

## Her Secret 25

### CHAPTER 25

“What the fuck...?” Maddison muttered in complete shock, really unsure how to even react to Steven’s sudden declaration. She always knew he was weird but this was another level.

“What do you mean by...bond?” Lana questioned, turning her entire body to face Steven as she tried her hardest to avoid River’s gaze. She could feel his eyes on her and it was really making her feel uncomfortable.

“Let’s talk and get comfortable with each other!” Steven announced. “We’ll have to spend 3 days together so we should at least learn to tolerant being around each other, right?” he stated with a giant grin on his face

Maddison furrowed her brows, she had a fierce look and Lana was certain she was going to say something mean to Steven and his optimistic look over their situation. But instead, she held her tongue and glanced over at River before she responded. It was almost as if she wanted to know his opinion about this before blurting out her own outlook over this situation. Lana was curious as to what expression River was wearing right now but she did not trust herself enough to even dare turn to him.

“Sounds like a plan.” River finally spoke after a long pause. He propped his elbow on the table and leaned his head against his open palm. Maddison seemed openly upset at River’s willingness to go along with Steven’s strange plan, but she brushed it off almost instantly. “What do you want to talk about?” he asked Steven.

“Hmm...what about everyone’s experience during last year’s founder’s day? I’ll go first!” he announced excitedly. “I was a part of the petting zoo team and spent 3 days scooping animal poop! It was a bad experience, I mean I’m glad the kids enjoyed themselves and whatever but smelling poop for 3 days straight really messed me up...especially my sense of smell. I kid you not, I was smelling poop even when I wasn’t around it! So I’m happy we don’t have a petting zoo this year or I might get some form of ptsd.” He said with a dramatic sigh.

“Pfft.” Lana stifled a laugh as she imagined Steven in a pen surrounded by cute farm animals and their droppings.

“Hey! Don’t laugh at my misery...” Steven frowned at Lana. He then turned to Maddison who could not hide her smile. “Not you too...”

“You can’t blame her.” River said as he gestured to Maddison. “She finds other people’s misery funny,” River stated with a light shake of his head.

Maddison’s expression immediately turned sour. “I do not. Stop making me seem like a fucking psychopath.” She countered.

“But you are, though.” River shrugged.

Lana wanted to blurt out that River himself was a psychopath but held her tongue. Instead, Lana silently agreed with him as she recalls the numerous times she spotted Maddison’s signature glare directed towards her. Sometimes, Lana wished that Maddison would just confront her if she had a problem instead of scowling all the time.

Yet, even with such a sour expression tainting her face, Maddison still looked beautiful. Her signature long luscious hair was always a different colour every week, this week it was burgundy and her voluptuous figure made everyone, boys and girls alike swarm over her like moths to a flame. It was no surprise that she was very popular among the students at the school, just like her cousin, River. But the biggest difference between the two was that Maddison was openly vile and rude whereas River often wore a mask.

Before Maddison and River could continue their idea of banter, Steven turned to Lana. “What about you Lana? How was your founder’s day last year?”

“I got to be in the team that helped out Ray and the rangers with the forest treasure hunt.” She answered.

“Oh! I heard they were opening the hunt for the locals too this year right?”

Lana shrugged as she hasn’t really had a proper conversation with Ray ever since the day of ‘the talk’. Somehow, she felt relieved that she was not in the same team as she was two years in a row. It was fun while it lasted but some part of her thought that she wanted a breather away from Ray but the other part was just starting to get bored of the repetitiveness of the whole situation.

She would spend most of her time at a designated checkpoint in the forest and waited to guide the participants to their next clue. At the moment, she thought it was exciting to watch how differently people reacted to different situations that they had to face throughout the treasure hunt. But now she just wanted a change and she got it. At least there won’t be any boring days when she was going to be spending 3 days with three strong personalities.

“Suzie seemed really excited about the treasure hunt,” Steven added. “So, we’ll be participating.”

Lana was surprised to hear this, especially since she knew Suzie was not the outdoorsy type. But she was glad that she was open to trying new things since Steven was fond of hiking and such.

“Just be careful, okay? It’s not as easy as it sounds.” Lana warned.

“Isn’t it just a kids event?” Maddison interjected before Steven could reply.

“Well, not really since you have to be 12-years-old and above to even participate. Even then, you’d still

need a guardian to be present if you are younger than 16.” Lana replied.

“Oh right, I forgot how careless people are that they would get lost in the forest so easily.” Maddison sighed as she flipped her burgundy hair.

Somehow, Maddison’s passing comment irritated Lana. “Not everyone is gifted with tremendous navigation skills.” She snapped followed by a smile.

