
DARK LOVE

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This book contains fantasy themes appropriate for mature readers only.
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advocating any non-consensual sexual activity.

Chapter 1

Wendy was in the washroom of a hotel room. She was wiping the smudged mascara from beneath her eyes. Her hands were shaking and her gaze was fuzzy because of two reasons, one; excessive drinking, two; her boyfriend, Clark.

She and her boyfriend had been together for almost five years, but judging from the yelling match they had a few moments ago, they were pretty much broken up. Wendy was of the opinion that their relationship was going nowhere while Clark believed that jumping into rash decisions would be catastrophic.

“Rash? Seriously?” she muttered angrily to herself. “Five years is not a small number, asshole!”

So, after much yelling and throwing things at each other, Clark left her in the hotel room and walked away from her life. She was not sure how she felt about that. On one hand she was out of a dead-end relationship, but on the other hand, she had been in love with him. It was true that he never bothered to ask if she had a problem with the venue of their weekly dates. Clark

always took her to a pricey hotel or his apartment, but never at her place. As a matter of fact, he did not even know where she lived.

Wiping her face one last time, she decided to leave for her apartment. It was late and her roommate, Emma, who also happened to be her best friend, would get worried if she was not home by midnight. Wendy was raised in a foster home. She had no family or a boatload of friends and usually kept to herself. Emma was the only person she considered a friend because unlike countless phony people, Emma truly cared and gave her honest opinion when asked.

She came out of the washroom, took one look at her stuff strewn around the room and walked out. No need to gather the stuff that held memories of her time together with Clark.

“All men are jerks,” she slurred to herself.

For someone who could not hold two drinks and had six that night, the walk from the room to the lobby was not a small feat, and if her small cocktail dress and six-inch heels were thrown into the mix then one can only imagine just how hard it was for her to walk straight.

“I should order an Uber,” she slurred again.

She fished out her cellphone from her purse with wobbly fingers and was about to unlock the screen when she stumbled in her heels and lost her balance. She shrieked impulsively as she heard the sound of glass breaking.

A broken vase was lying near her feet. She was not an expert when it came to knowing prices of decorations in the lobby of an expensive hotel, but even she knew the vase was not a knockoff.

“I am so screwed,” Wendy mumbled.

Wendy kneeled on the floor and started to pick up the shards with her hands and dump them in the bin nearby. She was trying to wipe out the evidence for the crime she had committed without alerting the hotel management.

A drunken mind comes up with lots of ideas that we all regret in the end.

She nicked her finger a couple of times and not because the shards were small and pointy, but rather due to her own inebriated state.

“What is happening here?”

She flinched at the sharp voice. She looked to the side and found a pair of boots at a small distance from her. Her gaze lifted from the expensive boots to black leather pants and then moved across a brown leather jacket to the face of a handsome young man with cropped black hair.

“This was already broken,” she blurted.

He narrowed his eyes and she tried unsuccessfully to keep him in focus. He was starting to blur.

“Is that what I would find if I checked the feed on the camera?” he asked.

Her throat bobbed in fear. If this man could access the cameras of the hotel then that would mean he was either the manager of the place or was the owner. Judging from the luck she was having so far, she was inclined to believe the latter scenario might be the case here.

“What’s your name?” he asked.

It was an easy question, but in her current state of mind, she was not able to recall her own name. She looked at his face for a moment too long before responding.

“Wendy,” she responded unsurely. “Wendy something... Wendy, aha! Wendy Michaels.”

She saw a ghost of a smile on his face before he turned his back on her. She released the breath she had been holding as he walked away from her, but then he looked back at her over his shoulder and she got tense all over again.

“Come with me,” he said.

It took her a moment to process his words. She looked

around and found the empty place a bit creepy. There was no one present, except for her and the owner of the place.

“Where and why?” she asked.

His eyes did not blink even once as he stared at her. She fidgeted and started to get uneasy.

“You ask an awful lot of questions, Wendy,” he said. “Has someone ever told you that?”

“I do? Yes! Of course, I do. People say it all the time.”

She was blabbering because she did not know what to make of him. Warning bells were ringing in her head, yet she was not running away. Her body was tricked into a false sense of security or so the small voice in the back of her head was telling her.

“There are cameras everywhere,” he said. “You don’t have to fear me.”

She faked courage and held her head high. She was drunk and all, but not stupid. She could not let a creepy stranger know she was afraid of him.

“Who says I am afraid of you?” she asked.

“Your hands are shaking,” he responded calmly.

