

Chapter 35

I sigh, inwardly, a little tired of getting friend-zoned. That's twice in one day – in one hour – after all. I ignore it, though, gesturing for Christian to bring the next paper-towel laden plate over me.

A door slams behind me down the hall. "What am I smelling?" Nico calls, walking curiously into the kitchen.

"Churros!" Frankie shouts, and his enthusiasm is infectious. "Want some?"

"Obviously," Nico grumbles and I shake my head as I grin, lifting the churros out onto the plate that Christian holds out. How can someone be so grumpy about desert?

"Almost ready," I chirp, my voice sing-song in its excitement as Christian give the churros to Frankie to be dusted in sugar and I move to the melted chocolate, giving it a stir and tipping it out into a bowl for dipping.

"These smell amazing," Nico murmurs, peering at the process. Suddenly, he reaches for the spice cabinet. "Hey, have you ever tried them with nutmeg on them? We had it once at Christmas and it was insane –"

"Nope!" Christian says, stepping towards Nico and holding up a hand. Nico freezes in mid-process with a glass bottle already in his hand. "No nutmeg. Iris is allergic."

I grin at Christian, grateful that he remembers, and Nico just shrugs, moving around me to the other side of the counter so he can get first dibs. I turn the stove off, letting the oil cool, but as I do I realize quite

suddenly that...

Well, that I only found out that I'm allergic to nutmeg a few years ago. It was at Christmas, when I'd tried nutmeg for the first time, and Damon had had to rush me to the hospital right in the middle of a party...

Slowly, I turn to stare at Christian as he and Frankie and Nico dig in to the desert. Part of me is pleased to see them enjoying it, but...

How the hell did Christian...

The realization comes to me slowly, and I stand up straighter, a little smile coming to my lips. Because while I found out that I'm allergic to nutmeg long after Christian left home...

...I did write about it to him. In an email.

I stare at him, half pleased and half pissed. Because he has been reading my emails, all this time.

But...why would he lie about it?

"Come get one, Iris," Frankie says, turning to me with a smile. "They're amazing."

"You really did well," Christian says, looking up to smile at me. "I seriously feel like I'm right back at Delgado's." I nod, glancing at the stove to make sure it's all turned off before going to join the boys. And as much as I enjoy the hell out of the dessert, I'm quieter than I'd usually be, letting the boys chat and laugh and enjoy their meal while I study the tallest of the three.

Trying to figure out, of course, precisely where Christian's boundaries are with me. And how I can break them down.

“Screw all this family nonsense,” Frankie says, swallowing his third. “I am marrying this girl!” I laugh as Frankie throws an arm around my shoulder and pulls me close, planting a kiss on my cheek. “Promise me, wife, that you will cook me churros every day and I will make you the happiest woman on earth – “

“Nope!” Christian says, though I can tell he’s not seriously pissed. “You’ve been warned, Frank, now hands off – “ Christian smacks Frankie lightly upside the head here, which makes him gasp and protest, “and go do ten laps for your insubordination.”

“What?!” Frankie shouts.

“Ten laps. Outside. Now.”

My mouth drops when I turn to look at Christian and realize that he’s dead serious.

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