

# Love Me in the Dark - Chapter 0

## Chapter 0 Prologue

RIVER

Three years ago...

He's even more stunning. The tall, dark-haired in a tux was standing across the hall, conversing with the other invites before he looked around and caught me gawking. Heat rushed in a wave from my chest to my neck. My cheeks were burning. My heart was pounding as I watched him freeze, turned to stone before an older man caught his attention. I sighed in relief despite my heart still hammered in my chest. That was three hours ago.

Damn. My feet were throbbing. Thanks to my expertise in online purchasing. I would have enjoyed a soak in a bathtub with my cheap Pinot noir, but my HR diploma came in handy. Journey loved her job at the Cullen Art Catering, so I decided to take her place for tonight.

The venue that featured a 70-foot ceiling with a gigantic column balcony was just majestic. I was assigned in the cocktail area with my partner Colleen, a little bit chatty, keeping me entertained with the gossips of people she recognized.

"He doesn't look pleased with the party," Colleen sang.

The fundraising gala was doing great, aside from the fact that it was more tedious than I thought, but this event was to raise money for a cause, and I had to suck this up for a few more hours.

“And you call this a party? I mean, yeah, it is because there’s a live auction, but no one seemed to appreciate the musical performance.” I’d been watching these people and only one man who managed to top my boredom—him.

“Forget about live music. Just take a look at the eye candy over there.” She was looking over my shoulder.

“Who is exactly the eye candy you are talking about?” I pretended to search for the eye candy even though I thought I may have an idea.

“Don’t look,” she rushed, pretending to inspect the table. “He’s looking at you.”

“Who’s looking at me?” With wide eyes, I looked at Colleen.

“Not now,” she whispered through greeted teeth.

“And you missed to mention him to me, why?”

Her hazel eyes widened into circles. “You don’t know him?”

I squinted slightly. “Should I?”

“If a man could knock you up by a stare alone, damn, you are nine months pregnant, River,” she casually said.

“I honestly don’t know anyone,” I admitted. “And besides, my only interest is saving Journey’s job. So I’ll stick with it.”

“Ugh. You’re no fun. But he’s hot, isn’t he?” She pushed the topic, which Journey warned me about her. We stepped back when the refill had arrived.

Yeah, like the hottest flame. “He’s okay, I guess.” I tried my best not to talk too much. We were briefed to avoid chitchatting, but here we were. We couldn’t just help it.

Colleen threw me a where-the-freaking-part-of-this-universe-you-come-from look. “Are you crazy? You should have seen his brother,” she whispered and straightened her back. “Poor Journey. She’s been looking forward to this event.”

“There’s always a next time. I need a five-minute break. I’ll be right back.” I wanted this to be over. I couldn’t wait to throw myself onto the couch and raise my feet.

Even a server needed to look decent. I entered the employer break room, and luckily, it was empty. I sat on the counter and kicked my shoes off. My heels were killing me. I closed my eyes and wiggled my toes.

A moment later, the break room door cracked open, my eyes flew open. Before I could compose myself, my spine stiffened like a stone. Oh, my god. It’s him. And he was holding his blistering gaze at me as if he was trying to talk to me telepathically.

“Not enjoying yourself.” He had a deep and husky voice. And just wow, no introduction? I guessed he thought he didn’t need one. Direct to the point. Is he the type of person who doesn’t like foreplay and chose the wall over the bed instead?

I gulped, stared at him in astonishment as I slid my butt down. When I straightened my spine and fixed my uniform, I realized what he was doing—he was talking to me as he stepped closer. He seemed to suck the air in the room, taking my breath away as I met his fascinating searing dark eyes. Sweet Jesus, he’s so damn gorgeous.

Thankfully, I managed to detach my tongue from the roof of the mouth. “Sorry. Is this supposed to be—?” Did I enter the wrong room? I looked around then back to him.

As he was closing the distance between us with his hands in his pockets, I was still rooted in place. He was tall with broad shoulders, at least, a foot taller than me in high heels. His tux was molded to his frame, showing his bulging biceps and sturdy thighs.

“I think you’re in the right room.” Something in his voice crawled shivers up my spine, in a good way, and made me feel hot at the same time.

“And I supposed you’re not?”

I raised a brow a little.

He studied me for a ferocious focus for a moment before he shrugged.

“Don’t tell me that event behind this wall is not your crowd.” I motioned to his perfect well-tailored outfit that cost a fortune.

His lips curved at the corner, then pressed them into a thin line as if trying to hide his smile. His dimples showed through his five o’clock shadow. He was almost perfect, except for his dark thick hair touching the collar of his starched white crisp shirt, but he couldn’t be any less perfect in my eyes. This man radiated power, oozed confidence, and had a full load of testosterone.

“And I can tell that this isn’t your thing.” How did he know? He stopped merely a foot away from me, eyes glittering with humor. He filled up the room like a force of nature, and I could hardly catch my breath. His pine and woody cologne quickly intoxicated me, and I also smelled alcohol in his breath.

“Bingo. I have to replace a friend who’s sick at home.” I didn’t know why I even bothered explaining to a stranger. Maybe I didn’t want to look stupid in front of a hot as hell of a male specimen, or maybe, I was only making a decent conversation.