She glanced at her hands and found them trembling. She wrapped her arms around her shoulders and straightened her back in a haughty manner.

“I am cold,” she responded.

He raised a brow at her obvious attempt at hiding the truth. She stared at him, refusing to look away lest her lie got caught out.

“Well, in that case, I don’t think you would have a problem if I asked you to follow me,” he said. “I want to discuss the price of the artifact you just broke.”

He did not wait for her to voice her agreement or disagreement and started walking. She contemplated her decision for only a few seconds before running after him.

It was better to get this over with rather than waiting for him

to get pissed off. She had broken a valuable vase and was caught red-handed. It was only fair that she answered for the crime.

“You want to know where I am taking you?” he asked, without turning around.

She stumbled in her tracks. He had just asked a question that had been roaming in her head but she was too afraid to speak it out loud. Either he was very perceptive, or he was able to read another person’s thoughts. Wendy chose to believe the first one because the other was an illogical explanation and a bit scary.

“Would you respond this time if I ask?” she asked.

“Just wait for a moment and you will know soon enough,” he said.

They rounded a corner and reached a closed door at the end of a hallway. Whoever was in that room was listening to awfully loud music. She did not want to enter that room, but luck had not favored her all night and despite her wish to avoid that room, she knew her destination was not someplace else.

“I am offering you a job or more of a gig, in exchange for damaging my property,” he said.

She looked from the door handle to the stranger who was smirking.

“Really?” she asked skeptically. “What will be my duties?”

“You, my dear, have to keep an eye on my friend.” She raised a brow, asking him to explain some more. “Joshua has a tendency for seeking out trouble. I want you to keep him occupied.”

She closed her eyes and counted to ten. She was already in a crappy mood and this man’s prank was not helping her mood either. She was obviously tipsier than she realized, and it was her own fault to engage a stranger in conversation.

It sounded a lot like he was asking her to sleep with his friend. This was a deal breaker for her. Just what kind of woman was this man taking her for? She was dressed in a kind of slutty dress, but that was only because she was on a date with her boyfriend.

Before she could snap at him or do him bodily harm, she turned around and started walking away.

“You still owe me a million bucks,” he called after her.

She stopped in her tracks and looked over her shoulder.

“Excuse me?”

He walked towards her until they were once again facing each other. She wanted to take a few steps back from his looming figure, but she gathered some courage and stood her ground. She would not let him know she was afraid.

“You broke an original relic that belonged to the late Queen Valarie,” he said.

Her mouth remained hanging open. She had no knowledge about history, so she did not know any Queen Valarie, but the vase did look expensive. No wonder it was a relic.

She knew the vase was expensive, but she had not imagined that it would be so expensive that she would not be able to cover the cost even if she had to sell everything she owned.

“What exactly do you want from me?” she asked. “Because let’s face it, I don’t have a million bucks and I believe you already know that.”

She stumbled at the end of her sentence, thus ruining her attempts at appearing in control. She righted herself and thanked the man even though he had not helped her.

The man shrugged and casually placed a cigarette between his lips. He lighted the end and blew smoke in the air.

“I already told you the alternative,” he said. “Keep an eye on my friend, Joshua.”

He was pushing his luck. If he became aware of the homicidal thoughts she was having right now, then he would run away from her presence this very moment. The urge to throw something hard at him was very strong.

“I am not that kind of person,” she snapped at him. “If you believe you can force me into sleeping with a friend of yours,

then let me tell you something... I don't work on the street corner!"

Instead of getting intimidated and backing off, he took another step towards her. Alarm bells were going off in her mind, but she would be damned if she cowered before the likes of him.

"Oh, pumpkin, you are taking it the wrong way," he said amusingly. "You only have to keep an eye on him, so that he does not fall into some nasty old habits. In fact, I am counting on your professional attitude."

She was relieved that she did not have to sell her body, but not so relieved as to release the breath she was holding. As long as she remained in his close proximity, she would remain on high alert.

"What kind of habits?" she asked.

She was thinking the worst about the man named Joshua. All sorts of filthy habits sprang to mind. He could be a drunk or a whoremonger or a junkie.

He waved his hand in the air in a dismissive gesture.

"Smoking, drugs, whoring, etcetera, etcetera," he said nonchalantly.

She was not surprised that he could tell what was going on in her head. She was not subtle about her reactions. It did not take a genius to guess that her expressions were a testament to her real thoughts. She was disgusted.

"What if I reject your offer?" she asked.

The man glared at her. She was starting to think he was not exactly in his right state of mind. She feared he might hurt her if she told him no.

