

DELETED SCENE – Mark’s House

Erin and Mark

“So, my mom wants to chop off my hair.”

“What?!”

Mark laughed. “I knew you'd have that reaction.”

My cheeks warmed. It's hard to pretend you don't think your friend's hair is hot when he read about how hot you thought it was in your private blog that went public. Argh. But even so, he wasn't changing the subject that easily. Especially since he hadn't even started the subject.

“I know you didn't call to tell me about your hair.”

“How do you know?”

“Because I know.”

Mark sighed again. I pictured him biting his upper lip, then his lower lip, like he always did when he was trying to decide if he should say something.

“So, maybe you could run interference with my mom and save my hair.”

This was weird. First, you don't call someone at ten o'clock at night to ask them to speak on behalf of your hair. Second, if you want someone to speak on behalf of your hair, the logical choice would be--

“What about Kara?”

“What about her?”

Okkaayy. Obviously one of us was missing something here.

“Nothing,” I said, “it's just--”

“--so will you come over and talk to my mom or not?”

I bit my lip. "Sure," I said. "I'll talk to her."

"Great," Mark said. "She likes you. She'll listen to you."

I was happy to hear Mrs. Sacks liked me. But I had a feeling this whole conversation was supposed to be about something--or someone--else.

"So you're not going to tell me why you really called?"

"I already told you--my hair."

"Liar."

"I'm serious."

"Fine. If you don't want to talk about it, we won't talk about it."

"You girls always think there's something more--"

"Forget it, Mark." I wasn't going to push, though, because I knew he'd shut down. It was clear he wasn't going to talk about what he had called to talk about.

Apparently, the fact that I was willing to come all the way over to Mark's house to plead for his hair was enough to get Mrs. Sacks to back off.

"But you have to at least get it trimmed so it doesn't end up hanging down past your chin," she said. We were all sitting around the dinner table--Mr. Sacks at one end, Mrs. Sacks next to him and Mark and I finishing off the opposite corner. I was nearly through the most amazing lasagna ever made--by Mr. Sacks and Mark, which really impressed me. We'd been laughing at stories Mrs. Sacks was telling because she worked for a big hotel chain and someone was always doing something funny in one of the guestrooms or restaurants.

It only felt a little weird to be at the dinner table with last year's crush and his parents. In fact, it was only weird when I let my mind wander over to the fact that I was at last year's crush's house with his parents. So I tried not to think about it and focused on the food and the conversation.

“Deal,” Mark said, then turned to me. “Maybe you could come with me to make sure they don't cut off too much.”

I finished chewing my garlic bread and rolled my eyes. I could not picture myself going with Mark to get his hair cut. And I could just see Jilly going crazy over it and Kara? I didn't even want to go there. “I'm sure you'll keep your one eye on the scissors at all times,” I said.

Everyone laughed, just as the phone rang.

Mark's eyes flicked toward the kitchen, then he shoveled another bite of lasagna into his mouth.

“Let voice mail pick it up,” Mr. Sacks said. “We're eating.”

I smiled. We had the same rule at our house.

After dinner I helped clear the table but Mark's mom wouldn't let me clean up.

“You two go ahead,” she said. “I've got this.” She held out the salt and pepper shakers. “But you can put these away in that cupboard.”

As I set the shakers inside the cupboard, I glanced down at their Caller ID: *Simmons, John*

It had been Kara calling during dinner. My stomach twisted a little. I knew I had nothing to feel guilty about--Mark and I weren't doing anything and I was going to leave soon--but seeing that name, knowing she was thinking of him and was calling at the same time we were laughing together at his dinner table--I don't know. It was just weird.

“So,” Mark said, stepping in beside me, blocking my view of the phone, “Want to play Playstation until your dad comes to pick you up?”

I checked his face to see if he'd noticed the Caller ID but he was just smiling at me, ready to try to beat me. “Sure,” I said, “but I pick the game.”

“Fine by me.” He gave my arm a squeeze before tugging me toward the family room.

I let myself be pulled along but couldn't get the Caller ID out of my mind, wondering why I was here instead of Kara.

LATER: She gave me a look and for a second I thought she knew about me going over to his house for dinner. But she couldn't. And I didn't want her to know because she'd make it out to be more than it was. And I actually wasn't sure what it was. Mark acted funny later, like he didn't want me to leave, and kept elbowing me and pushing against me when we were playing Playstation. All I could think about was *Simmons, John*, staring up from the Caller ID, knowing he'd be calling Kara back after I left and wondering why it made me feel all weird inside.