CHAPTER THREE

Living Dangerously

SEPTEMBER 2, 1995

**RADIO CITY MUSIC HALL**

**GRAND FOYER ROOM – 4PM**

The entire awards committee was seated at the grand table waiting for the legendary Pop icon and his attorney to arrive. Thumbs were being twirled and large pitchers of water were being passed around from person to person. Every member sipped from their glass impatiently as the repetitive sound of the large wall clock ticked every second away. Tension had filled the entire boardroom permeating the air with anxiety as well as excitement.

“Where are they?” Sam asked glancing at his wristwatch. “This meeting was supposed to begin thirty minutes ago!”

“I’m sure they are just held up in traffic, sir.” Jill said as she and her daughter sat at the opposite end of the table also wondering what the cause for delay was.

“This doesn’t look good, D.” Dennis whispered in David’s ear. “If he doesn’t show up, we’re never going to be allowed to work for this company again!”

“Calm down. He’ll be here. Aurora Clark won’t let our hard work go to waste.”

5:30 PM

“This is beyond ridiculous!” Sam yelled standing up from his chair. “I understand he is the most famous person on the planet but that doesn’t give him the right to be this late!”

“Sam, I can almost guarantee that they are—“Jill said before hearing the large office door open.

Several guards took their positions around the entire office as if they were working for the Secret Service. Aurora smiled knowing her idol was seconds away from entering the room. She took a deep breath and quickly ran her fingers through her wavy locks. She had the biggest urge to pull her compact mirror out of her purse but didn’t want to look self-absorbed. She felt like a child in elementary school about to meet the new cute guy enrolling for the first time.

A tall, light skinned gentlemen with dark brown hair entered the boardroom wearing a finely cut grey Italian suit. He introduced himself as Michael’s attorney and went around the table shaking everyone’s hands. Aurora’s eyes were glued to the door wondering where the King of Pop was and why he hadn’t come in yet.

“I apologize for the delay this afternoon.” John said as he sat to the left of the head seat. “As you already know, my client has a very difficult time travelling and attending business meetings in a timely manner.”

“Where is he?” Aurora asked the well groomed attorney turning everyone’s head towards her.

“He’ll be here shortly.” John explained. “He requested to view the stage and seating area before joining us.”

After several discussions Aurora liked to call ‘mindless drivel’ had ended, all legal and business contracts were thoroughly reviewed, signed, dated and stamped certified. Everyone present at the meeting signed dozens of confidentiality agreements and all terms had been fairly negotiated. All that remained to finalize and confirm Michael’s opening act was his own signature. Aurora saw his name printed in large bold letters at the top of each document and laughed girlishly as she signed her name next to his with a smile.

Once all completed paperwork was put in place, a dark skinned gentleman entered the boardroom announcing Michael’s entrance. Everyone stood up respectfully and smiled waiting for the greatest entertainer in the history of music to make his grand entrance.

“This is it, D!” David said eyeing his coworker and nudging him in the arm.

“I can’t believe you pulled this off.” Dennis said shaking his head gladly.

Aurora’s heart was pounding against her chest. Her hands became sweaty and she could no longer keep her balance. The upright, professional woman she was on the outside tried her best to keep her composure but the young, childish fan with a celebrity crush was screaming inside of her. When seeing a brief reflection appear against the white walls near the office door, Aurora became ecstatic. She knew he was just seconds away from entering the room. She quickly put her head down and closed her eyes hoping her bright red cheeks would not reveal her true emotions. **I hope he likes me.** She thought to herself as she half smiled and gently put her long brown hair behind her ears.

“Ladies and gentlemen, the man of the hour has finally arrived.” John said as his client entered the room gracefully and shook hands with everyone he saw.

Aurora lifted her head slowly and almost fell over at the sight of the man she admired her entire life standing just inches away from her. He was dressed in all black with a thin red band around his upper right arm, a large gemstone brooch on his lapel and black sunglasses. Surprisingly, he was not wearing his fedora. Sam, also noticing Michael was ‘uncovered’ questioned the iconic entertainer about his slight change in wardrobe.

“I see you are hatless today.” Sam said as he firmly shook Michael’s hand making him smile with red stained cheeks.