"Then you will owe me one million dollars for the expensive vase you just broke," he said. "Plain and simple."

She had already anticipated that answer, so it did not come as a big surprise. It was time to wrap up this whole drama and look

for a way out. She had her own shit to deal with rather than waste her time on a loony bin.

“I accept the job you are offering in exchange for covering the expense of the broken vase,” she said.

She flashed her best smile, trying to convince him that she was taking him seriously and was not at all thinking about making a fool of him. The man was obviously crazy, so it was only logical that she played along with his delusion.

He smiled back at her and fished out a rolled piece of paper from his pocket, solidifying her belief he was crazy.

“Sign this, Wendy,” he said.

She signed the useless piece of paper and vowed never to return to this place.

“See you tomorrow or whenever the job starts,” she said.

She practically threw the paper at his face before extending her hand. He shook hands with her and placed the paper back in his pocket.

“Why not start today?” he asked casually.

The question came out of the blue.

“What? Today! As in now?”

He ignored her outburst and held the doorknob. The music got louder as the door was opened.

“Let me introduce you to your new job,” he said.

Cigarette butts were lying haphazardly on the expensive Persian carpet all around the room. Empty beer bottles were decorating the coffee table in front of a couch.

She stumbled as she witnessed something interesting.

The most handsome man she had ever laid her eyes on was reclining on the couch.

“Oh, my,” she whispered.

His golden hair fell on his forehead as he opened his eyes and turned his head her way. He had amber eyes, a straight nose and a square jaw. He was dressed in simple denim jeans and a white t-shirt.

He took one look at her and turned his head away dismissively. She should not care, yet she was hurt by his dismissal. Unlike the owner, this person was pulling her towards him like a moth to a flame.

“What are you doing with Bozo the clown, Mike?” he commented dryly.

It felt like a bucket of ice-cold water was splashed over her head. He might be flawlessly handsome, but he had no right to call her a clown. What an ass!

Mike chuckled, but she ignored him and instead, glared at the man on the coach.

She had long red hair, full lips and green eyes. She knew her hourglass figure would make many men salivate.

“Well, this one does not want to do you either,” she said. “You remind her of... of... Simba!”

She regretted the words the moment they were out of her mouth because they did not make sense to her own ears, and judging from the confused expressions on the faces of the other occupants of the room, they were not grasping her meaning either.

“Simba, as in *The Lion King*?” Joshua asked, raising a brow.

She wished the earth would split and engulf her whole. She had compared him to an animated character. Granted, Simba was her favorite as a child, still he was nothing like that cartoon character.

“Uh huh,” she said, nodding her head.

She was standing her ground, even if her words were just a load of crap.

Joshua inspected her thoroughly. Unlike Mike’s gaze, his stare made her feel things she ought not consider after her recent breakup.

Despite her attempts at diverting her thoughts to harmless things, she was picturing herself kneeling before him and letting him do anything he wanted with her.

She shook her head, pushing the lustful thoughts out of her mind.

She was alarmed at her own line of thoughts. She had never wished for something so raunchy. She did not know what was happening to her.

“You do not like Simba?” Mike asked from behind her.

Her mind careened to the present. She looked from the amused expressions of Mike to the dark expressions of Joshua. For the first time that night, she was grateful for hearing Mike’s voice. She did not trust him, but he had just saved her from embarrassing herself further by picturing his friend in a series of erotic scenarios.

“Oh, I love him. No! I mean, he is cute,” she said awkwardly. “Not that I am saying your friend is cute or anything.” She threw her hands in the air, exasperated at her own stupidity. “Ugh, the bottom line is, I don’t appreciate being compared to a clown.”

Joshua was constantly scowling at her while she made a fool of herself. She took an involuntary step back when he stood straight. He looked more handsome with his six-foot-seven height and it was not something that helped her already confused mind.

“Are you insulting me?” he asked.

“Do you feel insulted?” she blurted.

He took a step in her direction, which prompted her to take two steps back, but Joshua did not falter. He kept coming towards her until there was only a small distance separating them.

She wished she could hide somewhere from his assessing stare. His amber eyes were kind of mesmerizing, but she could feel the predatory instincts that lay beneath the layers of his skin.

She fidgeted. His lips curled into a cocky grin. She wanted to slap him on his head for being amused at her edginess.

“Where did you find this character, Mike?”

She narrowed her eyes at Joshua and his smile broadened. Joshua was not getting intimidated by her angry gaze and it made her further agitated.

“Joshua, this is Wendy. She agreed to help you with your problems.”

