

## Astonishing.

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It was about 6.15 pm on a wild, sleet-filled November Wednesday night. John stood at the fish counter at Asda, wearing his shorts, displaying his short muscular hairy legs.

The girl approached from his left on dark grey high-heeled furry ankle boots, walking beside an attractive woman wearing a Hijab, whom he took to be her mother. Mummy was talking rapidly in what might be Punjabi.

Everything about the girl spoke of tallness. She was slim, athletic and brimming with energy. She did not wear make-up, nor she did she need it. Her skin was shining like newly-wetted sand, darkened around her eyes. Her lips, a dark plum colour, were frozen in a tiny smile, as if she was only half listening. No jewellery distracted from her perfection.

She walked erect on strong muscular legs revealed by skin-tight charcoal leggings. She held her shoulders high, with a full confidence verging on arrogance. A dark grey, almost black, faux fur bomber jacket lay carelessly on her shoulders. It was sprinkled with melting sleet. Her hair, a thick shimmering black, was pulled back tightly and hung in a single loose coda to her waist. Her dark pink ears stuck out, but only slightly. A V-neck cashmere pullover/dress in a lighter shade of grey hugged her figure, revealing part of her cleavage, inviting him to admire the outline of her small firm breasts, flat stomach and narrow hips.

Almost at once his glance skipped back to her eyes, her most striking feature. They were astonishing, extraordinary, entrancing. The inner ring was a deep purple black and her irises were anthracite flecked with dark red. Her gaze was haughty, imperious, and disdainful, on the edge of disinterest. Her slow blink announced her long black lashes. She knows she is special, he thought: two hundred years ago Maharajahs would have offered half their wealth to win her as a wife or concubine.

As they stopped behind him he saw both pairs of eyes scan him.

The girl's eyes changed, laughter lighting her face with a captivating beauty, as her melodic soprano voice chuckled a comment, sotto voce, to her mother: this new face revealed her innocence, her youth.

This memory of this encounter would never leave him.

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