

*About Alex.*

Taste:

Even knowing that Luke is still waiting for him in Angelus—having the facts straight from every phone call/email/IM/webcam conversation they have had since he left so many weeks ago—has no filtering effect on his thoughts as he stands on the balcony at the end of the dorm hall. It is freezing outside, his lack of proper winter wear notwithstanding, but he cannot bring himself to go back inside. There is a cigarette dangling loose between his fingers, and a cup of coffee in the other hand. But his mind is anywhere but on the burning butt or the cooling java.

He cannot remember what Luke looks like, let alone what she sounds like at this very moment. All he knows is he is a sucker for a pretty brunet, masculine or feminine. And the one walking out onto the balcony to stand next to him is... very pretty. The guy is taller than he is by a full head and shoulders, quite possibly taller than anyone else he has ever met. Even in the half dark of campus at 2 in the morning on a Sunday night, Alex can still make out the strong slash of the guy's jaw, the short flip of his dark hair at the nape of his neck, the long stretch of him. Alex takes a long puff on his cigarette, trying to decide whether to give this imposer what for, or to allow the invasion of his solitude.

As the smoke curls up from his lips, from the butt of his cigarette, Alex considers him, his face in profile, bare arms crossed low on his chest. Alex has always been a sucker for muscular types, as well, he imagines, and wets his lips before he tries to speak.

"Do you smoke?" he asks, opting for polite and subtle dismissal.

The young man jumps slightly and turns towards Alex, a look of shock being replaced by a wide grin, brighter still in the strange light of night. The smile crinkles the corners of his eyes, and creates darkly shadowed dimples in his cheeks. "Sorry. Thought I would be alone out here," answering Alex's unspoken question rather than the spoken one.

Alex gives an 'Mmm' of acknowledgement and takes a quick sip of his nearly-forgotten beverage. To have been read that easily by a complete stranger almost unnerves him, almost has him stubbing out the smoke, tossing the coffee over the side and hieing himself back to his dorm post-haste. He deliberately turns away, taking the last few drags on his cigarette while trying to avoid looking at his unfortunate companion. It is quiet, and strange, and Alex finds himself jittery and excuses himself from his ance-comforting balcony.

After it happens every night for a week, no matter the time of night Alex gets a craving for nicotine, he is beyond suspicious. Eye candy or no, it is interrupting his little bit of personal time during the day. It is disturbing his privacy. Not to mention that the balcony used to be empty and unused and it had basically become his. Until this new guy, whatever his name was, he thinks irritably as he props himself against the wall on the hinged side of the door, the frigidity of the concrete seeping through his sweatpants to

numb his butt. He stays slumped there, a pack of cigarettes being launched back and forth between his hands, even as the door opens against his hip. He almost wishes today was a day for his hearing to fail him, or his voice to be non-existent. Almost, in that he knows it has taken him this long to heal and to backslide at this juncture is going to kill him. Perhaps it will not literally kill him, but enough to mortify him for a time.

The new guy smiles down at him from his higher-than-average vantage point before sitting down across from him, back against the railing and legs stretched to the opposite corner of the little verandah. He holds out a bottle of something that Alex refuses and spends a moment just smiling at him.

Alex frowns at his hands, looking away. "Do you purposely search me out?" he grumbles, not surprised or happy about the expected intrusion. He pulls out a cigarette and lights it with a frown, trying to get the invader to take a hint and leave

"Yes." He laughs as Alex's eyes shoot to his face. "I'm Dorian."

"Why?"

"Why Dorian? Maybe you should ask my parents that." He chuckles again, and moves a little closer, resting his arm on a bent knee and crowds Alex's personal space some. "But mostly," he smiled as his voice dropped low and intimate, "I wanted to talk to you." He grinned as Alex's face contorted with even more distrust. With a sigh, he backed away, hands where Alex could be sure to see what he was up to. "I saw some of the articles you have published in the school newspaper, and on your blog. I thought... maybe we should meet?" His voice lilted upwards at the end, turning the statement into a question.

Alex dropped his eyes and had the decency to blush, grateful for the strange dark lightness that pervaded the late hours of night. "Was that all, then? Just to meet me for what I had written?"

"More or less." His voice sounded closer again, rumbling out into the chilly air. Alex felt Dorian's fingers rest lightly on his jaw, tilting his head up some. "My priorities kind of changed lately," he breathed before touching their lips together.

Alex's eyes blinked open in shock as that candy-sweet kiss swept through him. He felt it spreading, the sugar on his lips from the bottle [*Dr. Pepper*, he thinks] cutting through the cold smoke and lies in his mouth. And when they break apart, Alex thinks he can still taste him, a little, as he inhales the charged night air.

Oh, he is definitely going to have to rethink his isolation policy on this balcony.