

## Chapter 4: Salem Blues

Tatum

Something about this town didn't sit well with me. The air chilled me to the bone and the power that resonated under its surface seemed to taunt me with unusual expectations. I wasn't quite sure why it took so long for the organization to come to Salem, but now that we were here, my task was proving to be far more difficult.

Fifteen years, I had searched for a solution to our problems in this realm. Every lead that came in and every mission that happened, I was there. Ready at the forefront, praying that the key I needed would show itself so I could leave this god awful place. However, it was all simple wishful thinking on my part.

Instead, I was stuck here, still wandering.

Waiting for what I needed with company I didn't care for.

"Hey Tate, did you get any info?" Derrick—my supposed partner—called from outside the shop front, two doors down. He was a lazy son-of-a-bitch most of the time, but since we arrived in Salem less than twenty-four hours ago, he seemed to be overly excited at doing his job.

"No, same s\*\*t, different store," I replied, looking over my shoulder through the window at the ery woman with violet hair and bright azure-colored eyes.

She was different from the other women around here. Something about her screamed, carefree but mysterious. Not to mention, I had this feeling as if I'd known her for a long time. It was comforting, even if we had never met before.

"What's wrong with you?" Derrick laughed as I glanced back at him. His gaze was now locked on the woman I had been staring at.

"Nothing, just thinking about something."

"You mean that hot piece of ass?" he replied, a look on his face way more suggestive than it needed to be.

"Do you really have to speak about women like that?"

This wasn't the first time he had made comments about women that made me cringe. He was a piece of work and went through women like he changed his underwear. The urge to throttle him every time he made grotesque comments grew stronger and stronger.

It wasn't that I was a prude. It was just annoying as hell listening to him.

"I don't know." He chuckled. "Do you really have to be constantly oblivious to gorgeous women every time we go somewhere? I mean...come on, man. You have to have fun sometimes."

Fun. A word I would often use when it came to my line of work. Sure, when I finally was able to go home, I would try to take some initiative to settle down, but right now, that wasn't the case. I was on a job, and I needed to stay focused. Unlike my partner, who seemed to think with his d\*\*k more than the head on his shoulders.

A disgruntled scoff left my lips as I moved past him, headed in the direction he had come from. I had been in Salem for less than twenty-four hours, and it already felt like a waste of my time. Although Silas said this was where Finnick had said I could possibly find her.

And all of my research had only further confirmed their claims.

Though, the feeling I was being misled played heavily in the back of my mind.

"Tate, come on man...let's go get some food. There is no way we are going to find anything right now. We need to regroup...preferably at the nearest diner."

Again with his annoying antics. If it wasn't him trying to get laid, it was him trying to fill his stomach. Stopping in my tracks, I let out a heavy breath and cast him a glance over my shoulder with an irritated expression. "If you want to turn in for the night and get food, then go. I have a few more things I want to check out, and then I'll meet you back at the hotel."

It was against protocol to split up. Derrick's brows rose slightly as his eyes widened. He stared at me for a moment, but instead of arguing, he nodded. "Okay, but don't do stupid s\*\*t, Tate. We don't know this place well enough to be going solo. If you find something... call me."

Call him? The internal laughter coursing through me forced a smirk to fall across my lips. "Sure."

Derrick had worked with me long enough to know I wasn't going to listen to anything he had to say. Yet, he still felt the need to give me advice. When he realized I was done with the conversation, he turned and hurried away.

The day was still young, and though part of me wondered what it would bring, I knew I had to get a better grasp at what I was dealing with in this place, not to mention the people. I let my eyes drift once more to the sign hanging above the shopkeeper's door. The woman's eyes oated through my mind, a connection I couldn't forget.

It made little sense why she stuck out in my mind so much after such a short greeting, but in a city like Salem, she was the only face that remained clear. Which made me wonder if I was missing something.

I tried to keep myself focused on the task at hand. A task that didn't involve Derrick or the monster we were supposed to be hunting. My priorities were elsewhere tonight and had been for the past decade. Though the only way I had gotten close to finding what I needed was because I had joined the cult-like organization—Elite Humanity—and made my way to the top.

Not that I would stay there long. Once I got what I needed, I was out of this s\*\*t hole.