

## Love Me in the Dark - Chapter 8. Protective

KREW

Before Kai made his decision, he knew the shitload of consequences if he took the bait our PR had

put

forward for the sake of the company's future. Going ape was an understatement when I noticed

Krystyn

started to be irrationally suspicious. So I knew exactly how she felt when River went to her.

The background check was bullshit. I made that up to get her attention, but I already knew many

things

about River more than I was willing to tell her.

I contemplated putting a camera inside her room, but it was a little bit too much. River would hate me

if

she found out I was willing to invade her privacy to keep her on tabs. So I came up with a better

idea—to.

transfer her into the room next to mine. That was how I heard her screaming.

I went down to my office to check the feeds if she went out of her room after I left. It made me

madder that

she would choose to leave than accepting my help. Why did she come all the way here if she would

only

give up because I found her horrified in a nightmare? Too late, didn't she ever think? And I knew she

was

not completely honest with me. I might have to do digging on my own because I was almost certain

she  
was not going to share the full details.

It was five in the morning. I started working even if I wanted to get back to bed. Neither I was in the  
mood  
to work out. Before I could scroll with my email, my stomach grumbled, the door swung open at the  
same  
time. Good grace. River entered with a tray of steaming cups and a plate of bagels. The smell of  
butter,  
sugar, and coffee filled my office, making me hungrier. And hungrier for something else.

“Sorry, I did it again.” She blushed crimson. Cute. I could watch her blush all day. “Bad habits. I hope  
you  
don’t mind me joining you for breakfast.” Oh, I don’t mind at all.

I ignored her apology. I rose from my seat, took the tray from her, and placed it down the coffee  
table. As I  
made myself comfortable on the couch, I took a huge bite of bagel and grabbed the cup she offered.  
I  
realized it wasn’t so bad to have her company as long as she would keep her mouth shut and not  
minding  
my business.

There was something about River that was so authentic—she had this genuity in everything she did,  
and I  
bet she did not even know it. But her presence and being extremely gorgeous were a distraction  
most of  
the time. It was harder to stay focused when I got a constant hard-on even if she was not around.

“You’re hungry.” She settled beside me with a cup in her hand, clueless that I was thinking about her  
obscenely as frequently as possible.

‘I used to wake up in the middle of the night for a cereal.’

She looked surprised, staring at me with wide eyes.

“What?”

“Can’t see you a cereal guy.”

“What do you see me as a type of guy then?” I should not have asked her. My bad.

She shrugged, sipping her coffee. “I don’t know. Maybe you prefer a shot of bourbon instead.”

‘I don’t drink anymore. After—’ I gulped. I did not continue. I sipped my coffee instead. “Don’t  
apologize  
again.” I knew she still felt terrible. Although, it wasn’t entirely our fault. It was Kai who made  
uncomplicated things complicated, but I had no plan on telling her. “Have you tried taking self-  
defense  
classes?”

She shook her head. “No.”

“Great. Your class will start in three hours.”

“What? I can’t do that. I have a job to do, and I’m kinda in a house arrest right now, remember?”

“Who said you have to get out of the house?”

Her eyes grew bigger again. “Oh? But I can’t afford it right now, Krew. I’m still—broke.” She shut her  
mouth.

I sighed. She frustrated me sometimes. “Why do you always have excuses for everything? I can’t remember asking you to pay for anything, can you? I even gave you a job because that’s what you want.”

“And I’m grateful, but I can’t just—”

‘I won’t discuss this with you anymore. Take it or leave it.’ Disappointed, I went back to my desk with my

cup. Why couldn’t she just say thank you or at least feel excited about the small things I did for her?

She left without a word with the tray. Way to work with my communication skills. Well, if she didn’t want to

talk, so did I.

After hours of scrambling in the office, I went out. The entire house was dead silent. I wondered what was.

keeping her busy.

It was Sunday and her day off. That was why I decided to call my instructor to give her self-defense lessons, but it seemed my effort just went through the window.

I changed to shorts and shirt and headed to my mini gym, only to stop midway to see her and Aaren in a

position that I wasn’t exactly what I expected to see first thing in my gym. My blood rushed up from my

neck to my face. My nose was already flaring while watching Aaren behind River as he showed her the

basic elbow strike and bear hug attack. The fact that Aaren was attractive, and women fell for his

shits all  
the time, I felt something that I shouldn't.

I should have just taught her myself.

While I felt a terrible ache in my chest, I took the liberty to check her out. River was wearing yoga  
pants,  
showcasing her long legs. Her shirt was tied to the back, showing a good amount of her tone abs. I  
knew  
she was hot and incredibly sexy the first time I saw her, but her eyes had drawn to me the most like I  
was  
hypnotized every time our gazes met.

Before I could say anything, she beamed at me. "I took your advice."

