# Chapter 3: Angel in Denial

As Angel sat at the table across from Alastryn, trying to focus on their conversation, her mind wouldn’t stop wandering back to that almost-kiss and her own disappointment about the love note being fake. *Ugh. Why can’t I focus on what’s important?*

“Angel? Is there something else on your mind? You seem unusually distracted.”

Angel felt her cheeks heat. *Ugh. Clearly, I’m not going to be able to focus on breaking the seal until I do* something *to resolve all these confusing feelings. I need to just go ask Evariste about this directly or I’m never going to have any peace. I’m sure he’ll have a perfectly reasonable explanation for why he tried to kiss me, and then I can stop wondering about it and focus on breaking his seal.* Nevermind that a part of her didn’t *want* him to have a reasonable explanation, but wanted the obvious explanation to be the right one.

“Umm, actually, there’s something I need to go ask Evariste about. It keeps distracting me and I’m not going to be able to focus properly until we discuss it.”

Alastryn frowned. “I thought you said he and Emerys were having a private discussion.”

“Yeah, but they’re probably done by now. Anyway, I just really need to get this over with.”

Alastryn raised an eyebrow. “Oh? And what *exactly* is it you need to ‘get over with’?”

Angel could feel her cheeks growing even hotter at Alastryn’s knowing look. “Uh…nothing. I just…”

“Angel, come on, spit it out. What’s bothering you?”

Angel shut her eyes. This was so embarrassing. But she needed to talk about this with *someone* if she wanted to be able to focus on anything else, and perhaps it would be less embarrassing to tell Alastryn than to ask Evariste about it.

“Well…you remember what I said before about how Evariste and I somehow managed to have shared dreams while he was still captured?”

“Of course. I could hardly forget about something so inexplicable.”

“Uh…well…during one of those dreams, he…well it almost seemed like he was trying to kiss me before I backed away.”

Alastryn smirked. “Oh, so you finally know he’s in love with you? You two have certainly been dancing around the issue for long enough.”

Angel froze. The words range with a note of truth it was hard to deny. Emerys’ love note prank, the almost-kiss, Evariste keeping secrets…was Alastryn right?…did it mean…?

“In love with me? What? No, that…that’s impossible.”

Alastryn had both eyebrows raised now. “Angel, you just said he tried to kiss you. I don’t know how much clearer it could get.”

“There’s…there’s just no way he could be in love with me. There has to be a reasonable explanation for his behavior. I just need to ask him about it so I can stop wondering!”

“Oh? And, *what*, pray tell, might this ‘reasonable explanation’ be?”

Angel was silent. What *was* she expecting Evariste would say? That he was so addled by the pain he wasn’t in his right mind? No, she’d already dismissed the idea of his sanity being affected -- even at the time, he’d clearly been suffering, but not *addled*.

“I…I don’t know! That’s why I need to go ask him about it.”

Not giving Alastryn a chance to respond, Angel abruptly turned and left the room. Clearly Alastryn wasn’t going to be any help in dealing with this…confusion.She’d just have to go talk to Evariste about it after all.

Surprisingly, Alastryn didn’t even call after her as she left.