

# Bending the Rules

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Because this story has just begun and will continue to evolve from the original I can just give a grasp of what it entails. The mood of the story is something of two people from different and almost opposing religions falling in love. It was inspired by real individuals and will tell of the challenges faced from not only a religious differentiation, but non accepting friends, alternative lifestyle and a secret that can destroy everything they have been fighting for all along. The question is, will they make it or not.....

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"I had a good night with you."

"It was a'ight."

"Just a'ight?"

"Yeah"

"Wow I love that about you, your bluntness. Man you're just my type. Maybe you wanna see where this thing can go."

"*Anyway*, I got a History exam tomorrow I should be heading in" I say.

"*Damn* you're cold" he says covering his mouth with his palm.

"I'll see you around okay" I say getting ready to ascend the stoop.

"Dang girl hold on two seconds" he says quickly cutting my path off. "I don't know how to let you go, I mean how long have we been knowing each other? I'm a good guy right?"

"Eh" I say dismissively.

"So why are you giving me such a hard on-I mean hard time, hard time"

I look at him while I chuckle and shake my head. He looked embarrassed now and fumbled for the words to redeem himself.

"Guess I just sort of put my foot in my mouth just then huh?" he asks giving up.

"Uh huh" I say.

"Hey at least you know where my mind is at. But can you honestly blame me?"

"For your own thoughts and actions I can, yes I can. I'll see you around Joel" I say walking around him and up the stairs to the sorority house.

I peeped through the window after I got inside and saw him standing there for a while before he took his leave. I went to my room and saw I had six missed calls; I didn't bother to look as I already knew who it was. I sighed, stretched, kicked off my shoes and then plopped down on my bed with my History notes. Like I said, I had an exam tomorrow.

"So how did your date go last night?"

"Eh"

"Wow could I ask for a more detailed response than that?"

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"It was.....I don't know-

"-Another precious waste of your time?"

"It's like you were right there with me" I reply.

"Why do you even bother to go out with these guys? You know they're not what you're looking for."

"Yeah but I need to pass the time, besides keeping my grades up to keep this scholarship wears me out sometimes, and I just wanna go out and drink liquor I don't have to pay for."

"Italy, Crissy wait up!"

The voice came from a thick, sugar brown sister with cute dimples; Amora the delinquent, one of my whores. She and I had been friends just as long as Crissy and I had. I met them both in high school. My two best friends on completely two opposite ends of a spectrum, brought together by yours truly. Amora was tallish like me and had jumbo braids falling down her back. She was the loud, flirtatious and outrageous one, kind of like me but amplified about ten times more.

Crissy was short with the same complexion and straight black hair just past her shoulder blades. She was the quintessential good girl; conservative and sweet but so serious minded a little bit like me. She majored in Computer Science, while Amora was attempting to complete her diploma in Radiology for the third time.

I handed my books over to Amora so I could put my thick ash blonde hair in a ponytail. She too went out for drinks last night and was talking about maybe skipping class this morning, while I mumbled about her wasting her intellectual abilities. Her counter was that she still felt hung-over; well that really wasn't a counter was it?

"Mmmmm" she suddenly purred.

"What?" I asked looking at her funny"

She was looking at the guy now entering the security code for one of the medical labs. He walked in turned on the lights and walked back out again doing this in succession with the other two.

"He's new around here right?" Crissy asks.

"Yeah" I say.

"What does he do? Well apart from look good I mean" Says Amora.

"No idea" Crissy says as we both shake our heads at her."

"I think he's like the controller of the medical labs, you know overseeing all the analyses and what not." Says Crissy.

I took some time to study him. He wasn't that tall maybe 5'9 at best, broad shoulders, a little built, straight jet black hair that he wore low. He seemed incredibly shy though, always kept to himself. Sometimes it was like he wasn't even here. Something about the way he looked made me stare at him a bit longer. Trying to get a good look at his face was hard since he refused to look up.

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Just as I'd finally given up I caught a glimpse of his dark eyes looking at me.

"Did you guys see that?" Amora asks.

"See what?" I ask immediately diverting my attention back to the books in he hands.

"He smiled at you" she says as I tried to play it off.

"No he didn't" I deny.

"Crissy tell me you saw that" she persists.

"Yeah so what? Big deal, what's in a smile?"

"Thank you" I say breathing a sigh of relief. I could always depend on her to bring things to a calm.

"The big deal is, he doesn't even make eye contact with anyone *yet* he *smiled* at her." Yep, I can always count on this one to create mayhem. "Forget eye contact he doesn't even *talk* to anyone here, but he obviously wants to talk to you."

"I'm sure he talks to some people" I say.

"Like who? Who have you ever seen him talk to?"

"Maybe he doesn't speak any English" Crissy reasons.

