

## Her Secret 39

### CHAPTER 39 NO.39

The trio hiked up a small trail to reach the large tree with its branches covered in colourful ribbons. Lana noted that there was a steep slope next to the tree but a red tape surrounded the area to prevent anyone from getting too close or even falling accidentally. She then glanced behind when she heard voices. The other teams were already catching up to them. She then focused her attention back on the tree to find the red ribbon that they needed.

“You won’t be able to find it.” Someone said. The trio turned to the source only to find Hannah who was leaning against the tree, quietly watching them. She was getting bored waiting for someone to reach her. She then offered them a toothy smile and waved at them.

“What do you mean? Aren’t we supposed to find a red ribbon that’s on this tree? Isn’t that what the previous clue meant?” Zane asked Hannah. She was about to answer but her attention was drawn to River who walked up to the tree and pulled on one of the ribbons that was closest to him. He then frowned and showed it to his team members.

“Look at this.” He said.

Lana took the ribbon from his grip to examine it closer. It was an orange coloured ribbon but the word ‘yellow’ was written on it. She sighed.

“Of course, it can never be something so straight-forward.” She said, more to herself than to the others. “Do we have to check one by one until we find a ribbon that has the word ‘red’ on it?” she asked the others.

“I don’t think so.” Zane said as he appeared behind her and pulled the ribbon from her hand. She stiffened from his sudden action and closeness. “After looking closely at the tree, there’s 6 different coloured ribbons tied on it. Look, there’s orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo and violet.” He pointed out.

Lana looked up and slowly nodded as she was starting to understand what they were supposed to do here to pass this station. “It’s the colours of the rainbow.” She noted. “So if orange is yellow then yellow should be green right?”

River went back to the tree and looked for a yellow ribbon. When he found one he nodded at Lana to confirm her theory. “If we go with this theory, then we are looking for an indigo ribbon which will have the word ‘red’ on it.” He muttered to himself.

The three then stared up at the tree trying to spot the ribbon that they needed. Lana then exclaimed and pointed up.

“That’s pretty high, one of us would need to climb up there.” Zane pointed out as he walked ahead to volunteer.

Lana quickly grabbed Zane's arm to stop him. "Let me do it." Lana said bashfully as she slowly moved her hand away from his arm.

Throughout their time together, she felt that she had not contributed in properly solving any puzzles or riddles since both River and Zane were quick-witted and often solved it almost immediately. But now that they were tasked with something physical and even though both the men are athletic and could probably climb a tree with their eyes closed, she still wanted to at least do something to prove that she is a valuable member of the team. But deep down, she also wanted to look good in front of Zane and not let River have any reason to tease her about not contributing.

"Okay, be careful Lana." Zane said as he stepped back to give her space to climb the tree. River on the other hand stayed quiet as he watched Lana touch the tree in front of her.

Lana gave Zane a thumbs up and effortlessly climbed up the tree. Her gaze was fixed on the indigo ribbon and before she knew it, she was at arm's length of it. She reached out and grabbed it. Someone cheered and this caused Lana to look down as she did not recognize the voice. She was stunned by the amount of people who had gathered below to watch her climb the tree. She knew she had to hurry back down and continue ahead before the other teams solved this puzzle. She quickly shoved the ribbon in her pocket and made her way back down.

"Good job Lana!" Zane complimented excitedly as she hopped off the tree. She beamed at him and gestured to them that they should head towards Hannah who was now standing a few feet away from the other teams.

"Let's go get our fifth clue." Lana said to the two of them in a low voice.

River watched silently as Lana happily walked ahead, but then he noticed how dangerously close she was walking at the edge of the steep slope. Before he could even warn her to move away from there, he watched as the ground below her crumbled and she slipped over the edge.

Lana tried to steady her footing and hoped that the red tape was strong enough to hold her weight long enough for her to reposition herself. But everything happened too fast and she could feel the tape snap under her. She was falling down the slope and time seemed to slow down. She wanted to brace herself for impact but she could only stare ahead, dumbfounded at the sight in front of her—at River who jumped after her.