“I seem to have misplaced it somehow.” Michael replied insinuating Aurora’s sarcastic remark to him on the phone.

“I do hope you find it in time for the show, sir.” Jill said as he walked towards her shaking her hand. “We are very pleased to have you as our opening performer for this year’s event, Mr. Jackson.”

“The pleasure is all mine, Ms. Clark.”
“How did you know who I was?” She asked raising her brow at him.
“I’m very good at putting names with beautiful faces.” He said as he quickly glanced at the lovely looking intern standing behind her mother.

“You are too kind. I’d like you to meet my daughter—“
“The one and only Miss Aurora Clark.” He said offering his hand to the embarrassed and warm cheeked young lady.

“It’s a pleasure to meet you, Mr. Jackson.” Aurora said firmly shaking the Pop star’s large hand. “How rare it is to meet a celebrity that you’ve been a fan of your entire life.”

“I concur.” He said winking his eye at his new found friend.

Jill, eyeing the pair and sensing more than just a business related atmosphere between them, broke their handshake and thanked the Gloved One again for agreeing to be a part of her company’s annual event. After shaking everyone else’s hand in the room, Michael sat at the head of the table with John sitting at his left. Jill, her daughter and the others sat across the table according to their seniority in the company. David and Dennis could not hide their boyish smiles as they heard and listened to Michael ask specific questions about his upcoming performance.

“Mr. Jackson, we appreciate you flying all the way here to New York in such short notice.” Sam said as he explained the finer points of each contract to him. “In closing, we have all signed strictly outlined confidentiality agreements pertaining to your surprise opening. As a final step in this process, we require your signature on each document presented to you. MTV and RCMH will take care of all necessities afterwards.”

Michael checked each contract carefully making sure there were no loopholes or hidden facts he was not aware of. He trusted MTV, but years of experience in his career trained him to always read everything in detail before signing. John also reviewed each document and gave his client the ok to endorse them finalizing his deal with Music Television. Michael asked his attorney for a pen and to his surprise, he did not have one in his briefcase. Suddenly, everyone seated at the table threw pens in his direction making the King of Pop smile and laugh out loud.

“Um, thank you everyone.” He said giggling making everyone in the room swoon over him. As he viewed the small pile of stationery in front of him, one in particular stood out to him the most. It had a transparent barrel filled with small gemstone crystals embedded inside. The edging on the cap was lined in silver with the initials “ACC” engraved on the clasp. Michael smiled and gently bit his lip. It was Aurora’s. He picked it up and signed his name confidently on every document placed in front of him.

Aurora smiled and giggled to herself. She couldn’t contain her excitement as she watched the King of Pop use her business pen to sign legal contracts regarding his future performance for the company she and her mother worked for. Once the formalities were over, everyone in the room stood up and wished Michael the best of luck in preparing for the event and shook his hand again before saying goodbye and wishing everyone else in the room a good day.

“We are very excited and looking forward to seeing you light up our stage here, Mr. Jackson.” Robert Tishman, one of the founders of Radio City Music Hall’s property company said as he gathered all of Michael’s signed paperwork in his oversized brown portfolio bag.

“It’s my pleasure.” Michael replied shaking everyone’s hand as they made their way out the door.

Dennis and David were all smiles and giddy laughs again as Michael took photos and gave his autograph to the two of them. Michael thanked David personally for putting together an amazing visual and written presentation and sending it to the Clark’s. If it hadn’t been for him, Michael would not have been presented with the offer to perform and accredited David for his hard work. Jill, impressed with the way Michael acknowledged him, also told David he did a wonderful job and reminded him not to forget about the advice she gave him earlier about doing things on his own.

Aurora and her mother were next to say goodbye as they made their way towards the front of the office door.

“We’ll see you in a few days, Mr. Jackson.” Jill said shaking his hand for the last time. “You are, by far, the best choice for this year’s opening performance.”

“Thank you Ms. Clark.” Michael said meeting her gaze. “I believe your daughter also feels the same way.” He looked at Aurora and smiled as she tried hiding behind her mother like a child.

“We must be going, dear.” Jill said as she stepped outside the boardroom waiting for her daughter in the hallway.

“Thank you again for agreeing to do this.” Aurora said as she placed her hand in his. “It really was an honor to meet you in person, Mr. Jackson.”