"Hmmm, I wonder where he's from" she says scrutinizing him further as he dipped out of the lab again.

"That's a great opener for a conversation" she says looking at me.

"He looks kind of like a cross between a Latino and an Indian" says Crissy.

"No he doesn't I say. "Look at his eyes, he looks Middle Eastern," I say as we all stand staring at him now.

"In that case stay as far away from him as possible."

"Hey sis" I say turning around to face the owner of the judgmental tone.

"Oh come on Danielle, you know you think he's cute too" Amora says.

"Uhhh no, I couldn't see past the Arab in him"

"Okay" I cut in ending what was about to be a tense discussion.

Yep, that was my sis for you. If we weren't related she'd be the kind of person I might not talk to. She was stuck up, self-centred, hot tempered and too outspoken for her own good. Weighing in at just about 165 lbs, the toffee coloured girl had a head of light brow free flowing curls that fell over her shoulders and surrounded her bosom.

Hard to believe we were sisters since we looked nothing alike. I had light blonde hair just an inch or two shorter than hers. My high complexion was further set off by my very unique eyes; they were two shades of blue surrounded by a ring of green and tinted in a hue of hazel. It pretty much looked like a marble and had

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made me feel weird my entire life. To top it off I had a line of light brown freckles under my eyes which also ran across the bridge of my nose.

Despite these array of strange characteristics people found me pretty. I didn't always see it though; that made me overcompensate with my body, I was totally dedicated to fitness and my first year here I was consumed with working out at the gym.

"I'll catch up with you guys later, I gotta get to this lecture so I can get a good seat" says Crissy.

"Yeah chick" I say as we all bid her goodbye.

"I don't care if he's an Arab, you guys would look cute together" Amora continues as he heads off in the opposite direction.

"I'm sorry there is no way my sister is getting with a no-English speaking Muslim" she says.

Yep, at this point I should probably mention we were sisters by adoption; raised in the same home with totally different values, well at least for the most part.

"Who says he's a Muslim?" I asked with a sigh. "There are Christians in the Middle East you know".

"Whatever, they all have the same culture. You're a budding anthropologist I'm surprised I have to say that to you. They treat their women like doormats and are the biggest hypocrites alive. Preaching serve God yet flying planes into buildings-

"That's Muslims Danielle, and you can't blame them all for what a few has done. Anyway I gotta get to my exam I'll see you guys" I say walking off annoyed.

Her attitude really got to me sometimes; So righteous and Holier than thou, always casting stones and never looking at her own faults. Yeah I know 9/11 had us all twisted up and bent out of shape, even me, but being Christian myself I had to learn to let that grudge go.

Besides, looking at him I just couldn't see that, granted that terrorists were skilled at deception and operating covertly, for some reason he just didn't seem to fit the mold I mean if he really was from the Middle East life for him in America was already hard enough, I wasn't going to let the stereotype make me turn him into something he might not even be.

## Chapter 2: First Words

"So what foreign language are you taking this semester?"

"Well my name is Italy, and I can't speak a lick of Italian so what the hell. Already got Spanish down and I hear its pretty close."

"Lets see here, it says that Professor Molino has two classes open." She says.

"Molino Molino, that's the hot guy right?"

"I have no idea." Says Crissy.

"I had him for Spanish last year he's not bad" her friend I didn't know chimed in.

"Damn, says he also teaches German, dude is a linguistic whiz."

"Oh here he comes, Giovanni!" she hollers waving.

"Ah Nikola ciao, how are you?" Asked the tall, smooth faced man; barely stopping as he hurried toward his class.

"I'm great" she replies with a big smile.

"You taking one of my classes this semester?"

"I wish, maybe next year."

"I look forward to it, see you around" he says once again picking up his brisk stride"

"Oh yeah, you can definitely tick me off for his class" I say.

The scent of his expensive cologne lingered in the hallway. He was dressed casually in a fitted polo and jeans. His black hair was well combed and contrasted beautifully with his clean olive complexion. Made me wonder just about what manner of professor was he.

"Did I hear you call him by his first name?" Crissy asks.

"Sure, he's really cool. Our entire class called him Giovanni. He says Mr. Molino makes him feel ten years older and that it was his father's name."

"God Amora would die if she saw him" I say.

"He is fine" Crissy admits fanning herself with a pamphlet as though he had set her ablaze.

I wasn't too caught up in the conversation not to notice our mystery guy walking up the corridor to the labs. As usual he had a serious look on his face, yet his mouth was relaxed which showed a hint of gentleness in his expression. He looked straight ahead; his eyes not holding too long a gaze on anything or making contact with anyone. He saw me looking at him and smiled as he passed by. Wow he had cute dimples. Dimples were my thing man.

