

## Love Me in the Dark - Chapter 17. Terms

KREW

What was I thinking? I should be walking out of her room. I should be putting a distance from her.

Instead,

I was falling under her spell. Isn't it what you want, asshole? Isn't it the reason why you'd been

stalking

her for years aside from the promise you made?

She knew she saw and felt that I wanted her. I would never deny that fact, but it didn't change a

thing that

I didn't do relationships, at least, not anymore, and worse, I couldn't do it with her.

Before I knew River, it was already hard, and I didn't want to answer and explain to every woman I

slept

with about my own demons. It was just that I didn't want to see that look in their eyes—the judgment

or

the pity when I told them what I'd been through, but I didn't see those judgments when River

managed

get through my walls, but still, I was only helping her, and the tremendous fact that I had to keep

away

from her. When this thing was over, she was going to walk out of my life. Would I allow her to walk

away? I  
hadn't thought about it.

When she fell asleep in my arms, I gently pulled away from her even if it was harder than I thought. I couldn't and shouldn't get used to this emotion. I couldn't gamble my heart. I knew for a fact that I would hurt myself in return, yet here I was, taking all the risk. River was the only woman who made me feel vulnerable, weak, and strong at the same time.

I watched her for a moment as I sat on the sofa in the corner of the room. She slept soundly. Before I could turn into a creepy stalker, I walked out of the room and never looked back.

The sun rose, and I'd never woke up this late in the morning. I always had been an early riser, but I felt different. I felt some weight had lifted off my shoulders for some unknown reason.

Faint voices from the kitchen that I recognized were Anna and River. Yeah, I missed visiting Anna because of the weather, and she often came to my place to bring me some of her harvests and goods.

"Good morning, Krew," Anna greeted me with a full smile on her face.

"Morning, Anna, River." They were both sitting on the stools with cups of coffee and a plate of freshly baked pastries. "Sorry if I missed it yesterday."

'I won't suggest you come and visit me yesterday with that weather, dear,' Anna said sweetly.

'I won't miss it next time.'

'It's not a big deal, honey.' Something in her smile that I may find odd before she raised her brows,  
gesturing to the woman beside her. "Take River with you."

I shook my head slowly. I knew precisely what she was doing. I poured myself a cup of coffee when  
River

was about to slide from the stool. "I got this. Every time I visited Anna, I made a point not to treat her  
like a

visitor. Besides, this is my home, my rule."

"What he meant today, darling, is, he may have deep pockets, but he is not like someone who got  
what he

wanted in a snap of his fingers. That's what I love about him. This man has a heart of pure gold."

"Oh, common, Anna. You didn't see me like that when you first met me." I sipped my coffee, grabbed

a

baked good from the plate, and took a huge bite. Her own version of Southern biscuits was a lot

better

with flaky layers, buttery, and with tender crumbs, and it was pure delight in my mouth.

"You're right. That's what I exactly told River earlier before you appeared." So they were like old

buddies

now. The last time I checked, she looked at River with disapproval.

'It's not a secret the people looked at me more intimidating with their first impression, but what they  
didn't

know was that I was a softie inside." I grinned at her. At my peripheral vision, River bit her bottom lip

as if

she remembered something.

'I second to that," River agreed with a chuckle.

"Anyway, I have to get back." Anna slid from her stool.

"Already?"

"Well, I have a lounge to run. I have a few visitors coming over. Just checking on my favorite person

in the

world." She walked closer to me to kiss my cheek, and she had to tiptoe to reach my face. She was

a

short old fella, but I loved her like my own mother. "She's a keeper," she whispered before she

stepped

back.

'Let me walk you out." We walked side by side after she bid goodbye to River.

'Tell me about her?" she asked when we reached the living room.

"What to tell you? I don't know much about her aside from the fact that I am helping her."

"That's not what I saw when she talked about you as if you two have known each other for a long

time."

'I met her once. We had a short conversation. Then last week she came to my sister, asking for my

help."

"You missed the vital information, Krew. Why did she come to your sister when you only met her

once?"

She stopped and looked me in the eye, squinting to see what she missed out on.

'It's kind of a long story."