“And you, Miss Clark.” He said slowly letting go of her soft, well-manicured hand.

Aware that her mother was watching the two of them very closely, Michael discreetly slipped a note into Aurora’s hand and gestured for her to hide it in her briefcase so her mother wouldn’t notice. The brunette haired beauty followed her new friend’s instructions and said goodbye to him as she walked out of the boardroom.

“Miss Clark?” Michael said waiting for her to turn around and face him. “I believe this is yours.”

“I concur.” She replied holding her hand out for him.

Michael placed her writing instrument in the middle of her palm and closed it making a slight fist.

“I’ve never enjoyed signing my name on anything as much as I did today, Miss Clark.” He said turning 50 shades of crimson and running his fingers gently over her delicate hand.

Jill, witnessing and hating the entire incident marched her way towards the two killing any attempt at a possible budding romance.

“Mr. Jackson, I assume your WIFE will be accompanying you at this year’s event?” Jill asked giving him the evil eye.

“Yes, she will be.” He replied nervously clearing his throat.

“Excellent. I look forward to seeing her on your arm where she belongs.” The head committee member said before forcefully taking her daughters arm and linking it with her own. “Enjoy the rest of your day.”

As both Clark women made their way out of the venue, Aurora turned her head and saw John and Michael’s guards being escorted into a black SUV. The Pop star smiled and made eye contact with his new friend seconds before making his way into the vehicle. Slightly smitten by the famous entertainer, Aurora watched as his vehicle drove out of the venue parking lot. Watching her daughter’s every move, Jill was infuriated by her daughter’s unprofessional behavior and decided to lecture her as soon as they reached the Clark mansion.

DUDE, WHAT DID I TELL YOU?” David said as he flashed copies of Michael’s signed agreements in Dennis’s face. “WE GOT HIM, D! WE GOT HIM!”

“Yeah, yeah. Big flipping deal.” Dennis said rolling his eyes.

He was happy to have the great entertainer signed but was not a huge fan of his music. In his opinion, Dennis thought some other musical group or solo artist would have been a much better choice for the opening act.

“What’s your problem now?” David asked as the two of them sat outside on David’s outdoor loft patio. “You look like you just came back from a funeral.”
“I don’t think he’s the right one for the job, D.”
“WHY NOT?”

“He’s too famous.”
“Exactly! That’s what we needed.”
“I think a few others would have been better. Michael is great but he’s already got all the exposure he needs. There are so many entertainers out there who would kill to have the opening act at this year’s show.”

David wasn’t falling for Dennis’s excuse. He knew deep down something else was clearly bothering him.

“Why do I get the feeling you’re hiding something?”
“What? You’re crazy.”
“No one talks bad about Michael, D. He’s might not be perfect but everyone goes crazy at the sight of him. Now, what’s the REAL reason you don’t want him to perform?”

Dennis shrugged as he stood up from his chair. He placed his hands on the steel railing of David’s patio and sighed deeply looking at the gorgeous view of the Statue of Liberty directly in front of him with a breathtaking view of a pink and purple sun setting against the horizon to his right. Now that his job as the host was secured, Dennis had no reason to worry about looking elsewhere for work. Unbeknown to David, Dennis also had a secret – one that he never told anyone and kept buried for a few years.

“The way they looked at each other today...” Dennis said with his back towards his coworker. “I can’t believe she fell for him. What is it about him that makes girls go crazy?”
“Who are you talking about, D?”
“Who do you think?”

The Program Designer had no idea who his co-worker was referring to. David and Dennis had only known each other for a short time as coworkers and never shared an actual friendship or anything personal outside of work. Feeling rejected and heartbroken, Dennis needed someone to confide in about his secret. He was an only child raised in an orphanage with no ties to any of his biological family members. Aurora Clark was the only reason Dennis had applied for the host gig at the award show. Although he worked for the same company but in a different department, he secretly admired the grey eyed beauty ever since she began her internship. Knowing she was the daughter of Jill Clark, Dennis never had enough courage to approach the young intern and convinced himself that he was out of her league. He never bothered to pursue her and seeing her reaction towards the King of Pop during their board meeting broke him even more. He never expected his secret crush to fall for someone like Michael Jackson.

