

Chapter One

"We're about to close up, Bee."

Startled by the coffee shop owner's voice, I tugged on the cord connected to my ear buds and glanced around the empty café. The lights were already dimmed and he'd flipped up the chairs on the tables surrounding me. I offered an apologetic smile. "Sorry, Ron! I didn't realize it was so late."

"Oh, it's fine. You're one of my favorite and best customers." Ron drummed his fingers on the wooden chair across from me. He seemed hesitant to speak but finally worked up the nerve to say it. "Is everything okay? I noticed you've been spending more time here over the last couple of weeks. We just had that housewarming party for your new place so...?"

I brushed off his concern with a shrug. "I do some of my best work here. My brain seems to function better when I'm inhaling coffee fumes."

He laughed. "Maybe I should use that as part of my new marketing efforts to draw in the high-tech crowd."

"Make sure you emphasize the wicked fast Wi-Fi and these super comfy chairs," I added while tucking my laptop and gear into my backpack.

"What are you working on tonight?"

"I'm troubleshooting some bugs in a program I built for a DJ friend of mine. She likes to interact with her fans and the audience while she's spinning but it's hard to juggle social media while she works."

"I bet. That's a very hands-on job."

"Exactly. So I created a program that allows her to filter messages via hashtags and clip out the pertinent bits to build playlists." I drained the last of my lukewarm coffee. "She's trying it out at Faze tonight but it's not working seamlessly."

"You'll get it figured out," he said with a dismissive wave.

"I hope so."

"Bee, you built HomeFront at the kitchen table of your mom's house while you were still in high school. You created LookIt while you were a freshman at Rice. I'm pretty sure you can figure out some bugs in this new software."

I shot him an appreciative smile. "I might have to snap your pic and hang it in my workspace as a motivational tool."

He chuckled and combed his fingers through his blond hair. "Whatever it takes, right?"

"Yep," I murmured and slipped my arms through my backpack straps. When I reached for my chair, our hands bumped together. Ron quickly tugged his hand back. I'd noticed that he seemed to have an aversion to personal touch so I didn't make a big deal out of it. Everyone had their quirks and this one seemed to be his.

"Are you on your bike tonight?"

I nodded and dug the key to my bike chain from the pocket of my jeans. "It's not a long ride now that I've moved into the new place."

He glanced toward the floor to ceiling windows lining the front of his downtown shop. "It's awfully late, Bee. You sure you don't want me to drive you? I'm happy to let you park your bike inside for the night."

"It's a tempting offer but I'll pass. I need to burn off some energy anyway."

Ron seemed reluctant to let me go. "Well...if you're sure."

"I'm sure." I unclipped my bike helmet from my backpack strap and plopped it down onto my head. "I'll see you around, Ron."

"See you later, Busy Bee."

I smiled at his playful nickname and left the café. Outside in the humid night, I grimaced at the suffocating heat. Mid-May in Houston and the temperatures were already flirting with three digits. I shuddered to think what July would bring.

As I unlocked my bike and wound the chain around the handlebars, I wondered if it wasn't time to crack open that vacation folder tucked away in my desk. It wasn't just the heat I wanted to escape. The stress of my skyrocketing profile as a tech entrepreneur was finally starting to get to me.

A little nervously, I glanced around the dark but still busy street. One of the theaters up the block was just letting out and the bars and restaurants lining either side of the avenue had steady streams of patrons moving through their doors. I don't know what I expected to see among the crowd. A boogeyman in black? A masked figure?

Shaking my head at my silliness, I inhaled a cleansing breath and hopped onto my bike. *There's no one there. You're just paranoid.*

I eased off the sidewalk and into the bike lane. Keeping an eye on the late-night traffic, I tried to focus on the cars and buses whizzing along beside me. My thoughts

continually strayed to the weird vibe that had been following me around for the last few weeks.

At first, I had convinced myself it was merely the stress of preparing for finals, moving into my first real place, and entertaining an offer for my micro-blogging platform LookIt. I had even reluctantly conceded that years of pulling all-nighters to study or write code hadn't been kind to my body. All that caffeine and junk food? Not exactly good brain fuel.

Throw in all the normal coed partying and the occasional weekend hackathon, and I probably hadn't had a full eight hour stretch of sleep since high school. When I considered the fact that I had lost my mother and brother within the last four years? Well—it wasn't outside the realm of possibility that I was simply starting to mentally deteriorate from wear and tear and stress.

