

While his classmates took notes, Omar sketched Raven Holloway's profile. He was a talented artist who found that sketching was the best way to get to know a woman, often better than she knew herself. Every woman he'd ever known possessed unappreciated beauty. Beyond the obvious assets or liabilities of face and figure, every woman had something all her own, a particularly graceful gesture or expression that made her shine, if only fleetingly. Omar's trained eye could spot a good heart, trustworthiness (to the limited extent that any woman could be trusted), untapped sensuality and dozens of other sterling character traits. Omar lost count of the times that he'd gotten in good with a woman by complimenting her on a quality that no other man had noticed.

Sketching also helped Omar to detect the flaws. A woman needed to be told at just the right time that, yes, her ears were noticeably large—no hairstyle could hide that. Or that she was too yellow or too dark to be considered pretty. The physical flaws were good, but Omar got the most mileage out of the emotional impairments that his sketches captured. He was always on the lookout for a chin that showed occasional weakness, shoulders that stooped under certain conditions or a perpetual smile that turned downward for half a beat at the mention of a particular topic. Knowing what hurt a woman deep inside was Omar's specialty.

His sketch of Raven was about half done. She was more beautiful, more physically perfect, than he'd realized. But Omar wasn't satisfied. Although he captured the outward Raven, he couldn't pick up anything, good or bad, on the emotional level.

As Professor Lenton dismissed the class, Omar put away his sketchbook and decided not to wait any longer. Whatever there was to find out about Raven Holloway, he would find out the old-fashioned way. Although the two of them had done little more than swap greetings and exchange a few glances, Omar's gut told him that he could be with Raven during the four-day midterm break. Time to make his move. He picked up his books and made his way toward Raven.

"Excuse me," Omar said as he gently touched Raven's hand. "I've seen you around, Raven Holloway, right?"

"Yes, I am, and you've done more than see me around Omar. Seems like every time I turn around you're staring at me. When I'm at Callie's locker with her, I'm half afraid that I'm about to give you a heart attack."

Attitude. Omar knew it was coming and came back at her full force. "So we're skipping the small talk? Fine with me." He stepped closer to Raven and lowered his voice. "I've been staring, and you like it. Let me take you out to dinner tonight."

"I already have plans."

"That's cool, but I'm getting with you before this semester is finished. That's a fact, Raven. I figure it might as well be right now, while we have some down time. When do you want to see me?"

Raven looked dismissive and bored. "What makes you think I want to see you?"

Omar didn't say anything, he wasn't one to blink first. Raven wasn't the type either, but there was no need for him to know that, and she was ready to find out if Omar could fit with her program.

"What about Friday night?" Raven asked.

If she went out with Omar on Friday night and things clicked between them, her Saturday and Sunday would be on.

“Friday’s good.” Omar said, as though he read Raven’s thoughts, “That way we will have the rest of the weekend to get to know each other. I want you to dress up. Be ready at seven.”

Omar kissed Raven on the corner of her mouth, turned and walked away. He hadn’t asked for a telephone number or address, but Raven knew that Omar would find her.