

THE MEETING

As he neared the lobby, the sounds became louder and more distinct. The voices of people talking mixed with the sounds coming from the bar, and suddenly Luke felt an incredible embarrassment which made his heart pick up speed and change location, beating somewhere in his throat. As if he was going to enter a room full of people who were dying to see him. Or a stage, for God's sake. The inexplicable, highly annoying and extremely ridiculous nervousness made something inside him clench in an inexplicable expectation, and as he approached the entrance to the foyer, his mind was deciding whether to burst forward or run back to where he came from. He felt as if everything around him was setting to life, twirling by a presence he wasn't able to understand.

He could already see the first tables and sofas in the foyer. He could see the poor suckers still sitting on their luggage, and the woman who had welcomed the team at their arrival.

Everything was perfectly normal. Not that he knew what he was expecting, anyway.

The place was intimately lit, and the yellowish light that came from the vintage lamps and from an enormous chandelier was trembling through the dispersed shadows of the autumn night. Luke scanned the place to see if there was someone from the team already down there, but he couldn't see anyone, so he walked across the room toward the huge entrance door that led out on the rainy street. He was almost by the door, searching through the pockets of his jacket to find the pack of cigarettes and trying to ignore the unnerving, buzzing, vibrating inside his body, asking him, demanding that he do something that he couldn't comprehend. Finally, he found the cigarettes. He was just reaching for the door when it opened. He stepped aside, holding the door politely to let the people step by him.

The first thing he saw was an enormous amount of surprise which turned into some kind of resentment or reproach the very next second. Luke had no idea what he could have done to trigger such a reaction, but he was absolutely sure that he had never before seen the man who was staring at him from the wet darkness of the street. The stranger broke off the eye contact and turned to his right, opening the door a little more, so the person who was obviously standing there could step inside. There was something awful in the man's eyes,

something like pain and cruelty mixed up into a terrible, terrible disappointment. Luke looked in the direction of the man's betrayed stare, and everything around him stopped.

The world disappeared, leaving behind nothing but the sound of the glittery rain and the drumming of his heart.

And her.

And her.

Even though this moment, the moment of this amazing, terrifying, and exhilarating encounter was all that he would be able to think about for days, he couldn't decide which was the mesmerizing, enchanting thing he saw first. The bright green eyes, unnaturally wide and round, were staring at him from a pale, translucent face surrounded by moist, dark curls that were falling over her shoulders and down, way down to God-knows-where. The perfect, deliciously shaped lips parted in wild surprise, almost smiling but still too shocked and too abashed to be able to do that.

She knew him! Fuck, she knew him just like he knew her! He had never seen her before but he knew her. He knew the way the touch of her eyes felt and he recognized the scent that surrounded her. And she knew him, too. He could tell that by the look in her eyes.

Luke was too confused to function, way too confused to think and way too taken over by the incredible connection that felt so right and so wrong at the same time. He felt as if they had been standing there for hours, although it couldn't have been more than a couple of seconds. The woman's gaze wavered, the amazing green eyes sparkled as if there was something welling up inside them, and she looked at the man who was staring at her.

Her face was incredibly intense. It was apologetic, spiteful and so revealing Luke felt he could understand her without words – if only he had gotten the chance.

“Thank you,” the man nodded and the woman followed his lead. Assuming control over herself she smiled at Luke, who just stood there like the biggest loser in the goddamned world, staring at her and not being able to react.

As she stepped past him, a chilly sensation rushed through his body and embraced him for a heartbeat. The man followed her and as they crossed the foyer, Luke couldn't help but turn around and stare after them. She was the most perfect human being he had ever seen. The most perfect being.