

Love Me in the Dark - Chapter 37. Old Man's POV

RIVER

I think I'm gonna be sick. I have to get out of here.

I bolted out of the penthouse. A cry of horror escaped my lips as I sprinted inside the elevator. I punched the L button with shaky fingers and slid my body against the wall as it brought me down. Once I reached the lobby, I ran towards my car and unlocked the door. I finally got inside, slammed the door shut, and revved the engine.

Through the rearview mirror, I watched Lake standing there until he vanished from my sight.

I couldn't remember how I got off there safe and not getting into any kind of accident. I parked my car in front of my apartment building, and I had no idea what to do next. I cried over there for I didn't know he.. long. I screamed out of frustration and heartache. I bellowed my stupidity until I had no tears left to cry.

When I calmed down a little bit, I took my phone and stared at the contact list. I couldn't decide which one to call first— Journey, Krys, or Kai. Then I hit the one that I had not talked to in a long time.

He picked up right away as if he was waiting for someone's call. "Hello?"

I shut my eyes close as I said hoarsely, "Hi, Dad. It's me, River."

'I know, honey. I happen only to have a daughter. I missed you so much, honey. When can I see you?'

'I'm coming home.'

'That's wonderful news. I'll text you the address. I can't wait to see you, honey. It's been more than four years, and I've been longing to have my daughter back.'

'I still know the address, Dad.' I laughed in between sobs.

'I don't live there anymore.'

'What do you mean?' My eyes widened in horror. 'What happened to your house?'

'We can talk about this when you're here. I'll text you the address.'

After three hours, I was standing at my dad's new home. It was a two-story modern farmhouse. The old family car parked in front just confirmed that my father did live here.

I stood frozen when he walked out. I was torn between running and launching into him or running away

instead. My eyes started to get blurry as he took a few steps and then stop merely an arm's length.

My knees gave out.

'River,' that was all he said before he pulled me into his arms and hugged me tightly.

'Dad.' I felt a sob working its way up my throat. My body shook as I wrapped my arms around him.

When we pulled apart, all I could do was stared at him in disbelief while he was smiling at me. He looked

old, might have lost a few pounds, with graying hair at the sides of his head, but I still remembered
the
same face I left years ago.

“You look beautiful, honey. Just like your mom. I watched your videos, and I was so happy that you
got to
hold an instrument again.”

“Thank you. Can we talk inside?”

“Sure.” He wrapped an arm around my shoulders.

I gulped as I entered the living room with decent furniture. I sat on one of the sofas. I noticed pictures
of
me, Mom, and him when I was still a teenager.

“You live alone here?”

“Yeah. Can I get you something? Are you hungry?” He occupied the loveseat across me.

“I’m fine. What happened to your old house?”

[sold it.”

“Why? It’s yours and Mom’s.” I started to get weepy again. I had to choke it down to continue this
long-
overdue conversation.

“I got sick, and the treatment was expensive. I used all the savings I had, but it wasn’t enough.”

Tears finally fell from my eyes. “Why didn’t you tell me?”

“You cut me off, River. You also were not doing well with your last job. I don’t wanna be a burden.

And you
went away because of my alcohol problem.”

‘Burden? Dad, I’m still your daughter. Your family left. You could have just called me. I would be
here in a
heartbeat. You needed me, Dad. How did you get through all of that alone?’ I started crying again. I
couldn’t even begin to imagine him being sick alone. God, I was a terrible daughter.

‘I had a few help, from old friends, John—’

“Your bandmate?”

“Yeah.”

‘I thought he’s a lost cause.’

“Not financially.”

I stood up and sat beside him. I held his hand tight, and I could feel the strong knot of guilt in my
belly as I
looked at his pale blue eyes. “What happened?”

It was more than four years since I stopped seeing my father. My mother and his band made him an
alcoholic. I gave up trying to help him cope with his loss. He stopped drinking, then was tempted
until he
almost hit me with the bottle when I tried to take it away from him.

We agreed to stay away from each other’s for a while until I ended up working in the city.

'I had alcohol-related liver disease. Thankfully, there's this young man who helped and found a donor for me.'

"You had a liver transplant?"

"Yes. Three years ago. Three years and six months to be exact."

