been with me since London. I'd seen you in the check-in line with your small carry-on bag. I'd seen you on the plane. And now here you were, in Bangkok airport, sitting in the coffee shop where I was about to order coffee.

I ordered my coffee and waited for it to be made. I fumbled with my money. I didn't look back, but I knew you were still watching. It probably sounds weird, but I could just feel it. The hairs on my neck bristled when you blinked.

The cashier held on to the cup until I had my money ready. Kenny, his name badge said; strange how I can remember that.

"We don't take British coins," Kenny said, after he'd watched me count them out. "Don't you have any bills?"

"I used them up in London."

Kenny shook his head and pulled the coffee back toward him. "There's a cash machine next to duty-free."

I felt someone move up behind me. I turned.

"Let me buy it," you said. Your voice was low and soft, like it was meant only for me, and your accent was strange. The short-sleeved shirt you were wearing smelled like eucalyptus, and there was a small scar on the edge of your cheek. Your eyes were too intense to stare into for long.

You had a bill ready. Foreign money. You smiled at me. I don't think I said thank you. Sorry about that. You took the drink from Kenny. The paper coffee cup bent a little as you grabbed it.

"Sugar? One?"

I nodded, too flustered by you being there, talking to me, to do anything else.

“Don’t worry, I’ll do it. You sit down.” You gestured to where you’d been sitting, at a table between the fake palm trees, over by the window.

I hesitated. But you’d anticipated I would. You touched me gently on the shoulder, your hand warm on my skin. “Hey, it’s OK, I won’t bite,” you said softly. “There’s no other seats anyway, not unless you want to sit with the Addams family over there.”

I followed your gaze to the empty chairs next to a large family. Two of the smaller kids were crawling over the table, the parents arguing across them; I made eye contact with a girl about my age. I wonder now what would have happened if I had sat next to them. We could have talked about kids’ holidays and strawberry milk shakes. Then I would have returned to my parents. I looked up at your face, with the smile creases around your mouth. The deep blue of your eyes had secrets. I wanted them.

“I only just escaped my family,” I said. “I don’t want another yet.”

“Nice work.” You winked. “One sugar it is, then.”

You guided me toward where you’d been sitting. Other customers were near your small table, making me feel more confident to approach it. It took me ten steps to get there. I walked in a kind of daze and sat in the chair facing the window. I watched you take the drink to the stand and lift the lid off. I saw you pour the sugar in, hair falling over your eyes as you bent your head. You smiled as you noticed me looking. I wonder if that was when it happened. Were you smiling as you did it?