

Then suddenly a soft voice cut through all the chatter.

“Hey, Isabel.”

I whipped my head up, looking over my open laptop.

It was Tarek.

Jesus. I hadn't even heard him approach.

I decided to take in the entire sight of him. Since he had addressed me directly, I finally had an excuse to take a good look at him. I decided afterward that it was kind of a mistake. Taking in his entire body, I could feel my nipples become instantly tender. Oh my God.

He was wearing a black T-shirt with dark jeans. His T-shirt hugged his chest, which, like his entire body, was lean and muscular. His short beard and goatee were neatly trimmed. He was certainly dark enough to be what Lara and Eric called “my type,” although I usually went for Latin men. I guessed his age to be about 28, but his eyes held an experience that made him seem more mature.

He wasn't super-tall. I guessed that he was between 5 feet, 9 inches and 5 feet 10 inches. I was 5'6" so I more or less did a quick comparison. His curly black hair hung in carefully groomed, tight tiny ringlets around his face and almost down to his shoulders. He was incredibly sexy. He probably had to spend a lot of time on his hair, moussing it up, and that if he let it go it would probably be frizzy. His curls reminded me of Lara and her unruly hair, although her ringlets were more tousled and larger, and always framed her beautiful face perfectly. She was forever straightening it, but I kept telling her it looked gorgeous in ringlets, like Tarek's curls did now. I felt myself softening a little at the thought of my sister, but I steeled my reserve and plastered a semi-scowl on my face. My scowl and general surly attitude were my defense mechanisms. After enough unpleasantness, people generally left me alone. I liked it that way. Eric, Josh and Dinesh were somehow building up a tolerance for it. It was starting to piss me off. Lately, everything was pissing me off.

I had to admit, however, that I was intrigued as well as annoyed. Few people had the nerve to come and talk to me like this, with no warning.

I decided not to say anything at first. I just stared and raised my eyebrows.

He waited a good three to four seconds before he spoke. The left corner of my mouth started to

go up into a smirk. Invariably, there were only two reasons a guy like this, a semi-stranger no less, would deign to talk to me. If he was going to miss class and wanted to get my notes, he was shit outta luck. And if he wanted a booty call, well, I wasn't quite sure yet how I would handle that. Little did I know, he wasn't going to ask me either of those things.