

Chapter 12

Aislinn went through the motions of serving dinner and completing the rest of her chores for that evening. Cullen and his date who, Aislinn managed to find out from another member of the kitchen staff, was actually his fiancé ate their dinner in relatively short order and then left. Jenna had been conspicuously silent on all the subsequent visits that Aislinn had to make to the table and Cullen had managed to catch her eyes with an apologetic stare at one point. [www.novellw@tr.co.uk](#)

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Aislinn sat in the back of the taxi on her way home. She felt rich in her ability to afford the small luxury each night. Walking would have taken at least an hour. But she would have done it if it had been necessary. She figured that if tips continued the way they were that she would be able to afford to move out of her crappy apartment and closer to the restaurant in relatively short order. She was calculating how much time it would take for her to pay for her missed rent, pay back her friends for her jail break, afford an attorney to deal with Derrick's lawsuit, and then move into town. Anything to keep her mind off of Cullen.

The taxi finally pulled up in front of her place and she slid out of the car, paid with some of her tips from that night, and headed toward the steps. When a figure moved out of the shadows near the main entrance and reached for her she turned, leaned back, and delivered a forceful kick to the figure's chest. [www.novellw@tr.co.uk](#)

Cullen staggered back into the wall holding his chest and trying to catch his breath. He had to admit it had been a long time since anyone caught him off guard like that and he was shocked that she had been strong enough to knock him backward even with that consideration. He was still trying to catch his breath when she glared at him and headed inside without a word.

Aislinn fumed as she virtually ran up the stairs to her apartment. What the hell is he doing here? She barely managed to get her key out and go inside before he appeared at the top of the stairs. She slammed the door and walked across the room, threw her purse and coat on the table and kicked her shoes off. After a few minutes without a knock on the door she figured he must have gotten the message and left. She paced a bit before she decided that she wouldn't be able to calm down unless she looked to see.

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Aislinn walked over to the door and stared at it a minute. When she started to feel like a complete fool she took the locks off and pulled the door open only to find she was face to face with Cullen. He took a deliberate step into her apartment forcing her back until he was able to close the door. They just stood there staring at each other without talking. Neither of them knew what to say.

"So what? Why exactly do you want to be friends so badly? I mean this is virtually stalking. In fact I'd say that you waiting outside my place is definitely stalking. I'll admit that I do owe you for saving my ass the other night and for getting me that job, Lord Arnauk. When I figure out how to pay you back I will. But for now I think it'd be a good idea for us to keep our distance from each other."

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Cullen flinched a bit at the use of his title. He had never hated his position before, but between Jenna and Aislinn he almost wanted to disappear and let the rest fight it out and deal with the raids and the politics on their own. He nodded and headed back toward her door. As he got to the doorway he stopped and turned to look at her one last time before he left. "I guess I just thought maybe I wasn't the only one involved in that kiss the other night. I was hoping we could at least be on talking terms."

"At least on talking terms?" she was glaring at him and her tone hit him harder than her kick had. "What are you trying to do? Start a harem? From what I hear you're engaged to that blonde bitch."

"That's a long story," he said, no longer finding her amusing.

"Okay, so explain why you would be back here after the other night and then dinner tonight? Why you could come back here and imply that you think we should be friendly." She crossed her arms and stared at him, waiting.

Cullen shook his head. "You know what? Never mind. You're right. I shouldn't have come here. Sorry." With that Cullen left and closed the door behind himself.

Aislinn just stood there watching after him. As the argument she'd just had sunk in she threw herself down on her mattress sobbing. It was a long time before she fell asleep.

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