'I can see that.' My response was not exactly pleasant, but she didn't seem to care. She turned back  
her  
attention to her lesson without replying.

"Hey, man," Aaren noticed me. I trusted him, but I didn't know why I couldn't do the same when it  
came to

River. "Wanna show River your moves?" His grey eyes glittered.

Aaren knew he was better than me, but I learned a few moves and tricks. He was just around my  
age, but

he had made quite a record, had won a lot of matches until he decided to be an MMA instructor.

"Sure." I wouldn't say no, even if I ended up losing. We did warm-ups for a few minutes.

“Am I going to learn that too?” River was sitting on the floor, watching us with eyes filled with  
interest.

‘In a few months,” Aaren replied.

“Why can’t I do that in a few days? I’m a fast learner, you know.”

‘This isn’t about how fast you can learn,” I answered. After a few strikes, swings, kicks, and blocking,

I

never felt more alive, I countered attack Aaren’s strikes.

I was in a defensive move. Back in high school, I was helpless and weak. I was bullied and became

the

target of the jocks in the school. My family never knew what they had been doing to me until one

night I

didn’t go home. I started to build my own world from now on.

Knowing that someone was hurting River, I had this urge feeling inside me and the need to guard

her with

my life. I was confident she was safe in the house, but when I saw the horror in her eyes—it was like

a

reflection of mine during that night.

I needed to keep her safe. Maybe not only from that lunatic alone, maybe from any men who tried to

hit on

her. I couldn’t even begin to imagine seeing her with another man.

River is mine—

'Hey, Krew!' Aaren knocked me down with a thud. Air trapped in my lungs. He locked me with his  
arms

and legs until I could not move. "You're distracted. You could have knocked me out."

I blinked and tapped my hand to the floor until he released me.

"What was that all about?" It was River. She was already towering over us, looking confused and  
terrified.

"Sometimes we both got carried away," Aaren lied. "Nothing to be worried about. We know what  
we're  
doing, but never do this to anyone. Self-control is important. Never show off what you got. Surprising  
your  
attacker is your best defense."

"Sure," she replied, sounding unsure.

Still catching my breath, I rose from the floor. River's face showed she did not buy it.

"You could have hurt him," she said, following me as I grabbed the towel to wipe off my sweat.

'I didn't, did I? He does this for a living to not knock me out easily.'

"What if you did that to someone who didn't know anything about self-defense?" She was right.

"Your point?" What was wrong with me? I was losing my shit back there. River was doing something  
to me

that made me reckless and irresponsible.

"Nothing." It was not nothing. I could sense how scared she was.

‘Tell me why would I hurt someone?’ My tone was a little bit defensive. She gulped. Man, is there  
anything

I did I didn’t screw up? ‘I’m not gonna hurt you, River. If that’s what you’re thinking.’

‘I know.’

‘Now continue with your lesson.’ I looked at Aaren. ‘Go easy on her. It’s her first day.’

“River?” I knocked on her door.

When I heard no movement from the inside, I held the brass doorknob, pushed the door open as I  
helped

myself in. Did she forget to lock the door?

River was not in her room. I was quickly on alert mode, but nothing seemed out of place. The  
window was.

still locked from the inside.

“River?” I called her name again. When she did not respond, I rushed toward the bathroom and froze  
at

the same time. Too late to realize that the light in her room was on. Then she emerged from the  
door,

looking wet and damn gorgeous with only a towel covering the delicate part of her creamy skin. Her  
hair

was tied above her head in a messy bun. Her mile-long toned legs and her thighs were worth  
drooling

over. There you go again—this stupid attraction crackled up like a fucking fire.



“What the hell?” She jumped, her eyes widened into circles, hands gripping the towel securely on  
her  
chest as if I was planning to snatch it from her. Well, that was a lovely idea, but not tonight.

“LI.” I gulped like an idiot. “I was looking for you.” I gulped again. My tongue thickened in my mouth  
no  
matter how I wanted to defend myself. I still haven’t moved a muscle from where I was standing  
while I  
was gawking at her like a horny teenager just got his first playboy magazine. The more I stared at  
her, the  
more my pants tightened. Great.

“Can you turn around and let me get dressed? Or you can go now that you know I haven’t broken  
my  
house arrest?” She was pissed at me. She had every right to. The more I pissed her off, the hotter  
she got  
though.

Jesus, I was getting a little uncomfortable down there. I prayed in my head that she would not look  
down  
and notice something growing in my pants.

‘I’m sorry, but I called you twice. You should lock your door, River.’ I turned around.  
‘I’m safe in your house, right? And I remember locking the door last night, yet you managed to get  
in.’

‘This is my—’ I pursed my lips. Then I remembered why I was looking for her. I turned again, and the  
first  
thing I noticed when I was not drooling over her was the bruises on her arms. Jesus. “Did that

fucking

lunatic do that to you?"