But, while I could brush off the strange sensation of being watched, there was no way I could ignore the bizarre phone calls and texts that couldn't be traced beyond the burner phones that had been used to send them. With my contacts in the tech world, there was very little information I couldn't get my hands on, but the phones were dead ends. They had all been purchased with cash and had been used at various places around the city so I couldn't even create a geographical profile with cell phone tower pings.

Three days ago, I had started to receive disgusting photographs. They popped up in random places—tucked under the windshield wiper of my car, stuffed in my backpack—and made my skin crawl.

There was only one conclusion that made sense.

I had a stalker.

The very thought of some creep following me around and sending me snapshots of his dick made me want to puke. Ever since I had made a splash on the tech scene in high school with HomeFront—a real-time chat service for military families—I had experienced more than my fair share of weirdos. Most of them were harmless folks who lacked social skills and simply wanted to reach out to someone who interested or inspired them.

But this? No, this crap was a different league altogether. It felt intensely personal, and it scared me.

More than once, I had considered calling Kelly. There wasn't a man on earth I trusted more than my brother's best friend. He had been a permanent fixture in my life for as long as I could remember. If anyone could protect me from this unknown menace, it was Kelly Connolly.

But the former Marine worked in private security for the Lone Star Group and had been bouncing in and out of the country since March while on a detail with a sheikh from Dubai. I had tried calling him a couple of times but his phone went straight to voicemail. He hadn't returned my texts either.

A twinge of hurt twisted in my chest at the way he had basically ignored me. There was no one to blame for that but me. A poorly timed attempt to kiss him on New Year's Eve had resulted in a quick rejection and such incredible embarrassment. Not surprisingly, Kelly shutting me down like that had strained our once easy relationship.

Whenever he was in Houston, Kelly made sure to stop by and see me, but our visits were growing shorter. He seemed unable to spend even half an hour in my presence.

And it hurt. Bad.

Even now, as I angled my handlebars to glide up onto the sidewalk, I couldn't ignore the gut-churning pain of unrequited love. Falling head over heels for your brother's ridiculously sexy friend? Definitely not my smartest move.

But it wasn't as if I had ever stood a chance. Kelly was...well...he was perfect, wasn't he? The bright green of his eyes had been my favorite color since I was old enough to have a driver's license. His boyish grin did crazy things to my belly and that booming, raucous laugh of his made my heart race. I couldn't stop fantasizing about having his big, strong arms wrapped around me—or tumbling in bed with him.

Foolishly, I had let myself believe that I could be something more to him than just Jeb's kid sister. Clearly I had been wrong. Now, I was paying for that mistake. When I needed Kelly most, he wasn't there for me.

As I slowed to a coast near the building I had recently purchased, I experienced the strongest pang of loneliness at the idea of spending another night alone in my empty apartment. After living in a noisy dorm for two years and sharing a house with Coby and Hadley for another two years, adjusting to a newer, quieter space was proving incredibly difficult for me. I was having serious second thoughts about striking out on my own. I

found myself wanting to crawl right back into the third bedroom at Coby and Hadley's place.

Hopping off my bike, I walked it the last few feet to the private entrance of my building. I had snapped it up in early February after the developer that had previously owned it was forced into bankruptcy after pleading guilty to a list of shady crimes. So far, only the top two floors were inhabitable. One I used as a living space and the other as a workspace. I hoped to have the rest of it renovated and operational as the headquarters for JBJ TechWorks, my company, by the end of the year. The floor I currently rented at Yuri Novakovsky's downtown skyscraper was nice enough but we needed more space if we were going to continue growing.

After unlocking and locking the side entrance, I swiped my keycard near the RFID reader to access the elevator. I rolled my bike inside and punched the button for my floor. Leaning my head back against the cool metal, I tapped my finger against my bike seat while the elevator slowly climbed. The box bounced slightly as it reached its destination and dinged pleasantly.

I pushed my bike across the small private entryway to my front door. While I dug for my keys in the front pocket of my backpack, I noticed a strange brown residue on the door frame. Was it dirt? I couldn't tell and wasn't about to get close enough to sniff.

Holding the door open with my foot, I rolled my bike across the threshold and leaned it against the wall of my sparsely decorated space. I smacked on the light and took exactly three steps into the living room before freezing mid-stride.

