

“YOU look at me as if you expect me to slip,” they say, and it’s true. *Slip* is the right word for it. It wouldn’t take much – it didn’t take much before. You’re still keeping an eye on them; ready to act if they look the wrong way, if that old vision of the fire becomes too real once again.

“I am cautious,” you assure them. They know that about you. Those years apart were never enough to erase your familiarity.

You know better than to say trust me, but they know you well enough to work out that you want to.

“Then you should trust me,” they tell you instead, and their lips come to brush yours, a new and instantly recognisable taste.

“See?” they murmur. “I am defanged. No more bloodshed.”

You hold them by the wrist; your fingers dig into the contours of their veins. You feel like that child again. “Do you promise?”

They smile against your mouth. “I promise.”