

ROBIN LEE HATCHER

Christy Award-winning author

Make You Feel My Love

Chapter One

Chickadee Creek, Idaho
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The door complained loudly as it swung open before Chelsea Spencer. To a stranger, the gloomy interior of Rosemary & Time might resemble something out of a horror film, shadows and strange shapes abounding. But the antique store was as familiar and welcoming to her now as it had been when she was a child.

Many things used to frighten her. Some things still did. But not this place.

She located the light switch and flipped it on. Shadows went into hiding, and the strange shapes of moments before became familiar shelves full of books and old dolls, displays of costume jewelry, ancient furniture, knickknacks and bobs of all sorts, and plenty more. There was also a musty odor, thick layers of dust, evidence of small rodents escaping the elements, and dense spiderwebs in the corners.

“Aunt Rosemary,” she whispered. “How did it get like this?”

Outside, rain began to fall from the slate-gray heavens, and a gust of wind rattled the old building. Chelsea turned to close the door, shutting out the storm.

In her memories, the shop on Alexander Street was a quaint place, with lots of wonderful nooks and crannies where a girl could curl up with a good book and get lost for hours in some imaginary world. In her memories, the shop smelled of apples and cinnamon and was bathed in golden sunlight. Had she remembered it wrong, or had it changed that much since she was a girl of eight?

Oh, that wonderful summer in Chickadee Creek with her warm-hearted great-aunt, the sister of Chelsea’s maternal grandfather. Sometimes she wondered if that season had been real or if she’d only dreamed it.

Drawing a slow, deep breath, she moved farther into the shop, running her fingers over the dusty display tables and counters. Many hours of clean up, repairs, and reorganization awaited her. Days of it. More like weeks. But perhaps that was a good thing. Physical labor was what she needed. Labor that would leave her too weary to think

—or feel. That would be ideal.

The door flew open, banging against the wall. She squealed as she spun around, halfway expecting to see . . . to see . . . *him*. But it was only the growing storm, blowing rain into the shop. She hurried to shut the door again, this time making certain it was securely latched. Making sure she was safely inside. Making sure nothing—and no one—could get in.

The terror hit her then, as it so often did, out of nowhere. As powerful as a punch in her solar plexus, the panic almost took her to her knees. Instead, she leaned on a display case as tears welled in her eyes.

“Oh, God,” she breathed out. “I’m afraid, and I’m so tired of being afraid. Help me get beyond it.”

Liam Chandler stood at the front window of the house, watching the hundred-foot-tall ponderosa pines sway from side to side. Rain, driven before the wind, ran in sheets down the glass.

Jacob loved to be here when it stormed like this.

Liam closed his eyes for a few moments. In those weeks immediately following his brother’s funeral, he hadn’t welcomed reminders of Jacob. He’d pushed every thought of him away. They’d made him angry. They’d hurt. They’d made him want to lash out. They’d made him feel guilty for being alive.

But that had begun to change. Slowly. Little by little. Over the months, he’d started to write down random memories of Jacob in a journal. Writing about his brother, about himself, about their family, had begun to heal something inside of him. Eventually he might even figure out why things were the way they were in his family.

“*What about your career?*” In his mind he heard the phone message his mom had left for him yesterday. “*Are you going to throw it all away?*”

He clenched his jaw as he looked out at the storm again.

All his life, he’d wondered why he didn’t measure up in his mom’s eyes, why he hadn’t been as good as Jacob. Jacob, her favorite son. Years ago, when Liam had talked about going to California to try to break into the movies, his mom had scoffed and told him not to waste his time. She’d told him he needed a sensible career, like his father. Now things were different. Perhaps it was because Jacob was gone, because Liam was all she had left. Or maybe she wasn’t as indifferent as he’d believed her to be.

Still, going back to Hollywood held little appeal for Liam at the moment. Was what he did in front of the cameras really a career? As far as he could tell, it wasn’t talent that had garnered him attention from directors, producers, fans, and eventually *People* magazine and the tabloids. It was his looks, and he’d had nothing to do with those. Inheriting good genes wasn’t a talent.

But Jacob? His brother had been at the front of every line when they were passing out talent. His voice had been the kind that could make the angels weep. He’d been proficient on half a dozen musical instruments. If he heard a hummed melody once, he’d

been able to create a symphony from it on the keyboard. Jacob Chandler had been destined for greatness—before the Big C came calling.

Drawing a deep breath, Liam turned his back to the storm. Lamplight warmed the large, rustic room in which he stood. The rustic part was intentional. The house itself was less than five years old. Liam had it built after the premiere of his first major movie, one in which he'd had more than a minor role. He'd intended to use the house for hunting trips and short getaways, not for a permanent residence. His thinking had changed about that. The quiet of the forest appealed to him. And it wasn't as if he was completely isolated. Chickadee Creek was only a few miles away. Although only a single lane, the dirt road that connected him to the small town was maintained throughout the year. He had power, a landline, and even cable service that included the internet. The builder had told him that only the electricity and landline would have been available to him as little as two years before the house was built. Cell service remained spotty in these mountains, but that wasn't a negative in Liam's mind. Without his smartphone—he refused to connect it to the Wi-Fi in his home—the world left him mostly alone. Almost no one had his landline number. Just the way he wanted it.

