

## Chapter 2

Normally a guy who said something like that and looked at her that way would have scared the crap out of her. But there was just something about the smelly guy that told her he wasn't a threat to her. If there was one thing she had always been pretty good at, it was reading people. That was half the reason Derrick didn't really bother her. She had known what he was like the minute she took the job. So, obviously it was her own fault she had to put up with him. Aislinn picked up the phone. "Give me a number."

Cullen rattled off a number and she dialed. It rang twice and then a gruff, sleepy voice picked up. "Hello?"

"Yhea hi, sorry to wake you," Aislinn said.

"Yhea, who is this?" the voice said.

"Um, I tend bar. Do you know some guy named Cullen?"

A shocked, "huh?" came from the sleepy voice. Cullen was watching Aislinn with amusement. His eyes sparkled a bit and he had a grin that reminded her of a kid playing a great joke on someone. He was taking note of everything about her. For a human she was rather impressive or very stupid. There wasn't another person in this bar who had been willing to be within two feet of him, but the girl didn't seem bothered at all. At least not by his appearance or mood. He got the feeling that there really wasn't anything he could have said or done to have made her afraid of him. And more than any of that she was able to make eye contact with him and stare him down. It had been a long time since anyone had enough balls for that. [www.novelslurp.com](http://www.novelslurp.com)

Aislinn growled her annoyance at the situation. "Look, I'm sorry I woke you up, buddy. But there's this guy in my bar and we're closing. He's too drunk to leave on his own. He says his name is Cullen and he gave me this number when I asked him if he wanted me to call someone for him. Can you come get him or not?"

Keith rubbed his face. He thought he was having a crazy dream. He looked at the cell phone and then put it back to his ear. "Cullen?"

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"Yhea, Cullen." The female voice at the other end of the line was sounding more agitated by the minute. "Are you coming to get him?" she insisted.

"Yhea fine. Where is he?"

"The bar's called the Blood Pit. It's on the corner of Elm and Oak. Do you know it?"

"No," he said. "But I'll find it." Then there was a click.

Aislinn stared at the phone. Cullen chuckled. "He hung up?"

"Yhea, but he said he was coming." Aislinn went back to cleaning up.

Cullen reveled in the feeling of the spinning room. As he waited he watched the girl move about. The drinking had done precisely what he wanted. It drowned out the look, smell, and feel of that bitch he wasn't interested in being mated to. He was trying to figure out what that scent was on the girl when one of the other girls walked up to her. That annoyed him to no end. Now there were two obnoxious smelling perfumes in addition to the rest of the odors in this room covering up the girl's scent.

"Ais, I've gotta go." She lowered her voice and looked over at Cullen uncertainly then back at Aislinn. But Cullen's ears were better than most and he heard every word she said. "I want to wait for you but Jeremy's outside already and he's being impatient. I don't know who to be more concerned about. Derrick or this guy you're looking after. It's not real bright of you."

Aislinn looked back toward the offices then over at Cullen. "I know. Maybe I can talk Derrick into watching him til his friend gets here."

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"Fat chance on that. How's he gonna stalk you if he's gotta stick around here for some guy. Nope, he'll say that you didn't just kick him out so this guy's your problem. Then when he's gone and you don't have me around to give you a ride home, Derrick offers you a ride and guess how he'll expect you pay for it. Not to mention, the jerk's been drinking tonight. He's checked his brain at the door."

"It's okay Renee. I'll be fine. I've taken care of myself for this long." Cullen noted the tired, lonely sound in her voice.

Renee looked at Cullen again, just as some big football type poked his head in the doorway. "Renee," he yelled. "Are you coming or what?"

"Yhea," she answered. "I've gotta go," she said in that abused, manipulated, will-answer-to-any-jerk-that-pretends-he-cares-about-her way. She hugged Aislinn. "Be safe," Cullen heard her whisper.

"You too," Aislinn said knowingly. Renee blushed and then hurried away. As she reached the door the guy grabbed her by the arm and led her out.

Cullen held himself back. She was just another human in an abusive relationship and it wasn't any of his business. He growled under his breath and tried to stand up. Suddenly the room began spinning again and he sat back down on the stool with a grin and a chuckle.

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"Aislinn!" The voice that called the girl's name was slurred and angry sounding. Cullen looked up to see the girl hurry to some greasy looking guy who was standing in a doorway on the back wall. He tried to get her back into the office but the girl was smart enough to not let him draw her in. "Haven't you gotten rid of that guy yet?" His tone was annoyed and drunk.

"He's got a friend coming to get him. If you want to go I'll lock up behind me."

"And leave you here in my place?" He grinned luridly at her. "The only guy you get to stay here alone with is me." He tried to grab at her but she stepped back and he missed. That earned her a glare.

"You know that I don't work that way, Derrick. You wanna fire me go ahead. But I don't play touchy feely with any guy."

Cullen grinned again. She was amusing. Her tone was assertive and she seemed to be in control so he let her protect herself. It was nice to see that some people could. Cullen missed the end of their conversation to his swimming brain and his own thoughts. The guy disappeared back into his office and Aislinn was walking toward him when he looked up.

"So where is this friend of yours anyway?" She said. He could hear an edge of concern in her voice when she said that. She stared at Cullen and then over at the door.

"You know what," Cullen said and eyed the office door. "If you need a ride home or something..." His voice trailed off as he looked at her.

Aislinn's eyes meet his again. She couldn't help see there was something in there. He was just one of those people she knew could be trusted in the same way she knew that Derrick couldn't be. At the same time logic dictated that she not accept rides from drunken strangers. "No thanks." She walked over to the main doors and looked out. There wasn't anyone there and the parking lot was abandoned except for a large black SUV and Derrick's crappy red Honda. Presumably he SUV belonged to this Cullen guy. She was considering calling a taxi. It would cost her but at least that was safer than any of her other options at the moment. Aislinn turned around to find Cullen standing directly behind her with a confused, appraising look on his face.

He just couldn't put his finger on it. He wasn't sure what she smelled like. But he was starting to think that he liked it, whatever it was. He figured that if it weren't for the alcohol he probably wouldn't be being so introspective or even care. The worst part was that he wanted a closer inspection. Not that she'd submit to that. She wouldn't even let him give her a ride. She was standing there looking at him cautiously. He closed his eyes and smiled good-naturedly, shaking his head. He could just imagine her reaction if he said something like, "I'll give you a ride home, you can take a shower, then you can let me smell you. He chuckled again. Alcohol hadn't felt this good in ages. And he didn't even feel that good. It's pretty sad with a little bit of amusement caused by a random female and alcohol beats out everything else in your life, he thought.