There, sitting on my coffee table, was a hot pink gift box adorned with a bright white bow.

Adrenaline poured into my bloodstream as I realized someone had been in my home while I was gone. I was the only person who had a key to the front door or the access card for the elevator.

Panicked, I glanced around the open living space. Was my stalker still here?

Terrified, I frantically backed up to the door and escaped my apartment. I didn't bother waiting for the elevator. I rushed to the emergency stairwell and swiped my keycard through the reader there to unlock the door. Taking the steps two and three at a time, I raced down the seven floors. It was a freaking miracle I didn't break my neck.

Bursting out the side entrance, I didn't even wait for the door to close behind me before sprinting to the sidewalk. My backpack bounced against my back as I desperately searched for people. A fast food joint on the next corner over beckoned me with its promise of safety.

Huffing and panting, I reached the brightly illuminated spot and sagged against the brick wall with utter relief. With shaking hands, I retrieved my cell phone from my backpack and started to dial 9-1-1. My finger hovered over the touchscreen but I couldn't commit to calling the police.

During my freshman year, a girl in our dorm had been stalked by an ex-boyfriend who had followed her halfway across Texas just to harass her in Houston. The police had done absolutely nothing to help her, not until the creep had gotten close enough to abduct her from a grocery store parking lot. All the restraining orders in the world hadn't been enough to save her from seven horrifying hours of being held hostage at a rundown motel with that sicko.

Even though it made me feel awful, I had to consider the purchase offer for LookIt slowly working its way through the lawyers and accountants. There were so many people counting on that deal happening, especially the investors who had supported me from the beginning. Bad press like this? It could tank a shaky deal.

There was only one thing to do. I had to find Kelly.

* * *

The thumping, stretched beats of the trap track ricocheted off the walls of the night club and slammed into Kelly's brain in a way that made his ears ache. Rolling his aching neck, he moved around the packed dance floor of Faze and scanned the crowd for any signs of impending trouble. So far, the night had been quiet but he never counted on it staying that way for long.

He hadn't pulled any bouncer shifts at the club since Yuri, the Russian billionaire who owned the place, had finished the expansion of the space. It had taken Kelly almost an hour to get his bearings. He couldn't believe how many damned people were packed into the joint.

Apparently being the hottest nightspot in Houston wasn't enough. The Russian tycoon seemed determined to put Faze on the map as one of *the* clubs worldwide. Considering he'd already done it with his club in Paris and the one in Moscow, Kelly figured Yuri would push Faze onto that extremely elite list by the end of the year.

A couple of fanboys hanging around the DJ booth caught his eye. Cobalt's latest album was burning up the charts. Because there weren't many female DJs and electronic musicians operating at her level of notoriety, Coby garnered a lot of attention. Tonight, her devoted followers had come out in droves to hear her drop new tracks and mixes.

As Kelly angled in that direction, he studied the two guys pressed up against the booth. They weren't very old. Nineteen or twenty, close to Coby's age. In his many years a Marine and then working in private security, he had developed a good sense for reading people. These two were music lovers and maybe even wannabe artists, but they meant Coby no harm. Even so, Araceli, the general manager at the club, had a standing order that no one got close to the entertainers.

It took a flick of his fingers to send the two men back from the booth. He did it with a smile so as not to provoke an incident. The two guys nodded understandingly and did as directed without causing a scene. He was glad to see the pair weren't going to behave like dicks about it.

Behind her laptops and audio gear, Coby shifted her headphones and tapped her chest. Kelly understood the signal and reached into the pocket of the black blazer he was required to wear on duty to retrieve a couple of VIP after-party cards. He handed them to the guys and bent down to address them. "Stick around after we close. Coby will visit with you for a while."

"Thanks, man."

"Cool! Thanks."

Kelly nodded and continued his round. A familiar face coming through the front entrance caused his heart to stutter wildly in his chest. His reaction to spotting *her* irritated him. Of all the women in the world to have that effect on him it had to be Beatrice Langston—the one woman he simply couldn't have.

There were few rules that Kelly followed without question but dating the baby sister of the best friend who had died in your arms? That was one line he couldn't cross—even if it ripped his damn heart out of his chest to see Bee with anyone else.

But she was alone tonight and looked tense and almost fearful. If she hadn't been on Yuri's list of VIPs, Big V, the club's head bouncer, never would have allowed her past the velvet rope in that casual getup. Among the sea of scantily clad women in curve-hugging dresses and criminally short miniskirts, Bee looked out of place in her vintage Rice University t-shirt and skinny jeans. Why the hell was she still wearing her backpack?