“Dude, you lost me. What are you talking about?”
“Nevermind, D. I’ll see you later.” Dennis said as he headed inside the loft.

Feeling bad for his coworker, David wanted to know what was bothering him and refused to let Dennis leave until he told him. Knowing he was alone, David was worried about his coworker and didn’t want him to feel upset and thinking he had no one to turn to. As he made his way towards the front door, David asked him again what was on his mind and if he was really alright.

“I’m fine. I just need to clear my head.” He replied.

“I’m here if you need to talk.” David said trying to be a friend.

Dennis suddenly got angry and hit David’s wall next to the front door with his fist.

“WHAT THE HELL DOES SHE SEE IN HIM? FAME AND MONEY? IS SHE REALLY THAT TYPE OF GIRL?”

David put two and two together and realized his coworker was talking about Aurora Clark. She was the only single female employee at the board meeting closest to him in age proving to him that she was definitely the one. In an attempt to comfort his coworker turned friend, David patted Dennis gently on his back and said he could stay and hang out with him if it would help cheer him up. Feeling grateful for his new found friendship, Dennis accepted David’s generous offer and thanked him as they both played video games and ate pizza like young teenagers. Dennis was not aware of the fact that his coworker also had a secret crush – one that he too felt was completely out of his league. Now that David was aware of his coworker’s dating preferences, revealing his secret was definitely not an option – especially since Dennis was the one that David had a crush on.

“Aurora Chastity Clark! Just what on God’s green earth do you think you were doing?” Jill yelled as she and her daughter entered the grand foyer of the Clark mansion.
“I was just being friendly, mother!”

“You were being TOO friendly. Have you no sense of decorum?”
“You are overreacting. I was just trying to be nice.”
“That’s certainly not what it looked like.”

Aurora scoffed as she heard her mother unnecessary rants. She was a grown woman with her own place and her mother still saw her as the innocent little girl she once raised on her own. Sadly, Aurora had her share of failed relationships due to her overbearing and highly overprotective mother. Aurora quickly decided she would not allow her mother to interfere in her love life anymore.

“You know I love you mom but I’m 32 years old and can make my own decisions.”

“Aurora, that man is MARRIED and has a criminal record. I do NOT want you getting involved with him. Do you hear me young lady?”
“INVOLVED? ME? WITH HIM? You are going over the deep end. I was only trying to lure him into the opening act.”
“Now that you’ve succeeded, I trust that you will have nothing to do with him.”

“You are being paranoid. What would someone like him want with me anyway? He’s rich, famous, handsome, smart, a great singer, an incredible dancer – all qualities that make me beneath him in status.”
“Now, don’t you go belittling yourself.” Jill said as she and her daughter made their way into the living room. “You have plenty of endearing qualities that would make him and any so many other men fall madly in love with you.”
“Oh, please mother. Me and relationships don’t go well together.”

“That’s because the men you choose to date are all low lives!”

Aurora’s temper was starting to rise. Throughout her entire life, she had always been patient with Jill but could not stand it when she would become narrow minded and extremely judgmental. Especially towards things she never completely understood.

“I am not stupid mother. I do not date low lives. The truth is, NO ONE is ever good enough for you!”

“Especially that childish, bizarre looking pedophile!”
“MOTHER!”

“You know it’s the truth, Aurora.”
“HOW DARE YOU SPEAK ABOUT HIM THAT WAY?! You don’t even know him!”
“I know more about him then you do. I have seen that man grow up in front of my very eyes. He is NOT normal Aurora and you are to STAY AWAY FROM HIM!”

“I am not going to let you dictate to me!” Aurora said getting up from mother’s black leather sectional. “I will talk to whomever I want, whenever I want, however I want!”

Aurora walked out of her mother’s mansion slamming the front door on her way out. She was livid. She ran to her car and just got in and drove around. She had no idea where she was going and was too angry to care. She wanted to be as far away from her mother as possible. Ever since she was a teenager, Jill Clark had always gotten in the way of her daughter’s personal relationships. She looked down at every single guy her daughter brought home resulting in Aurora staying single for more than five years. Feeling bitter about being abandoned by Aurora’s father, Jill took her harsh feelings of resentment towards men on her daughter’s love life. No longer wanting to be her mother’s punching bag, Aurora decided it was time she took matters into her own hands. She loved and respected her mother dearly but had enough of her meddling. Aurora was a beautiful, independent, smart, funny and highly intelligent woman. Any man would be lucky to have her – including the most famous one on the planet.