“My brother backed out an hour before the event.” Colleen was right, he had a brother.

I nodded in understanding. “Well, how unlucky we are—” I stopped when he stood still for a moment and stared at me. Really stared at me, making me almost quiver. What’s wrong with this guy? Why did this man have the ability to invade me and make me all hot and race my heartbeat?

I wished I could read what was in his mind right now. I gulped. “Aren’t you supposed to do something, like pretend to fix your bow, lit a smoke, or dial your girlfriend and tell her that you’re dying in boredom?” Gah! Just shut up, River. I looked down at my feet, feeling utterly embarrassed.

“Couldn’t say I was unlucky. Maybe things really happen for a reason. If I didn’t show up tonight, I wouldn’t have met the most beautiful woman in the room.”

“What?” I froze. I had to think twice that he wasn’t referring to me. Of course, why would I think it was me? “I guess so. I’ve seen a lot of beautiful women tonight.” So, no girlfriend then.

Crap. I sounded stupid. I met his gaze, and he was staring at me again, seeming to zero into my eyes for a few moments as if to memorize my face, which I could tell that nothing special about me. Does he paint for a living or something? Then he dropped his gaze on my mouth. Every nerve in my body jumped.

“You have the most beautiful blue eyes I’ve ever seen.” He must be drunk, or this must be his pickup line.

I blinked at his words. He was just probably bored and wanted to waste his time with someone, and that poor someone was me for a moment, in this freaking break room. Great.

I was sure I looked like a mess. My exhaustion weighed on me. My penny brown hair was falling out of its ponytail, and god, there was nothing special with the color of my Prussian eyes. Nevertheless, my knees weakened, and my eyes widened into circles. Stupid River, get a grip.

“You’re not bad yourself.” God, please, kill me now. In my head, I could see myself facepalming. Did I just say that? But okay, this man was hot, like a blue flame. His dark eyes were hypnotic, and he had the cerise red full lips I’d ever seen, not to mention his strong jawline to add to his perfection. And if he only made a move, I was definitely willing to let him bang me in this room. I would hate myself later. Tomorrow would be the new day anyway.

With his nose flaring, he muttered a curse under his breath as he was still staring at my mouth. He then trailed a finger on my cheek. It was a simple touch, yet I felt a jolt as if I accidentally jabbed my finger into a socket.

When I looked at his slightly parted lips, in an instant, my blood was molten lava in my veins. Oh, boy. Am I really doing this?

I hadn’t had fun in a long time, and I couldn’t remember the last time I had the best orgasm or wild sex in a powder room or any room for that matter.

Before I could contemplate further, he crushed his mouth to mine, his hand at the back of my neck. I gasped in surprise, taking that advantage to thrust his tongue deep. He completely invaded me, and I had no power to resist. He tasted of wine and mint, and it was strangely good. So good that I couldn’t push him away and slap him hard.

Instead, I kissed him back, tangling my tongue with his. Our lips slid each other as if they’d done this a thousand times. I entwined my fingers in his dark hair, and it felt like silk against my fingers. I dug my fingernails into his scalp, pulling him closer as if I couldn’t get enough of him.

A low growl vibrated from his throat into our mouths, fueling the heat between my legs. We kissed like we’d missed each other for a long time of bottled-up desire and longing between us crackling up into the fire. This kiss was not the first normal kiss—this was hard, yearning, and raw with pure desire.

He pressed his hard body against mine, and my back hit the marble counter. My god, he wanted me.

I could feel his rigid erection pressed against my lower belly, and I also wanted him that my nipples ached, tightened, and hardened, causing an intensified heat to pulse in my core.

“God, I want you so bad. I want to fuck you so hard right here right now,” he said roughly into our mouths as he reached towards my breast. I flexed forward, seeking to ease the ache between my thighs and my sensitive nipples. I shivered and sighed as if he just read my mind—he cupped and pinched my hardened buds against the fabric. Oh, yes!

I felt how wildly my heart pounded, and it wasn't the only one, I also felt his big, hard, hungrily digging cock twitching on my lower abdomen. And it felt incredible.

I held my moan as he nibbled and nipped my bottom lip, and I imagined his mouth sucking my breast. Dear God, I wanted his mouth and tongue in there, everywhere, all over my body. I could feel the pool of desire soaking my panties. All I knew was I wanted him. At this moment, I didn't even care that I didn't know his name.

Then his hand slid south, trailing his fingers between my thighs. I inhaled in a huge gust, shuddering.

I wanted him to fuck me now until I couldn't walk. Except, this wasn't me. This isn't me.

“Stop.” I pushed him. My voice sounded like I wanted to dash out of the door, but my body screamed something else—please, don't stop!

He froze as if he'd turned to stone. His face paled as if someone just slapped him, but his dark eyes pinning into mine were still on fire, and they were shooting flames at me. “Excuse me?”

“I'm not the kind of woman you could just throw compliments and spread legs for you.” God, what was I thinking? My hormones had taken control of my brain.

He stared at me, seemingly offended, and I could clearly see now that he was sober, but still drunk with lust. Then deliberately, his freeze started thawing while I was beyond turned on. But now something chilly filled between us. We were merely an inch apart, but the distance seemed like miles away.

He said nothing as he stepped back.