The sight of her so under-dressed and with that strange expression on her face tipped Kelly's internal alarm. Something wasn't right. Sticking to the shadowy edge of the club, he matched her weaving movements through the dancing throng. He caught up with her a few steps from the DJ booth and tapped her shoulder.

Startled by his touch, Bee pivoted toward him with her balled fist raised and ready to strike. His battle-hardened instincts were instantly activated. He closed his fingers around her smaller hand, slowing the momentum of her swing with his much stronger arm. "Bee!"

The sound of his voice and his friendly face must have finally registered. The panic in her dark eyes instantly fled. Her shoulders slumped with relief. "I've been looking *everywhere* for you!"

Concerned, he stepped closer to her. The urge to brush her wispy, dark bangs behind her ears and cup her sweet face overwhelmed him, but he shoved it aside. "What's wrong? Are you all right?"

She gulped and glanced around nervously. "I just didn't want to be alone tonight. I thought I'd come hang out with Coby." She offered him a stiff smile. "I need to troubleshoot that new software I built for her anyway."

Kelly wasn't fooled by her casual act. Where was the easy, flirtatious grin she always shot his way? Bee never missed a chance to push the boundaries of their relationship. What had her so scared tonight?

He slid his fingers under her chin and tipped her head. Unable to avoid his gaze, she swallowed hard again. He lowered his face so he didn't have to shout to be heard over the music. "The truth, Bee. What's wrong?"

She gripped his wrist. "Someone was in my apartment."

The words punched him right in the gut. "What! When? Tonight?"

She nodded. "I came home from working late at the coffee shop and there was a package in my living room."

Kelly's stomach dropped like a runaway elevator. Instantly on alert, he slipped his arm around her shoulders and dragged her closer. His practiced gaze scanned the club for anyone that looked out of place. Dipping his head, he asked, "Did you call the police?"

"No."

Incredulous, he gawked at her. "Why the hell not, Bee?"

Her lips tightened. "What are they going to do? Dust for prints? Tell me to get a restraining order against an anonymous stalker?"

His eyes narrowed. Frustration flared within his chest. "What stalker?"

She licked her lips and glanced away from him. No doubt she understood how upset he was at being in the dark about all of this craziness. "Someone has been following me and leaving sick photos for me to find."

He swore softly and tried not to grit his teeth. "And you didn't think I should know about all this?"

The light overhead shifted to a pop of yellow that illuminated her beautiful face. Her eyes flashed with anger. "Why do you think I've been calling and texting you?"

The realization that the calls he had been dodging put her in this incredibly unsafe situation made him feel like shit. "I'm sorry, Bee. I meant to call you back once the detail was over but—"

"You didn't."

His jaw clenched. "I didn't."

Before he could make a better apology, the bud tucked into his ear clicked. "Kelly? We need you up in the VIP section."

His lips settled into a frustrated line as Ryan's voice dinged his ear. He lifted his arm and spoke into the mic attached at his cuff. "Copy. On my way."

Grasping Bee's smaller hand, he tugged her over to the DJ booth where Coby watched them curiously. He clasped Bee's trim waist and lifted her petite weight without much effort at all. Her hands flew to his shoulders as he placed her on the other side of the short wall that acted as a barrier between the entertainment and the dancers. Her eyes were still wide at his manhandling when he pointed a finger at her. "Don't even

think about leaving without me. You stay with Coby until we close. I'll come get you. Understood?"

She nodded. "Okay."

Satisfied that she would be safe, Kelly headed for the VIP section and tried to ignore how damn good it felt to hold Bee. He refused to acknowledge the way his heartbeat had sped up when their bodies had brushed together, her breasts so soft against his hard chest. He really didn't want to think about how badly he'd wanted to nuzzle her neck and inhale the sweet, bright apple scent that she favored. Remembering the short but sizzling kiss they had shared at New Year's sent heat rolling through his belly.

Stop it.

Jeb had entrusted him with Bee's care. If his friend were alive today, he would have kicked Kelly's ass up and down the street for the dirty thoughts racing through his head right now.

