

## *Ink.*

The gate slammed shut, clipping me on my derriere before clapping on its frame with a shaky bang.

“Son of a-“ I growled rubbing my sore ass and walking away.

No one wanted me, I couldn't even say 'Hi my name is-' before my hopeful future employers shut me out. In this case push me out the front gate and slam it onto my *assets*.

For three hours now, I had been trudging along, my thin booklet of a resume clasped in my cold hands. My feet were burning in my cardboard filled rubber soles and my legs wouldn't hold my weight anymore.

I couldn't take it anymore. Moving to a low-lying brick wall, I sat and brought my knees up to my chest. The sun was hanging low over the horizon of squat buildings that looked similar to dirt mounds in a field.

The heat was still lingering in the last fading moments of sunlight, hitting my face just right to make my tattoos shine.

I absently stroked the left side of my face that was painted with intricate cravings in green ink, wrapping my cheek in a veil of vines. They curled up from the depths of my shirt and finished at my eyes. The best decision of my life. They define who I am. Yet even as I pass by people in the street, they avert their eyes, and keep their heads downcast.

I didn't care much for people's opinion, however when it comes to the next stage up, employment, it's blasphemy.

My chest tightened with rejection stabbing at my heart. The tears were a plague as I tried to wipe them away, my eyes burning with a mixture of salt and hurt.

I wrapped the edge of my shirtsleeve around my hand and rubbed harshly under my red rims. The tears were running down my tattoo and all it did was make me despise everyone more.

I rose off the wall and strode down the street towards the last place of potential employment on my list. The one I least wanted.

As my feet slapped the pavement I stared down at the name and hated myself for even writing the words down.

Boutique Boots.

A fancy store that sold high priced boots and shoes for whoever was willing to spend there money on something more expensive than it deserved. I rolled my eyes at myself. Positive thoughts, come on think positive thoughts.

The store would be closing within the hour, and I was still walking at a leisurely pace.

*Stop stalling!*

I grumbled at myself under my breath and made my aching feet shuffle along the path quicker.

People were always too quick to judge someone. Nobody knew or even cared that I was top of my class in high school, nobody knew that I was really friendly or good with customers, because no one could get past the thing that gave me my identity.

As I rounded the last corner to the store I froze, my sore feet anchored to the pavement. Boutique Boots was lit up like a Christmas tree with people laughing and chatting, in and out of the store.

This was the store of stuck up customers and nosy rich people. I don't belong here.

I almost turned around right there and then to go back to my little apartment and maybe start considering enticing some cats out of the back alley to keep me company. At least they didn't care what someone looked like.

Shakily, I picked up one foot and placed it in front of the other and so forth. Steadily without stumbling and embarrassing myself, I slowly made my way to the store.

Placing my hands on the delicate glass doors, I pushed them open.

The first thing that hit me was the smell. The smell of gorgeous leather and crisp air fell like a drape over me. Looking around, no one seemed to pay me any attention as they all dug through the boxes and boxes of shoes.

The only staff member I could see was behind the counter a few steps away from the door busy writing something down in a logbook.

I took an uneven breath and held my head high as I walked towards the man. He looked up as I approached and did last thing that I was expecting.

He smiled.

"Hi, welcome to the Bou's Boots. How can I help?" He said, his eyes didn't even seem to register the ink decorating my face.

It took me a moment to get my thoughts together. "Hi. I was just wondering if I could give in my resume?"

He grinned even more and gestured to a door across the room with *Staff* written boldly on it. "Don is just through there, he's the boss."

"Uh, thanks." I turned away and let my polite smile fall into a frown. He didn't say anything about my tattoos, or even sneer at them. No one even looked at me funny as I crossed the room either.

*What is wrong with this place?*

As I reached the door, I hesitantly knocked.

A grumble came from behind the door and it took all my false bravo to push the door open widely.

A big man stood before me, with wide eyes and a head of thick bronze hair, but it wasn't his hair that I was staring at. It was the facial tattoos.

A dragon appeared to be eating his mouth, curling down from behind his ear, its wings up over his cheek. It was spectacular.

I grinned.

Don looked from the resume clasped in my hands to my tattoo, to my eyes.

He grinned.