“You don’t have to tell me. I’m not up for gossips. What I wanted to say is, there’s something more between you two than River wanted to bed or you to bed her.”

What the fuck is she talking about? What else did River tell her about me? My cheeks burned. Are we.

these opened books?

My brows knitted together. I was about to tell Anna that she misread everything, but did she though?

I

clamped my mouth shut again.

‘I could feel the sexual tension in the air the moment you came to the kitchen. There must be unsated

desire left hanging last night.” Oh, fuck me now.

“Okay, old woman. Enough about me and River. Nothing’s gonna happen between her and me. I’m not up

for a relationship at this moment, and she, on the other hand, is not into one-night stands. So, don’t make

your hopes high. Now that I made things clear, stop looking at me like I just lost my sanity.”

“Oh, you noticed it on my face?” She hit me on my arm. “See? That’s exactly how obvious her reaction

was when she saw you. And you have to believe me, Krew. True love comes only once. Don’t miss the

opportunity because you don’t do a relationship.” She shook her head. “Kids nowadays. Who invented

that one-night crap?”

I ended up bursting out laughing with her one-night crap.

Once we reached the gate, she looked at me with concern in her eyes. "Whatever demon you're  
keeping  
deep inside you, you have to let it out somehow. If she still sees you the same person as you are,  
there's  
no reason she's not worthy of a rule to break. Trust me, Krew, I know when it's real, or if she's just  
after  
what's in your pocket."

'Ill keep that in mind. Take care, Anna. I'll see you soon."

When I came back to the main door, River was already leaning against the wall. I looked around to  
make  
sure no one was watching us. "You shouldn't be here."

'I went out with you once, and nothing happened."

"You're stalker might have traced your last whereabouts. You don't wanna validate it to that lunatic  
that  
you're here with me."

'Is it about your secret lair or the possibility of the paparazzi would find you with a stranger at your  
house?"

"Nothing of some sort, River. I don't care about them anymore. I only care about your safety."

'I thought this is the safest place in the world for me."

'I don't wanna gamble your safety over your stubbornness. Now, let's get inside.' I gestured for her  
to  
enter the house.

She glared at me before she got in.

"We need to talk." I wanted to ignore my heart that started to beat wildly, but I had to face the fact  
that she  
might turn down the offer and wouldn't talk to me again, aside from the other reasons and something  
had  
up my sleeve. Jesus, I wished I could pull this off without getting any of us hurt.

"Sure. Been waiting all day." I didn't miss the hint of sarcasm in her voice as she followed me.

I unlocked my office door, gesturing for her to enter.

"You left."

'I know, but not until you fell asleep.'

"Do you always do that?"

I locked the door and faced her. I had to tell her the truth and be honest with her whether she liked it

or

not. "Yes. I always left after I had sex. I don't intend to cuddle or pillow talk when my intention is

pretty

clear. To have sex, nothing more."

She gulped. Her eyes were wide as she stared at me.

“And this is what I wanted to talk to you about before we can continue what we left last night.” Was I

an

asshole? Yes. Was I trying to make my point clear? Absolutely.

She gulped again and licked her lips. “Can we just have sex and don’t make it awkward between

us?” You

absolutely have no fucking idea how much I wanted to do you in every corner of this house.

‘I don’t wanna make things complicated between us, River. We like each other. I can see that. Even

blind

people can feel the tension between us, but that’s it. Just sex.”

“So your assurance is nothing but a lie.”

‘I didn’t lie to you about that. Nothing has changed.’

“But?”

“On my own terms.”

‘Then no!’

I held her arm before she could grab the doorknob. “Hear me out first.”

“No. Do I look like a woman who follows terms just to have sex with a guy who I wanted to sleep with

for

over three years? Even if you’re the last man on earth and humanity depends on us, I won’t do that.

I’m

not that desperate. Sex as you call it and maybe just sex to you, but it still has to have emotions to

share



and feel between two people. I can't just have sex with you and be like a stone. So no." That's it.

She

walked out, slamming the door in my face. Great.

I pulled out my phone and dialed the number on my speed dial. Before I could press it against my

ear, it

answered from the other line.

"We need to talk."