

## Discussion Guide for *Romancing the Dark in the City of Light*

1. Define the word 'deliverance.' Explain how a suicidal death might be a *release* or *deliverance* (pg. 3). Explain why Kurt wants Summer to consider this.
2. Moony's mood darkens when he asks Summer if she knows Kurt (pg. 50). Explain what his physical reaction reveals about his feelings at that moment. Explain why Kurt chose that particular moment to make his presence known.
3. Compare Moony and Kurt by discussing ways that the two are similar. Contrast these characters by listing their differences. Discuss how they each affect Summer in different and similar ways.
4. Discuss what being "*Trapped in a giant cobweb of blah*" (pg. 60) means. Explore what this description reveals about Summer's state of being at this point in the story.
5. Explain Summer's overreaction when Moony stumbled while going through the metal detector at the U.S. ambassador's residence (pgs. 71-2). Examine the underlying reasons behind her mood swing.
6. Discuss why Kurt encouraged Summer to go to the Paris sewers with him. Tell why he told her that she would "love" it (pgs. 81-85). Explain the motivation behind this action.
7. Summer wonders how Moony is able to manage pain and still apparently enjoy life with "gusto and, like, grace" (95). The word *grace* is defined as kindness, good will, and compassion. Describe ways that Moony extends grace to Summer and others. Explain his motivation for doing so.

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8. Analyze the feelings of “hollowness,” the “rush of deep sadness,” and the energy “vacuum” Summer experiences following her first kiss with Kurt (pg. 119). Explain what is happening to Summer at this moment in the story.

9. Summer’s entering Karen’s classroom generates a fond memory of her father holding her hand (pg. 146). Consider the emotional impact of this moment with her father. Explain what his holding her hand means to her. Explore Summer’s feelings for her father.

10. Summer states that “to become the girl [Moony] deserves is impossible” (pg. 171). The word *impossible* is defined as being intolerable, unreasonable, and hopeless. Explain why Summer feels deserving Moony’s affection is a hopeless act.

11. Discuss why Kurt does not carry money. Tell what this detail reveals about his character.

12. Summer tells her mother, “...graduating will be moot if I’m not around to inherit” (pg. 190). By saying these words, is Summer indirectly making a call for help? How so? Consider her mother’s judgmental response to Summer. Is her mother missing the true intent behind Summer’s comment? If so, why?

13. How and why does the news of the death of singer-songwriter Kentucky Morris impact Summer?

14. Consider Summer’s statement, “Humans are capable of incredible things. Full recovery against the odds” (pg. 219). Is Summer capable of full recovery? Do you agree with this statement? Explain your answers.

15. Moony takes Kurt’s hand with his weak one (pg. 239). Explore the symbolism behind this act. Discuss why the act of holding hands is meaningful to Summer, thus causing Moony’s reaching out to Kurt to be more poignant.

16. Consider the meaning behind the phrase “She’s not afraid of dying. She’s afraid of loving” (pg. 239). Explain how loving is a risky act, more daring and terrifying than the act of suicide.

17. Explain Kurt's physical transformation from having a young "handsome profile and shiny disheveled hair" and "perfectly shaped fingers and nails" (pg. 20) to developing coarse skin, a lined face, and ragged nails (pg. 269). Consider Kurt's seemingly gradual aging and increasingly foul body odor. Tell what these physical changes reveal with regard to his character and Summer's feelings for him.

18. Return to the early pages of the novel. Explore the phrase, "She knows the guy can't read her mind and doesn't mean anything by those words, but there it is: the real and growing reason why she's got to find someone to love" (pg. 3). Discuss how these words of exposition inform the novel's resolution.

19. Discuss the role that alcohol plays in this story.

20. Moony asks Summer (pg. 93), "But what does life expect from you?" Interpret the meaning behind his words. Predict how Summer's response to Moony's question might have changed from the midpoint of the story to the end. Explain the causes for the change in Summer's outlook on life. What about you? Describe what life expects from you.