After driving nonstop for an hour, Aurora pulled her car over to the side of the road to gather her thoughts and take a few deep breaths. She was still very angry at her mother but knew she needed to calm down. The last thing she needed was an accident causing injury to herself and possibly someone else. She turned off the ignition and reached for her briefcase from her backseat to grab a few napkins to pat her sweat infused face with. As soon as she opened it she saw Michael’s folded on top of her copies of his signed documents. She had completely forgotten about it and quickly unfolded it reading the icon’s message written with the ink from her pen:

*“I’ll be rehearsing at RCMH tonight.*

*Please come and see me.*

*MJ.”*

Aurora smiled as butterflies invaded her stomach. Her inner child was jumping for joy and she felt like a teenager with a high school crush all over again. Her mother’s evil remarks about her new friend echoed in her mind and were constantly taunting her. She closed her eyes, covered her ears and let out a high pitched scream hoping the sound of her mother’s voice would quickly disappear. The MTV intern had never felt so conflicted in her life. Her mother was saying one thing and her heart was saying another. Aurora Clark was not one to take orders from anyone (except her boss) and wasn’t about to let her mother tell her how to live her life. She turned on the ignition and drove to the one place she really wanted to be to see the one person who had been on her mind since the first time they shook hands. She knew exactly what she wanted to do and where she wanted to go - Radio City Music Hall.

9PM

David went to sleep in his large, wood lined canopy bed thinking about all of the events of the day. On his way out, Dennis informed his new friend that he would be spending the next few days preparing his speech cards and voice over techniques for the event. Both men agreed on wearing black suits with white ties and were very excited to see the biggest show of the year come to life. Although David’s heart was broken he did not let it show. He suggested Dennis tell Aurora the truth about his feelings but Dennis was convinced he would not be a suitable match for her.

David, now caught in a complicated love triangle, felt the need to take action. He wanted to see his friend happy even if it wasn’t with him and he knew the only way to set things straight would be to set up a meeting between the young Clark and the host. Since Dennis would never have the courage to do it on his own, David decided to take matters into his own hands and do whatever he could to see his friend happy. David did not know Aurora Clark very well but had a feeling she wasn’t the type of woman Dennis thought she was – only into the rich and famous who didn’t really have a taste of real life.

David smiled to himself as he came up with a brilliant plan to set the two of them up. His intuition had never let him down in the past and he was certain it wouldn’t this time. He was on a mission. Even though it meant getting hurt, he felt better knowing he would be responsible for putting a smile on Dennis’s face. Just because David couldn’t have the one his heart desired didn’t mean his friend couldn’t.

Jill called her daughter’s cell phone several times wanting to know where she was. She hadn’t heard from Aurora since her outburst at the mansion and was worried about where she could be. Jill Clark knew her daughter better than anyone – if Aurora wanted to do something, nothing and absolutely no one could ever stop her from doing it. She thought telling her daughter how she felt about Michael may have gone against her resulting in Aurora being drawn right into his arms. Jill was aware of the fact that Michael was married but, like the rest of the world, also knew his marriage was rumored to be in danger and on the verge of collapsing.

Jill did not want Michael using her daughter as a rebound. The thought of them even being friends made her skin crawl. She had no idea how to stop Aurora from what she thought would be the biggest mistake of her life but did know she would do anything in her power to keep her only child away from one of the most controversial people in the world. In Jill’s eyes, Michael was nothing but trouble. She wanted him as far away as possible – even if it meant threatening to break his contractual obligation and remove him from the MTV Video Music Awards.

Aurora arrived at the venue an hour later and parked inside the guest section of the facility parking lot. She noticed the entire building was surrounded by armed security and police officers. She gulped as she exited her vehicle and looked around hoping to find someone she recognized who could let her inside. She walked towards the main entrance and a few guards stopped her asking why she was there and if she had a pass to enter the premises.