The edge of Maddison’s lips twitched. “Oh? And why are you so bothered by my comment? Did you think I was talking about you? Aren’t you a forest ranger? It’s quite laughable if you of all people got lost in the forest.” she sneered.

Lana smiled as her grip on her thigh tightened from annoyance. Before she could say anything back, she noticed Steven frantically watching the two of them.

“Um...guys...?” Steven panicked as he could feel the building tension between the two girls. “C-Calm down okay. We shouldn’t be fighting.”

“We’re not fighting.” Maddison and Lana said in unison. Lana then sighed and turned to look away from Maddison.

“Well then...what about you two? What did you have to do last year?” Steven asked the Attwoods after a short pause.

“We didn’t participate last year.” Maddison replied, clearly annoyed.

“We had to go to the city for a family...gathering.” River said hesitantly. Maddison turned to glance over at him. There was a weird pause and against Lana’s better judgement, she turned to look over at River. She felt like a deer in headlights when her gaze met his. Strangely, she did not expect to be in awe by looking into those beautiful blue eyes of his, especially since she thought she was getting used to it by now. But what caught her attention was the unexpected sadness that glistened in his eyes. Lana forced herself to pry her eyes away from him.

“...but, during our freshmen year I was in the carnival team. I had to take care of one of those game booths.” River continued after a long pause.

Maddison laughed, her voice was melodious and soothing to hear. “Oh please, it was the funniest thing! His booth was constantly packed with both girls and boys alike trying desperately to gain his attention. Overall, it only took, like what? 2 hours for all the prizes to be won? Everyone was really persistent huh?” She snickered.

Steven joined in by laughing at the silliness of the situation. “I can totally see that happening, he is a very popular dude after all.” He added with a cheeky grin.

River brushed him off and continued his story. "After that incident, I was reassigned to the technical team." River sighed.

"And you, Maddison?"

"I was in the catering team, and nothing crazy happened so I had a peaceful 3 days." She replied.

"Well, seems like none of us ever had ticket booth duty huh? I wonder if we'll be okay?" Steven asked absent-mindedly.

"It's just sitting and selling the tickets right? Sounds like a breeze. Even a complete idiot could do it." Maddison said. Lana turned to her and their eyes met. Maddison smirked and Lana felt as though her remark was directed towards her.

Just at cue, the door to the classroom flung open and Mrs. Hathaway entered with a big smile on her face. "Hello there my lovely ticket sellers! Sorry for keeping you waiting." She announced. The four of them stood up from their seats simultaneously and headed to sit at the front closer to where Mrs. Hathaway was. "Glad to see that no one was fighting." She said, eyeing Lana and River. Lana averted her gaze, feeling guilty for some odd reason.

"So, what's up, Mrs. H? What do we have to do?" Steven asked.

"It's simple really, the four of you will be split into two teams. Team A will be River and Lana and Team B will be Maddison and Steven." Lana smiled before she opened her mouth to ask nicely if she could be in a team with Steven instead but Mrs. Hathaway had a feeling they were going to protest so she quickly added, "The teams are final." She added hastily.

Lana slumped down against her chair as she internally screamed at how terrible her luck was whenever she was around River.

"Anyway, the ticket booth will be opening at 8am-4pm for the duration of the festival and each team will spend about 4 hours at the ticket booth while the other team will be helping out Ray and his rangers." She explained.

"Is there not enough people to help the rangers?" Maddison asked.

"This year we have less high school students to delegate all the tasks, so some teams will be working together with the rangers regardless. I hope that's okay with the four of you?"

The four of them nodded. Lana was already a part-time forest ranger, River and Maddison were werewolves who spent most of their time in the forest and Steven was an avid fan of hiking so he knows his way around the forest.

But for Lana, this change was like a slap in the face. Just when she was finally happy to get away from

Ray and the forest, she is being dumped right back at them. And what's worse is that she'll be stuck with River for a total of 12 hours throughout the 3 days. She really felt as though the Mistress of Luck had left her to fend for herself.

"Okay then, founder's day is next weekend and preparations will start soon! I hope we can all work together to make it a successful weekend for everyone involved as well as the visiting tourists." Mrs. Hathaway said. She then turned to look at River and Lana. "And you two, I hope you can work together in harmony. It is founder's day after all and I expect you two to be on your best behaviour." She added with a sweet smile.

Maddison raised an eyebrow over the strange remark from Mrs. Hathaway and Steven was curiously looking at Lana and River for their response. Lana and River exchanged glances, the both of them quickly looked away from each other before letting out a defeated sigh simultaneously.