"Who?" I gulped and almost shivered as I looked at Dad. "Who is this young man?"

'I even told him to look after you while I'm in the operating room and while recovering.'

I shivered as I wiped my tears. Why did I feel I knew this young man he was talking about? "Is he—
oh,
god." I wasn't able to continue talking. I covered my face as I shook to cry.

'It's okay, River. I'm in good health right now.'

'Dad, who's he?' I looked at him, hoping he would give me a direct answer. "Dad, is it Krew Selik?"

"Yes. He's a wonderful young man." He looked away. There was something in his gesture that he hid from me. Then he looked at me again. "I'd never met a young man who has a good heart, River."

"You met him four years ago? I pushed you out of my life when you came to me, and you were already sick at that time?"

'It's his father's liver that saved my life. Mr. Selik was an organ donor. Luckily, I was compatible, and his liver was as good as new. Koby was brought to the same hospital where I was admitted. He died on

the
operating table. His organs would only last for a few hours. I think things happen for a reason. We
both
meant to be there in that hospital at the same time. Krew visited me in my ward. He looked like he
was
carrying the world over his shoulders. I wasn't aware they just brought his dad who had his second
heart
attack. Then he asked me if what's my problem. When I told him the whole story, how I lost my wife,
my
band, my daughter because of my addiction, he made me swear not to hold a bottle again. He
promised
he would help me. Then he did what he promised."

"How about this house?"

'He paid the house provided that I would work in one of his cause. Cassiel Foundation. At first, I
work in
maintenance. Then I became a motivational speaker. Sometimes, I performed during therapy. I
never
drunk since before my surgery."

'Then why did you not contact me?"

I felt guilty and ashamed for what I did, River." I could see it through his eyes. How he felt guilty and
how
he regretted everything he did. But so did I.

'I'm sorry if I lost my patience with you. I should have let someone help you, Dad, and not
abandoning

you. I was the shittiest daughter, and it won't happen again." I hugged him tightly. "I'm here now. I

would

never leave you alone."

I had so many questions to ask, but my brain was in a pretzel. All I could do was be grateful that my

father

was still alive because of him.

Did he know me before we met that night? Did he know that I would be there when I was in that fundraising gala? Did Kai know that my father was the recipient of his dad's liver? Is that why he

hated

me? Was Krew stalking me, or he was only looking after me?

Oh, my God! I accused him of something terrible, but why couldn't he just tell me the truth?

We had dinner together. My father was a good cook than my mom, which was a trait I didn't inherit.

"So, wanna tell me what troubles you?" Surprisingly, the house came up with a full package, even

the

coffee machine to his dishwasher.

"What made you think something's troubling me, Dad?" I placed the last plate into the dishwasher

before I

looked at him over my shoulder.

"I'm your old man, and I can still read you like an open book, honey."

"So you know me of being a bad judge of characters?"

"Apparently, yes." He chuckled. It felt good to have my father's back.

'Then I must have misjudged someone after all.' I sighed and looked down at my foot. "I think I
messed it

up, Dad. But in my defense, I didn't know anything at all."

"You're too cryptic, honey. Is it heart problems?"

I slumped my shoulders as I met his worried gaze. 'I'll live. Can I stay here for a few days?"

"You can stay here for as long as you want. I still keep your mom's guitar. I thought you might like it."

"Oh, my god. Really?" It was the first time I gushed since I arrived.

"Yes. Give me your car key. I'll park it in my garage."

'It's on the coffee table. Thank you, Dad."

"You're welcome, honey. You can borrow some of your mom's old clothes. It looks like you have no
clothes with you, have you?"

"Yeah. I wasn't planning on going somewhere until I thought of you."

"Go upstairs. Your room is in the last to the left. The guitar is there too." He paused. "I hope you'd
learn

how to share your feelings, River. It helps a lot."

'I'll keep that in mind." I smiled genuinely.

After an hour in the shower, I changed into my mom's old jammies. It smelled mothballs and
detergent, but

I had no choice. I walked downstairs to make ginger tea when I heard Dad whispering in the kitchen.

'Dad?'

'I'm here, honey.'

"Who are you talking to?" I froze. My heart was in my throat. Astonished, I could hardly form

coherent

words. "What are you doing here?"