

RIVER POV from CONNECTED (Connections #1)

Written by Kim Karr

Time is Running Out

The set ends so I walk over behind Garrett to lean my guitar against the wall. I pull my shirt up to wipe the sweat off my forehead. It's hotter than shit in here and I need a drink. Garrett laughs, tipping his head back to swallow the beer he somehow already has.

"You going to grab a drink? I'll take another," he says as he downs the rest of his beer. "And, dude, wear this. Seriously man, your hair looks like shit," he says throwing his beanie at me.

I move closer and shove him a little and put the hat on my head. "Shut the fuck up, you should talk."

I hop off the stage and my sister rushes over to me. "River, I need you to take me home as soon as the last set is over. I have someone meeting me back at my apartment."

I shake my head, knowing it must be a guy. "Yeah yeah, I will Bell, but really can't you get a boyfriend that has some manners? You know, like actually picks his date up and maybe even takes her out? And at a decent hour?"

She rolls her eyes. "All guys aren't like you, big brother. Nice beanie," she teases before disappearing back into the crowd.

As I walk through the jam-packed room, some brunette chick I think looks familiar asks me if I want to grab a drink in private. I kindly refuse, telling her I need to refuel before my next set. She's still talking when I motion toward the bar to signal that I'm moving away. As my eyes flash across the bar, they're suddenly drawn to a beautiful girl standing against it. And she's looking directly at me.

I start walking toward her, leaving behind the brunette who is still talking. As I stare at the beautiful girl, I think, "*I want her.*" Tall, slim, long blonde hair that's pulled away from her face. But it's her eyes that get me—the way she's looking at me. Shit, I've talked to about a dozen chicks tonight, but she is the only one who has me interested.

As I stare back at her I'm feeling like she's not just any girl. Not just a girl to have sex with. *I'm actually having a fucking conversation with myself.* I can't figure out what's going on in my own head.

I try not to smile, but I know she's checking me out. *Fuck, why'd I put this hat on?* I quickly pull it off and comb my fingers through my hair. I can't take my eyes off her and I feel like I want to knock everyone out of my way to get to her.

When I finally reach the bar, I stand right in front of her. For some weird reason I feel the urge to touch her, but instead I shove my hands in my pockets. She's smiling at me and I smile right back. This girl is hot. Her eyes still haven't left mine this whole time, so I decide to break the ice by calling her out. "Were you staring at me?"

She pouts her lips and rolls her eyes. Shit, that look gets me.

"No, I was just looking for my friend while I waited on my drinks. You just happened to be in my line of vision."

I stifle my laugh and say, "That look was hot." I want to say, "You're hot," but I don't—not yet anyway.

I can tell she's trying not to laugh. If she does, I know I have her. Her phone rings and her smile fades. "Why would you think I was looking at you, anyway?"

The person beside her walks away and I secure my place next to her. I toss my hat on the counter and lean against the bar, my eyes never leaving hers. I answer in the most honest way I can. "Because I was staring at you, hoping you were staring back."

I don't want to fuck this up so I decide to be the guy Bell always tells me I am—the guy with manners. Then I say what I should have said first. "With all this talk about who was staring at whom I think we forgot the basics, I'm River," I say as I extend my hand.

She reaches hers out. *Hey, I get to touch her.* But she quickly pulls her hand back before I get to grasp it and accidentally knocks a dude's beer over. The asshole gives her a dirty look and swears. I know I have to step in because this guy is out of line. I gently guide her out of my way and try to control myself as I say, "Sorry man, just an accident, but let me buy you another." I hand him a ten, "Buy two." I hope he takes the money and leaves. Lucky for him he does, because otherwise I might deck him.

I turn around to find the girl smiling at me and sliding one of her beers my way. I start to drink it and she says, "Thank you, that guy sure as shit wasn't happy with me. In fact he kind of acted like an asshole." I can't help but laugh mid-sip, almost spitting the beer out of my mouth. *Not cool.*

Not able to resist any longer, I run my finger over her smooth bare shoulder and lock

my eyes on hers. “You’re more than welcome.”

She just barely shudders and steps back. I’m pretty sure she’s interested in me so I step closer, not wanting to break our connection. “Now, where were we? Do we need to start over?” I ask, looking into her eyes.

“We were introducing ourselves,” she says smiling.

“Okay, so let’s try again. I’m River and you are . . .?”

“I’m not sure you need to know that information right now. I’m kind of thinking you might be a stalker,” she teases.

I laugh. I’m all about game playing but I’m not ready to play. I really want to get to know this girl, and I’m pretty sure the feeling is mutual, so I avoid dropping the canned line I might have used on another girl and say, “You’re not serious, are you beautiful girl?”