She mentioned to them that Michael had personally invited her and one of the guards took out an electronic talking device from his belt and spoke directly into it. He told the person on the other end her name and that she had been invited by the King of Pop himself. After a few minutes, the guard received the ok to let her in and he walked her towards the large double doors leading to the grand stage where several workers were busy setting up stage lights, speakers and plenty of other necessary equipment.

Aurora thanked the security guard and entered through the doors hoping to catch a glimpse of hew new friend. To no surprise, he was on stage with two other men talking into an earpiece and wearing his signature “Billie Jean” attire. The young and giggly intern smiled as she made her way down the walkway leading up towards the stage. Michael noticed her coming towards him and smiled biting his bottom lip nervously.

His stage crew members noticed the sudden change in his behavior but didn’t question him. Michael ran to the side steps of the stage and greeted his new friend with a hug and kissed her cheek. He couldn’t have been happier to see her and made sure that she knew it.

“Thank you for coming.” He said smiling from ear to ear. “It’s so nice to see you again.”
“You as well, Mr. Concur.” Aurora said smiling just as brightly. “I hope I’m not interrupting anything.”
“Not at all.” He said gesturing the young beauty to sit next to him in one of the hall seats. “I’m glad you’re here.”
“Me too. Is it ok if I watch?”
“Of course not!”

“WHY?!”
“It’s a surprise. You have to wait for the big day just like everyone else.”

“I think I already have an idea about what song you will be performing.” Aurora said lightly tapping the icon’s signature fedora. “I’m happy to know you found it.”

Michael giggled making Aurora do the same. She loved seeing him happy and out of his element. In that moment she knew her mother’s harsh words were nothing but malicious lies. She certainly didn’t need her mother’s or anyone else’s negative opinion of her new friend floating around in her mind trying to discourage her. Aurora was old enough to know and see better and she did.

“I’ll show you around.” Michael said as he stood up offering his hand to her. She gracefully accepted it and the two wandered around seeing the entire stage setup and lighting. The icon introduced the young Clark junior to his production crew, security and backup dancers. Aurora noticed Michael had very high standards. His dancers were very fit and never took breaks without permission. His backup singers did intense vocal training and everyone made sure each of the King of Pop’s demands was met in a timely manner. He was not an easy person to say no to especially now that he was scheduled to be the opening act of the biggest musical event ever to be recorded that year.

“You certainly don’t travel lightly do you, Mr. Jackson?” Aurora asked as the two of them went into a private dressing room backstage. She noticed dozens of his clothing, accessories and photos scattered throughout the room.

“It’s never really been my style.” He explained. “I’m very specific with my needs.”

“I can definitely concur.”

Michael laughed as he and Aurora both sat at an L shaped office desk across from each other. The two of them talked about several different subjects from music, childhood, Michael’s days with the Jackson 5 and his difficult relationship with his father. Aurora’s eyes filled every time her new found friend would talk about his upbringing and how his father used to treat him. She couldn’t help but relate to him as she too came from a broken family. She never really knew her father and explained to Michael that her mother became bitter and stone hearted because of his infidelity and eventual leaving. Michael then told Aurora about Joseph’s act of adultery and the daughter it produced as a result.

In an effort to cheer him up, Aurora quickly changed the subject and talked about Michael’s love for animals, cartoons, Disney characters and amusement parks. The Pop star invited the young intern to his home at Neverland lighting up his new friend’s face with excitement. She couldn’t wait to see the famous landmark that she had always heard about and seen on TV. Michael guaranteed she would have a fabulous time and would never feel like an adult even for a second.

“I must go now.” She said looking down at her watch. “It’s getting late and I certainly don’t want to get in the way of your rehearsals.”
“It’s alright.” Michael said standing up next to her. “I already know my routine. It’s just a matter of setting up the music, lights and getting my wardrobes ready.”
“Wardrobes? You will be changing on stage?”
“I might.”
“And how do you propose on doing that, Mr. Concur?”
“That’s for me to know and you to find out, Miss Clark.”

“I’d love to meet Ms. Presley as well.” Aurora said turning Michael’s smile into a frown.

“I’m sure that could be arranged.” He said with a hint of sadness in his voice.

Aurora noticed his sudden change in behavior and wanted to question him but didn’t want to seem nosy or unprofessional. This was the second time Michael had shown his emotional side to her and as a friend, she wanted to comfort him without crossing the line of friendship and business. She sat back down in the office chair letting Michael know she was all ears if he wanted to talk about his dissolving marriage.