As if to belie his thoughts, the phone rang. Amused by the timing, he shook his head as he went to answer it. "Hello."

"Mr. Chandler? This is Grace Witherstone at the mercantile. We've got that order you placed last week."

"Great. I'll be in to get it after the worst of the storm passes."

"It's supposed to hang around awhile. You might want to wait until tomorrow. Unless you want to get drowned while you're loading everything into your truck."

He glanced toward the window. "Yeah, you may be right. Won't hurt for me to wait another day."

"I see you got a case of paper. You writin' a book or somethin'? Maybe about our little town or the Chandler family history."

"I'm not a writer, Mrs. Witherstone. Just want the paper for printing when the need arises."

"Well, if you decide to write about Chickadee Creek, you might be interested in knowing Rosemary Townsend is comin' back to town."

Liam sank onto the sofa. If he'd learned anything in the months he'd lived in these mountains, it was that the owner of the town's general store liked to talk. There was usually a nice mix of gossip and history included in Grace's soliloquies. Having nothing better to do on this stormy day—and preferring not to think any more about his brother and their mom for now—he might as well listen. "Who's Rosemary Townsend?"

"She owns the antique store on Alexander. She closed it down over a year ago, even before she took a really bad fall and busted up her leg. But she's recovering from surgery now. Guess she feels a whole lot better, because she's plannin' on opening up the shop again. Anyways, she knows the history of Chickadee Creek better'n anybody hereabouts. She's got bunches of old books and newspapers too. So if you were needin' to do

research, she'd be the person to talk to. Especially if you want to know more about your own people. There's been Chandlers in these parts for a hundred and fifty years."

The woman paused. Liam assumed she needed to take a breath.

"Rosemary's from one of Chickadee Creek's longtime families too. Same as the Chandlers, although the Townsends stuck around and your folks kinda came and went, even though they kept hold of most of their property. The Townsends don't go back as far as the gold-rush days, but they was here startin' before the first world war."

"Gold rush, huh?" He knew the history of the area, but he figured he should say something to let her know he listened.

"Land sakes. Don't they teach such things in schools no more?"

"Sorry. I guess I didn't pay enough attention in history class. Tell me about it."

"The Boise Basin was what founded Idaho, pretty much. More gold come out of these mountains than the California 49er or the Klondike rushes. Maybe put together, though I can't say for sure on that. Anyways, Idaho City was bigger than Portland at the height of the rush. Biggest city in the northwest for quite a spell."

Liam nodded, as if the woman on the other end of the line could see him.

"By the time Rosemary's people came to these parts, the rush was long over and big companies were mining the land in other ways. Not sure what the Townsends did back then. All I've ever known was Rosemary's antique shop. Guess I'll have to ask her what they did. Or maybe I'll ask her niece. A great-niece, actually. She's come to stay with Rosemary and help out while she continues her recovery."

"Do you know her great-niece?"

"Not really. She visited for a summer when she was a little thing. Maybe eight or nine. Lots of freckles and red hair. That's what I remember most. Quiet little thing. Quiet as a church mouse. Wonder if she's still like that. Time'll tell."

"Time will tell," he echoed softly.

"Well, looks like I've got a customer come in despite the storm. Gotta go. I'll see you tomorrow. Good talking to you."

"You, too, Mrs. Witherstone. See you tomorrow." Liam grinned as he set the phone in its cradle. Next time he'd better show he knew more than he'd let on, or Grace Witherstone would have him run out of town on a rail.

Cora

April 1895
New York City

Cora Anderson moved toward the ballroom of the McKenzie mansion, her satin gown swooshing against the marble floor. Her gloved fingers rested in the crook of her father's arm. She felt the weight of her mother's diamond necklace against her breastbone, but it wasn't as heavy as the weight upon her heart.

Her role tonight, she knew all too well, was to convince a man to marry her. But not just any man. It must be the man her father had chosen as the most advantageous for the family.

Aaron Anderson, her father, had made his fortune in the years immediately after the Civil War. An ambitious young man, he'd soon been able to build a fashionable residence on a fashionable avenue in New York City. A year later, he'd married above his station. Ever since that momentous occasion, he'd sought acceptance into the upper echelons of society. Sought it and failed. He was tolerated but not embraced. It was now his only surviving child's duty to achieve what he hadn't been able to realize on his own.

Cora and her father stopped inside the ballroom doorway and watched the couples whirling around the dance floor to the strains of a waltz. When the music came to an end, the buzz of conversations increased. Men escorted their dance partners to the side of the floor. Young women checked their dance cards or waved fans before their faces. Shy smiles were exchanged, as were calculated looks.