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I hadn't allowed my eyes to linger too long, and the next time I looked up again all I saw was the tail of his white lab coat as he docked inside. He really was inexplicable and it made me wonder about him more. I decided to let it alone and snatched up my things for the next lecture.

The next day I started Giovanni's class. I must say that sexy Italian accent paired with such a seductive voice did little to help my concentration. He had the kindest eyes when he smiled, which he did quite often. He was also a helpless nicotine fiend as he stepped out for a smoke every 15 minutes. It did seem to interrupt the lecture but he was too gorgeous for anyone of us to protest.

"So Italy, how is it that you got such a unique name?" he was asking me now.

"It's just as much a mystery to me" I say.

"Have you ever been?" he asks.

"Not even" I say.

"Italy is a very beautiful place. I've never met someone named Italy before, but like the country you do have that factor of beauty in common" he says as his lips curl into a knowing smile; Knowing that his flattery though unrequited was not unwelcomed.

He walked back to the head of the room and blurted out something in Italian and then turned and looked at his class for a response. My phone vibrated furiously in my pocket. It had been doing that for the last minute and I was beginning to get annoyed. I decide too take it out and switch it off and enjoy the rest of my class.

After it was over I strolled sluggishly through the halls, scrolling on my iPad to see what class I had next if any at all. I suppose that's something I should know off hand, but I had become less stringent about these things this year. It seemed I had an entire hour before my next lecture. I posted up on a nearby wall as I texted Crissy to come meet me while still checking my other classes on my Ipad.

I stuck a pen in my hair scratching at my scalp, thinking that it probably needed a wash. I dreaded the heat outside now that would make it thick and mangled. I loosened the ponytail a little bit as I sucked on the other end of the pen now, maneuvering the electronic devices around as I do.

"Excuse me"

I was just about to ask this person what was their problem and to wait a damn minute but thankfully decided to look up first instead.

"Oh....hi" I say holding both devices in one hand and removing the pen from my clenched teeth.

"Hi" he says.

"Oh am I blocking the entrance? I didn't realize" I say stepping further away from the door.

He smiled politely but kept his eyes on the door as he pushed it open. I hadn't realized I had wondered onto the medical testing block again. Suddenly I was overly conscious of my messy hair and plain white V-neck that read "I Love Sex" in big pink and black letters (a gift from Amora). I had slipped on a hoodie before I went into class but removed it as soon as I walked out. Anyway he probably didn't notice since he didn't really look me in the face.



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"Really now?" Asks Giovanni as he slows in passing.

"What?"

"Your shirt, it's very interesting" He says continuing his stride with a naughty smile.

Immediately I flung my hands across my chest to hide the embarrassing print. Why on earth hadn't I burnt this or given it to good will like the rest of things Amora bought me?

"*Shit*" I say as my iPad slips out of my hand and hits the floor.

Just as I stooped to pick it up hoping the screen wasn't cracked, our mystery man appeared in front of me kneeling also to do the same. I stand up first allowing him to pick it up and hand it to me.

"Thank you" I say.

He responded with a toothless smile; it was only then that his irresistible dimples appeared.

"You're welcome" he says after a while.

"I knew you spoke English" I say to myself rather than to him.

"Sorry?" he says confused.

"Oh never mind, I'm Italy" I say extending a hand.

"Shaheed" he says taking it hesitantly.

His grip was firm but swift. I think my skin hummed when we touched or I could have imagined it.

"Is it broken?" He asks.

"Um what?" I ask.

"Your device" he says pointing to the Ipad.

"Uh no thank God I paid like a.....it doesn't matter, Shaheed right?"

"Yes, but everyone here calls me Shah or Mr. Ibrahim."

"That's Arabic isn't it? I ask, my heart momentarily sinking for some unknown reason knowing almost with certainty that he was indeed Muslim.

"Correct"

"Where are you from if you don't mind me asking?"

"I am from Egypt."

"Oh, well I'm an anthropology major, it's a really big thing for me to meet people from other cultures."

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"Anthropology? I don't know what this is"

"Oh it's just the study of different cultures really, I would love to interview you some time."

'Oh, Okay" he says scratching his eyebrow and lowering his eyes to the floor.

"Is that okay?" I ask.

"Yes, its fine" he says smoothing out the already smooth collar on his shirt.

Okay so now I was really perplexed at his inability to make eye contact with me. But then I saw highlights of pink in his cheeks; thought he was blushing and that was so cute, but then I noticed it wasn't so much his eyes avoiding mine. It was him trying to redirect his attention away from my shirt. Now I too was turning pink and vowing to destroy it as soon as I got it off me.

"Anyway I better get going" I say squeezing the iPad against my chest and making a quick disappearance.

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