Remembering the thin line between business and personal matters, Michael briefly explained his marital situation to the intern who, as a friendly gesture gave the King of Pop some advice on how to deal with his irate wife and what he should do at the award show to ensure the press didn’t write anything negative about them. The more he and Lisa Marie acted like they were unhappy and no longer in love, the more the press would want to write that they are miserable. At the same time, if they were to behave as if they were truly happy and in love, the press would then write that the two were simply masking their real feelings. Michael was so tired of being the target of tabloids he told Aurora he no longer felt the need to wear a mask anymore.

Aurora, wanting her friend to see reason explained how important it was for Michael to stay strong and not give up on what she thought meant the most to him. The Gloved One told his new friend about Lisa wanting to separate and couldn’t believe what she heard.

“Is that what you want?” Aurora asked the emotional and weepy iconic star. “Can you see yourself without her?”
“If I have to.” He said trying his best not to cry in front of the Clark beauty. She offered him a napkin and he thanked her as he wiped his cheeks with the soft, cotton lined tissue.
“I’d hate for the media to have another reason to exploit you.” Aurora explained trying to comfort Michael the best way she knew how. “For the sake of not giving them another reason to write stupid garbage, please stay strong and act like everything is ok between you two at the awards.”

“I will. It’s her I’m worried about. Lisa Marie is known to have a sour looking face in public. She never comes off as friendly even though she does have a good side to her. For some reason she does not allow a lot of people to see that side of her.”

“She obviously means a lot to you.”
“She did.”
“DID?”
“I don’t love her the way I used to. She’s so distant from me now. The Lisa Marie I knew and loved for many years died inside of the woman she is now.”

“Mr. Jackson—“
“Please call me Michael, Aurora. I don’t like being addressed so formally by my friends.”

Aurora’s face lit up again. She felt so honored and special to be called Michael Jackson’s ‘friend’. She happily agreed to stop being fancy and they both began the next phase of their friendship on a first name only basis.

“I’m touched that you think of me as your friend. I’m excited to walk this interestingly unknown path and have full confidence that I will not regret my decision to accept such an incredibly rare gift from you, Mr. Concur.”

Michael laughed and shook his head in amusement wondering why Aurora was always so proper around him.

“Do you speak to your other friends this way?” He asked raising his brow to the brunette intern.
“Only the ones that wear fedoras and one sparkly glove, Mr. Jackson.”
“AURORA!”

Michael stood up and ran towards his new friend tickling her until she laughed hysterically. In that moment, they both knew something beautiful was blossoming between them. Something they both needed and wanted. Something that began from a single phone call and sprung into a beautiful bond. A bond that had to be kept a secret from everyone in their lives – for now.

After two hours of talking, tears, tickles and tight hugs, Aurora felt that she had overstayed her welcome with her new friend. She knew he was a busy man and had to get his act together in just a few days and didn’t want to be the reason for his flawless craft to seem tarnished.

“Will I see you again before the show?” She asked as Michael walked her to the door.

“Would you like to?” He asked cutely making her heart melt like wax.

“I think you know the answer to that.”

Michael giggled and said he would be spending the next five days rehearing at Radio City until the morning of the show. Aurora really wanted to see him again and said she would do her best to see him backstage to wish him luck. Michael thanked her again for coming to see her and wished her a good night as they both stood by the door smiling at each other like two innocent children in love.

“I’m really looking forward to seeing you bring my all-time favorite song to life on stage.” Aurora said smirking at Michael as she looked down at his signature black penny loafers.

“Which song is that?”

“It was on my list. I’ll let you figure it out.”
“You like to walk on the wild side.”
“I concur, Mr. Jackson.”

Michael was bursting with happiness. His affection for the grey eyed beauty was growing by the second and was amazed at how sweet and polite she was the entire time they were together. Usually, fans always had a habit of screaming and fainting in his presence but not Aurora. She was calm and collected which led Michael to believe they both could be very good and close friends. She was not intimidated by his appearance, fame or success and the King of Pop simply adored her charming and elegant persona. He was drawn to her and loved every second of it.