It was like an elaborate marionette performance, Cora thought as she observed it all. There were invisible hands controlling every movement in the room. Some were clueless of what went unspoken, but she wasn't one of them. She was all too aware of her father's manipulations and what the end result would look like.

As if summoned by the thought, Duncan Abernathy broke away from a group of men and strode in her direction. Her father patted her hand, signaling that he'd also seen the man's approach.

"Miss Anderson," Duncan said as he stopped and bowed. "Good evening, Mr. Anderson." It was more nod than bow this time. "It's good to see you both."

Duncan Abernathy came from old money. His family had become shipping tycoons several generations back. Later, the Abernathys expanded into the railroad industry, managing to multiply their wealth even during economic downturns.

From what Cora could tell, Duncan held no interest in ships or railroads. He would rather spend the money his forefathers had made than make any of his own. He liked fast horses and trips to the Atlantic shore and to Europe. He liked dancing and gambling. He liked champagne and fine wines and rich foods. He liked to be seen with a beautiful woman on his arm. More than anything else, he liked to talk about himself.

She disliked him intensely.

“I believe this next dance is ours,” he said, holding out a hand.

She placed her fingers onto his palm and felt his hand close around them, like a noose tightening around her throat.

Cora

April 1895

The gardens behind the Anderson mansion were in full bloom on the day Cora's father sat down at his desk to hammer out the details of the marriage contract. He'd made it no secret from Cora or his wife that he would be settling a very large sum on Duncan Abernathy as soon as Duncan and Cora married. The bridegroom, in turn, had promised to make doors open for the senior Andersons throughout New York City and along the entire eastern seaboard.

Aaron Anderson thought it a brilliant exchange.

Cora Anderson thought it a prison sentence.

The years of her life spread out before her—predictable, boring, unchanging, lonely, unescapable. All the polite tea parties. All of the fancy dress balls. The travel that took her only to places she had been before to see the people she already knew. She would be tied to a man who thought quite highly of himself but who had nothing interesting to say. When he had an affair—as he most surely would—he would be relatively discreet. Rules were rules in their society, after all. But it wouldn't occur to him that his wife might mind when he took a mistress. Cora would be little more to him than an attractive ornament on his arm. She would be expected to bear his children and to see that they were raised well. But she wouldn't be expected to have a thought of her own. Definitely not a thought that differed from his.

"We will announce the engagement at a dinner party," her mother said.

Cora turned from perusing the gardens.

"In two weeks, I think."

At the age of forty-five, Beatrice Anderson remained a striking woman. Her golden-brown hair was free of gray, her face unlined, and her waist still narrow despite giving birth to three children in quick succession.

Of those three children born to Beatrice and Aaron Anderson, only Cora had lived to adulthood. The two Anderson sons had died, one as an infant, the other at the age of three. Cora, the youngest of the children, didn't remember either of her brothers. Perhaps that was why her unhappiness with the life she led also made her feel guilty.

"Cora, do sit down. Your fidgeting is making me nervous."

Cora obeyed her mother, moving to a sofa and settling onto it.

"Now, as I was saying, we'll have a dinner party in two weeks to announce your engagement to Duncan. Perhaps forty people." She pursed her lips. "I suppose I must wait to see who the Abernathys want to invite before I make up my own list."

"Aren't your friends important enough, Mother?"

"Whatever do you mean?"

"Nothing." Eyes lowered, Cora plucked at a loose thread on the sofa.

“Straighten your shoulders, dear. A slouch is so unattractive on a woman.”

It doesn't look good on a man either.

“Perhaps we should go to Paris to buy your wedding gown. Unless, of course, the engagement is to be less than a year. Has Duncan given any indication of his preference?”

“No.” She supposed he would like to marry sooner rather than later. The way he spent money, he could surely use an infusion into his bank account.

“I was nineteen when I married your father. Three years younger than you are. I was so happy to leave my parents' home and begin life as a married woman.” Her mother's voice trailed away on a wistful note.

But why was her mother wistful? Did she regret the life she'd led? She showed no true affection for her husband and little devotion to her daughter. She cared most about how things appeared. Had she ever desired to walk a different path?

Cora rose from the sofa and returned to the window, as if hoping the colorful gardens could change the directions of her thoughts. It didn't work.

Am I as passionless as Mother?

It took only a second to answer to her own question. *No!*

Cora wasn't passionless. There were many things she cared about, many things that interested her. However, she'd spent most of her life hiding her true feelings. She'd been trained to keep her opinions to herself. She'd been sent to school, but not with an actual education as the goal. No, it had been so she could rub shoulders with young women of quality—and, with luck, to meet some of their eligible brothers.

She closed her eyes and drew in a deep breath.

If she could do anything in life, if there were no restrictions upon her as a woman, she would become a concert violinist. Nothing stirred her soul like music, especially the music of a violin. But it wasn't considered seemly for a woman to perform on a stage. Her father would rather see her dead.

She looked out the window again as she wiped a tear from her cheek.

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