The worried look on his face was something that Lana never expected to see in her lifetime. She watched as he reached out his hand to grab her by the wrist, he then proceeded to pull her close into a tight embrace. Lana's face was pressed against his chest in a smothering manner. She could feel him turn his body around so that she was on top of him. In a blink of an eye, River landed on the ground with a painful thud. A pained groan escaping from his lips.

There was a loud crack, someone screamed in horror, someone shouted for help and Lana found herself

paralysed in River's arms. The reality of the situation struck her instantly when she felt his body go limp.

"Lana! River!" she could hear Zane called out to them frantically. He turned to the stunned ranger beside him. "Hannah! Call for help, now!" he alerted her, his urgency breaking her out of the shock that she was in.

"I know!" she hurried away from the edge, trying her hardest to stay calm as she pulled out her walkie-talkie to alert the other rangers of what just happened. She then noticed the other teams crowding around the edge to look below. "Move away from the edge!" she cried out desperately to them, afraid that the sudden weight of all these people would only cause the already unsteady ground to crumble further.

Some listened to her as they scurried backwards but others were too immersed in the events that unfolded to even bother moving. She then went towards these people and pulled them away with one hand while with the other hand she switched on her walkie-talkie and pressed it against her lips.

"Attention all rangers! There's been an accident at the fifth station!! I repeat, there's been an accident! I need medical assistance at once!" she cried into the device. There was a loud static sound that emitted from her device and almost immediately she could hear someone talking back to her alert.

"Hannah! What happened? Over." Ray's voice blasted from the walkie-talkie. Hannah felt her eyes burn with tears as she watched Taylor running up towards her. She was glad that at least someone else was here during this time but that didn't stop the panic that was overwhelming her.

"It's River and Lana! The ground collapsed and they fell! Ray, send medical assistance now! I think they are seriously hurt! Over!"

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The air around Lana felt suffocating as she found it hard to breathe. She was not sure if it was the result of her fall that caused a sudden rush of adrenaline to fill her senses or if her anxiety was overwhelming her at an alarming rate. She could hear muffled voices calling out to her but she could not understand the words properly. She squirmed out of River's hold slowly and gently pushed his body so that he was laying on his back.

"River...?" she called out. His eyes were closed and he did not show signs of moving. She silently leaned forward with her hand going to the back of his head as she tried to listen to his breathing. She let out a small sigh of relief when she could feel that he was still breathing. She then pulled away and felt her stomach knot up. Her hand was covered in blood and as her eyes scanned for the location of the wound, she noticed that his right arm was twisted in an unnatural way.

"Shit..." she muttered, realizing that he must have landed on his arm when they fell but not only that, his head was also bleeding from the impact. An overwhelming sense of dread engulfed Lana as she looked down at him in horror. Her vision quickly blurred from tears and her throat burnt. "River...please get

up..." she cooed as she caressed his cheek, her voice cracking painfully as she tried her best to stifle a sob.

She tried her best to calm herself as she tried to remember the training she had. She knew what she had to do in times of emergency like this but somehow nothing was viable was coming to her.

"Lana!!" she heard someone call. She turned to look up over the slope where Zane was. His expression only made Lana's chest hurt agonizingly. "Help is on its way! Are you alright?? Is River alright??" he called out anxiously.

"Zane! Help...R-River is—" she wanted to tell him the River was hurt but found herself unable to properly speak as she choked on her urge to cry out. This feeling was suffocating, her chest was at the urge of exploding from the thought that her recklessness caused someone else to be injured. Even if they never got along, she would never have wished for him to get hurt because of her. She hated herself for not being strong enough at this moment, she couldn't even remember her basic training.

The guilt was unbearable, she then turned her attention back to River as she silently prayed that he would just open his eyes and tell her that he was alright. Her face hovered over his as her shaky hands held onto his cheek and neck. She could feel his pulse slowing down and this only caused her to panic even more.

"P-Please get up River...please..." she begged as her tears fell down onto his cheeks.