

“It’s time, Fleur,” the deep voice said.

Fleur’s shoulder’s tightened with that voice. Goodness, she’d heard it so many times over the years. Not just in real life, but also in her dreams! Hot, heated, crazy dreams where that voice told her to...and she did. Oh my, the dreams she’d had with that voice...it was embarrassing.

Too many times, she’d wanted to find closure, to end this fascination she had with the man and his voice. Now was as good a time as any, she thought.

Every muscle in her body tightened in anticipation of battle. Swinging around, she glared up at the man. He might be the tall, dark and dangerous kind but she’d had two years to work him out of her system. She rarely thought about him now. Well...almost never! If her subconscious still pushed him into her dreams at night, well, that was just...irritating. Closure. She could find closure!

With a forced, saucy smile, she lifted one shoulder delicately, holding the bottle of wine in front of herself with both hands. She wasn’t using the bottle as a shield, she told herself. It was just...a bottle of wine! Simply a bottle of wine that she was holding in front of her.

Unfortunately, Hunter didn’t acknowledge the bottle. And the stupid thing wasn’t doing an adequate job of pretending to be a shield because he moved closer! So close that the knuckles of her fingers tightly gripping the bottle were now pressed against his chest. She leaned back, but he leaned forward, not giving her any space.

“Break up with your friend, Milton. Tonight. We’ll discuss our future over dinner tomorrow. I’ll pick you up at seven.”

At the initial contact of knuckles against hard muscle, her mouth fell open, shock and...something that felt like desire but wasn’t desire because she absolutely would not desire this man again...made her tremble. But with his words, his COMMAND, she stiffened in outrage.

Memories flooded back to her. Not that they’d ever left, but the pain, the anger and the hurt over that one date came back to haunt her despite all of her efforts to pretend that she hadn’t been hurt and confused after their one date together.

“We had dinner once. Remember?” she asked, pushing against his chest, wanting him to move back. But no one pushed Hunter around. He was too big, too muscular and definitely too arrogant. When her nudge was ineffective, she stepped around him and tried to take a deep breath. Unfortunately, the air was filled with that male scent that she remembered so well from their date two years ago.

She took a deep breath and another step backwards. He was dangerous. And unbearably tall. And definitely overly muscular for her personal tastes. She didn’t like men who looked like boxers. Definitely not!

Fleur knew she was a bit on the short side, but this man just made her feel...vulnerable. “That dinner was a long time ago, Mr. James. I’m sure that it is long gone from both of our memories.” If only, she thought with increasing anger that she refused to show to him. Anger meant that she’d cared about their date, that she’d been hurt by his rejection. There was no way she was going to let this arrogant man know how badly she’d been hurt two years ago.

“I remember,” he replied, his dark eyes looking down into her blue ones. “I also remember that kiss. I remember the way you trembled in my arms. And I definitely remember the way you kissed me back.”

That annoying trembling was happening now and Fleur hated it! She hated the subtle reminder of how she’d melted in his arms. And she definitely hated the knowledge that he’d been the one to stop that kiss. If it had been up to her, she’d have begged him to come into her apartment and make love to her that night.

Yeah, that kiss had been...

She inhaled deeply, trying for the millionth time to get that one memory out of her head. So far, it hadn’t worked. Darn it!

Fleur shook her head, trying to focus on the present and not that kiss. Or the way it had made her feel. And she definitely didn’t want to think about all of the dreams she’d had of this man since that one kiss. “That was in the past, Mr. James.” She looked away. She’d dreamed about that kiss so many nights. And days, she admitted, if only to herself. But obviously that kiss hadn’t been as amazing for him as it had been for her. He’d promised to call after that night. But he’d never called. He’d never even...

Looking away from the horrible man before she broke down and begged him to tell her what she’d done wrong, she stiffened her shoulders and pushed those memories away. All in the past. She wasn’t going to dwell on what he had or hadn’t done after their one date.

Unfortunately, Hunter James had other ideas. “No, it was just the beginning.” He reached up and cupped her jaw with his massive hand and for a small moment, Fleur reveled in the feel of the hard calluses, the tanned hand against her pale skin and the heat that seared her cheek with his gentle touch.

Gentle touch?! Fleur jerked back when she realized that her eyes had closed and her head had actually tilted into his hand. Stepping back again, she looked around, grateful that there were no other guests in the kitchen who might have witnessed her moment of insanity. Fleur was furious with herself for giving in to the need for his touch. It had been just one small moment, but it was too revealing.

“That kiss...it was the end,” she told him succinctly. “Excuse me, but I am helping my parents tonight.”

He grabbed her arm before she could walk away. “Allow me to explain why I didn’t call you,” he told her.

She jerked her arm out of his grip and pasted on a bright smile. “There is nothing to explain. Things just didn’t work out.” She shrugged daintily. “It happens. And it was just one kiss, Mr. James. I hardly remember that night. You should move on too.”

Feeling victorious because she’d gotten that dig in, and the last word, she walked away, an extra saunter in her step since she’d just bested the man who had haunted her for too long.