“I really must be going now.” Aurora said as she opened the dressing room door. “Thank you again for inviting me to see you. I enjoyed our talk and can’t wait to see you again before you perform.”
“So am I.” Michael replied giving her a hug and a kiss on her nose. “Drive safely.”

Michael had his arms gently wrapped around Aurora’s perfectly slender waistline. As he broke their embrace by slowly beginning to let go of her, she immediately stopped him from pulling away and placed her hands directly on top of his. Without saying a word to each other, the two ‘friends’ stood there staring and holding each other with no desire of wanting to let go. Aurora’s heart was pounding. Michael’s ears were ringing. What was happening? Did time suddenly freeze for both of them?

In that moment, the iconic Pop star and intern both felt something strong between them. So many unsaid words were spoken during their silence forcing each other to realize they were becoming more than just friends. Michael, already fanatical about the brunette haired beauty slipped his hand out from underneath Aurora’s and lightly brushed her cheek. She gasped feeling the warm contact between his fingers and her face and whimpered lovingly against his touch as he ran his thumb across her bottom lip.

“You are so beautiful, Aurora.” Michael whispered as he gently ran his hand through her brown, wavy hair. “I can’t wait to see you again.”

“Me too.” Was all she could say as she tried to stand up straight with her now numb legs. “Have a good evening. Please don’t strain yourself. I wouldn’t want anything to happen to you.”

“I concur.” He replied making her smile and his cheeks flush with shyness.

“You are just TOO cute, Mr. Jackson!” Aurora said tickling his stomach making him squeal like a toddler.

She continued making him laugh as he tried tickling her back. After screaming and forcefully moving each other’s hands away, the two of them accidentally landed against the wall with Aurora’s back falling against it and Michael’s body landing directly onto hers. Their chests were pressed together and both of them panted trying to catch their breaths.

“Are you alright?” Aurora asked as she gently moved a few curls way from Michael’s adoring face.

“I’m fine. Are you?” He asked slipping his hand against her back worried that she may have hurt herself.

“I’m ok. I think we’ve had enough fun for today. I’ll better leave before something else happens.”
“I’m looking forward to it.” Michael said winking his eye and not moving his hand from her backside. “Goodnight, Miss Clark.”

“Goodnight, Mr. Jackson.”

Then it happened – their eyes closed, their lips met and neither one of them saw it coming. Michael was gentle with Aurora at first but became slightly aggressive when he felt her not resisting him. She eased into his kiss and curled her hand around his hip bringing him closer towards her. Unfortunately, their brief encounter with passion was interrupted as Aurora came to her senses and realized what she was doing. She tilted her head away from Michael’s luscious, cherry flavored lips and pushed herself aside from the Pop star feeling an intense shock and embarrassment.

“I’m sorry. We can’t do this!” Aurora said covering her mouth with her hand. “I don’t know what came over me.”
“It’s ok, don’t apologize.” Michael said trying to rectify the situation. “It just happened. We wanted it to.”
“I must leave now.” Aurora said trying to pull herself together. “You’re a married man. I can’t get involved with you like this. Enjoy your rehearsals, Mr. Jackson.”

Aurora ran out of the dressing room without looking back leaving Michael feeling devastated. He loved what happened but sighed deeply as he closed his eyes and banged his fist against the wall. Why did he kiss her? Why couldn’t he control himself? Why did Aurora have to be so beautiful? He hated himself thinking he may have just ruined the best friendship he ever had. A friendship he’d always longed for. A friendship that spiraled into a single act of impulsive romance. A friendship he wouldn’t dare allow to slip away from him.

Aurora ran out of the Radio City building and into her car. She took a deep breath and tried to regain herself as she put on her seatbelt and started the ignition. She put her head down on the steering wheel and cried thinking how she could ever allow such a thing to happen. Michael was only supposed to be the name on her business contract and a friend - nothing else. How did things change so quickly? Did she lead him on? Was she flirting with him? Did he think she was the type to mix business with pleasure? She too hated herself in that moment and desperately wanted to turn back the hands of time and start over but she couldn’t. Aurora knew she had to control her growing feelings for Michael and decided not to see or speak to him again until the night of the award show. She had to mentally prepare herself and be ready for the next time their paths would cross. She needed to be strong. She needed to resist. She needed to break free from his intoxicating spell.