Up in the VIP section, he spotted Ryan watching a loud group of guys. He immediately recognized the men as professional baseball players. One of them had a nasty reputation for picking up—and roughing up—college girls exactly like the perky blonde one perched on his lap. How he'd gotten by Big V at the door perplexed Kelly. The giant bouncer and ex-Army sergeant never let assholes like that into the club.

Phoebe, the harried host of their table, smacked away the grabby hand of one of the ball players. Kelly's jaw tightened at the sight of a Faze employee having to defend herself against some prick who thought his high credit card limit and mediocre batting average gave him the right to abuse her.

Movement in the far corner of the VIP section caught Kelly's eye. Yuri stepped into view. He flashed an irritated glance at the offending party and gave a little jerk of his head. His message sent, Yuri slipped back into the ultra-private zone partitioned with gauzy curtains.

Kelly and Ryan didn't rely on their wrist mics and headsets to communicate. Like most of the private security agents on LSG payroll, they were both former military. Where Kelly had been a Marine, Ryan had been a corpsman in the Navy. He'd served alongside numerous Marine units during his many deployments so they were on the same page when it came to situations like this.

There were two ways this would play out—an easy ejection of the group from the club or an altercation. After the relative quiet of the night, Kelly had a sneaking suspicion punches were about to be thrown. Working for Yuri as a bodyguard, he'd learned that the billionaire had a fondness for getting things done quietly and with finesse. This was one time when he might have to step on Ryan's toes a bit to keep the situation calm.

"Look, guys, you were told to keep it down but it seems like your party is unable to comply. Management has asked that you settle your bill and head on out for the night." Ryan diplomatically offered the group a chance to save face and leave without a scene. "You crossed a line touching one of our employees."

"Come on, man! It was a love-tap. You can't expect us not to reach out and touch the merchandise when it's on display like that." The spokesman for the group had consumed enough alcohol to activate the stupid section of his brain. "Look, we'll leave her a nice tip, and it'll be fine."

"Oh, you're going to leave her a very nice tip—but you're all out of here. Now." Ryan leveled one of those icy glares. "Quietly."

The man closest to Ryan shot to his feet and purposely knocked into the bouncer. Kelly groaned inwardly and took a quick step forward to make his presence known. Like Ryan, he was taller and stockier than the athletes attempting to make a ruckus. "Is there a problem?"

"No." The smartest one in the group gently insinuated himself between his friend and Ryan. "We'll pay our tab and go. Can, uh, can you get our driver?"

Phoebe appeared from the sidelines of the almost dust-up with the small black folder holding the check. "He's already waiting out back."

While Ryan and the hothead remained in a staring match, Kelly carefully watched for any signs that things were about to kickoff. The guy paying the tab made an outraged sound when he saw the bill but one look from Kelly prevented a protest. With a swipe of his pen, he settled the tab and handed back the check.

Kelly put a gentle hand on the shoulder of the young woman to prevent her from following the ball player with the bad reputation. He wouldn't let Bee leave with a man like that and he sure as hell wasn't letting this woman either. "Not tonight, sweetheart."

She shot him a strange look. "But I—"

Kelly shook his head. "Believe me. You don't want what he's offering."

A rough hand shoved at his chest. "Mind your own fucking business."

Kelly carefully pushed the player's hand off his chest. "Don't touch me again."

"Or what?" He sneered and wavered on unsteady feet.

Kelly took one step forward and invaded the man's personal space. "Or this Marine is going to unleash the fucking beast that kept him alive through four tours in hell. One of us will be leaving in an ambulance. Understand?"

The drunk blanched and nodded shakily. He backed away slowly and didn't even try to make eye contact with the girl as his group beat a hasty retreat. Ryan shadowed them out the back exit while Phoebe started clearing away the table. The coed looked around, almost as if scoping out the joint for a better offer, before settling on him.

Flipping her hair, she licked her lips and smiled coyly. "So, soldier, you want to dance?"

His eye twitched at the soldier remark. She obviously didn't realize there was a world of difference between a soldier and a Marine. This didn't seem like the time to enlighten her. "No, thanks. I'm on shift."

She trailed one manicured finger down his chest and stopped right above his belt buckle. "Maybe later?"

Her touch didn't have the effect she intended. Instead of feeling good, it made his skin crawl. This woman was a knockout with that bombshell figure. There was a time when he would have craved the touch of a woman exactly like this. Now he found himself pulling away from her and trying to ease his rejection with a kind smile. "I'm flattered, but I'm taken."