All smiles and amused expressions vanished from Joshua’s face in an instant. He looked sharply at Mike who raised his hands in surrender and backed a step away from him.

“Take her back, Mike,” Joshua said. “I don’t have time for your twisted games. This one is not fit for the job.”

A secret look passed between the two of them. Something was not right here.

“Think about it, Joshua,” Mike said. “It is a perfect solution for your current dilemma. We are running out of time.”

Mike smiled which pissed off his friend. Joshua picked up an ornament from the table nearby and threw it directly at Mike, who dodged the flying object coming his way and ran towards the door.

She took a step toward the door too because she was not so crazy as to remain alone with a man who had finally lost his mind.

“Night, night, kids,” Mike said.

Mike winked at her and shut the door behind him. She ran towards the door and twisted the knob, but the door did not open.

Mike had locked her inside the room with his crazy friend.

“Open the fucking door!” she yelled.

She banged on the door, but there was no response from the other side. She started to freak out.

She felt movement behind her and turned around with her back to the door.

Joshua strode towards her angrily and her heart stopped beating in her chest. He put his palms on the door on either side of her head, trapping her between his body and the door.

“I will make your life a living hell if I see you ever again,” he seethed. “This is the first and last time I want to see your face.”

She was aware he would definitely come through on his

promise. His handsome features were just a disguise for hiding the savage lying beneath his skin.

“Please, let me go,” she said. “I want to go home.”

She was close to tears. She would grovel before him if that was what it took for him to grant her freedom. She had never fallen so low as to beg another person, but at the moment it felt as if her emotions were not under her control anymore.

“Why?” he asked tauntingly. “I thought you liked me?”

He rubbed his lower body against hers and an involuntary moan came out of her throat. She gasped and her cheeks became crimson with embarrassment.

He smirked arrogantly and leaned towards her ear. The moment she felt warm breath on her lobes, she shivered and tried unsuccessfully to stifle the trembling of her body which was part fear and part arousal.

“I don’t think you want to go home,” he said. “I think you want to stay the night in my room.”

She mustered what little strength she had left in her body and pushed him away. She was breathing hard, trying to get control over her emotions.

She turned the knob once again and this time the door opened. Before she could storm out, he grabbed her hand.

“Who is going to tuck me in bed? Come now, Bozo. Do your job. Assist me in going to sleep.”

His arrogant behavior made her snap. Despite the haze of horny thoughts, she became angry.

“Don’t touch me,” she said angrily. “I said, unhand me this instant. There is not enough money on this planet that would make me work for a piece of crap like you.”

She snatched her hand away from his hold and stormed out of the room. She had expected he would follow her or call after her, but oddly, he remained inside his room and let her go easily.

In the hallway, she saw Mike leaning against a wall. She strode towards him.

“You have no empathy,” she said angrily. “You are an emotionless bastard. How dare you leave me with that maniac?”

Mike looked at her with a bored expression. It was like her outburst meant nothing to him. He did not even bother to stand straight.

“You made a deal, Wendy,” he said. “Maniac or not, you are going with him.” He held his hand up in the air as she tried to interject. “I have been reading your thoughts the whole night, so it’s for the best if you drop the act.”

He was not making any sense. Was he claiming to be psychic? She did have some seriously warped fantasies regarding his friend, but those were private thoughts. How can he know about them?

He was only bluffing and was messing with her head. She was sure of it.

“I am not messing with you, Wendy. If you need further proof, I can also do anything to you while you kneel before me,” he said, smirking. “Or is it only Joshua that turns you on?”

“Okay,” she whispered, her throat getting dry. “I believe you, but I need to pack a few things if you don’t mind. I will meet you tomorrow.”

She would be an idiot if she engaged him in further conversation because let’s face it, he was a creepy dude who could literally hear her thoughts.

“Fine,” he said. “I will see you in the morning then.”

She gave him a fake smile and started to run the hell out of that place. She had no intention of coming back to the place that was associated with the horrible memories of her recent breakup and the presence of a creepy man who claimed to be a mind reader.

He pulled her back as she was going past him and whispered in her ear in a voice that was soft like an angel, yet the threat in them was clear as a day.

“Go home and pack whatever you want, but keep in mind,

you will not see a flicker of remorse on my face as I personally choke you to death if you so much as think about backing out of the deal we made.”

She stumbled forward as he let her go. She had believed that she was scared of him before, but she was wrong. The way she felt in the hallway at that moment was real fear. Her legs were shaking like a leaf as she walked towards the entrance.