Taken? Where the hell had that come from?

Undaunted, she shrugged. "I'm sure I'll see you around later."

"My answer won't change. You'd better find someone else to take you home. Be more careful this time."

While Ryan dealt with the aftermath of tossing the group, Kelly kept his eye on the VIP lounge. He moved closer to the balcony overlooking the dance floor below and allowed his gaze to drift to Bee. Standing next to Coby, she now wore a borrowed set of lime green headphones but kept the ear closest to her friend uncovered so they could

talk as she tapped away at the laptop opened in front of her. The screen lit up her face with an ethereal bluish glow. Even in that safe spot, she seemed tense and nervous.

Yuri sidled up next to him at the balcony. "Does she ever stop working?"

Kelly snorted. "That question from you, huh?"

Yuri laughed. "Careful. You're starting to sound like Lena."

"I didn't see her tonight. Is she away on business?"

"No, she's having a night with her friends."

"You'll tell her I said hi?" Of all the security clients he'd ever guarded, Kelly had enjoyed Lena's detail the most.

"Absolutely," Yuri answered with a smile. Then, gesturing toward Bee with a bob of his head, he said, "Backing her might be the best business decision I made this decade. The advertising sales on LookIt have been phenomenal and that cloud program for music that she's about to beta test will be huge. Have you seen this new program she's built for Coby so she can interact with her fans? Musicians will be all over it."

Kelly shook his head. "Tech isn't my thing."

Yuri studied him for an unnervingly long moment. "You should start brushing up on it. LookIt grabbed its twenty millionth user this earlier this month. Bee and I have discussed the outlook of JBJ TechWorks. She's considering dropping out of Rice altogether to move forward with the expansion. Whatever she decides, she's going to need a strong supporter in her corner. Especially now that there's an offer on the table for LookIt," he added almost as afterthought.

Kelly's stomach clenched upon realizing he was *that* out of touch with Bee. "What offer?"

Yuri seemed surprised. "She didn't tell you?"

Guilt squeezed his chest like a vise. "I've been out of the country for the last few weeks. Dimitri convinced me to take a detail for a sheikh and his family. I've been bouncing between Houston and Dubai."

"Well, I'll let her give you the details. Personally, I think it's a smart move to slide LookIt under the umbrella of Insight."

Kelly's eyes widened fractionally at the mention of the multinational internet company. They were a massive force in the tech world and a company that had actually tried to hire Bee straight out of high school.

"Whether she agrees to sell her baby is another matter entirely. But," Yuri tapped Kelly's arm to draw his attention, "you need to convince her that it's time to hire round-the-clock protection. She might have been able to exist in that safe little bubble on campus, but once the news leaks about this deal or even how much advertising cash LookIt is drawing?" Yuri shook his head. "She's going to be an easy target."

Kelly's protective instinct ignited. "No one is going to hurt Bee."

"I said the same thing about Lena once. We both know how that ended."

The sadness and guilt lacing the tycoon's voice reminded Kelly of the day a fellow bodyguard had tried to kill Yuri and Lena. His inability to see Jake as the threat still haunted him. "We both learned something from that experience."

"Yes, we did." Yuri clapped him on the back. "I need to go network and mingle, but I wanted to chat with you first. I hardly see you anymore." With a lopsided smile, the billionaire added, "I can't decide if that's a good or bad thing."

Kelly snorted with amusement as Yuri left to work his way through the VIP section. That giant man-beast Vasya trailed his boss. The Hulk-sized Russian spoke perfect English but he rarely uttered more than two words together in any language. Still, Kelly had enjoyed working with him. The guy took pride in a job well done and that was something he really respected.

When Ryan returned to his usual post, Kelly moved back down to the main dance floor. Though he maintained focus on his job, he allowed his gaze to wander to Bee every now and then. As instructed, she remained with Coby, safe behind the barrier.

While he worked, Kelly couldn't stop thinking about how disappointed Jeb would be in him. He stretched his tight neck again and tried not to remember why he had put so much distance between himself and Bee. That kiss!

There weren't many people who could throw him off-kilter but Bee was one of them. His mouth went dry as the memory of her soft lips pressed to his made his entire body buzz. His gut clenched as the image of her hurt face flashed before his eyes. Shutting her down and denying them both the one thing he wanted more than anything in the world had been one of the hardest things he'd ever done—but it was for the best. Wasn't it?