

## Her Secret 40

### CHAPTER 40 NO.40

Lana let out a startled gasp when she felt River's body shifted slightly from under her. River's eyes fluttered open and she could have sworn that time truly slowed down at that moment. Through her blurry vision, the blue of his eyes dazzled prominently to the point of enticing her into a daze. She was not sure if she was too stunned at her own relief that he was finally awake or if she was just put in a trance by his azure gaze alone.

She caught herself after a long moment and pulled herself away from him. She quickly wiped her teary eyes with the back of her hands, ignoring the metallic scent of blood that lingered over her hands. Before she could say anything, she felt his hand touch her wrist. There was a strange sensation against her skin where he was touching her, it felt almost calming, it felt like his touch was all she needed to completely calm down.

"Don't speak." He said in a hoarse whisper. He took the time to assess the situation they were in. He looked up at the people hovering over the slope and tensed. The fact that there was a crowd forming only meant that more eyes saw what happened. His grip around Lana's wrist slid down to her waist. His grip tightened as he pulled her body closer to his in an attempt to cover his own body with hers from prying eyes. He could not allow anyone to see his broken arm at any cost. "Stay still." He told her as she froze in place from his sudden action.

"You..." she muttered, which made River turn to properly look at her. Her clothes were soiled by the soft dirt that they landed in, her hands were covered in dried blood and her cheeks were tear-stained.

His eyes widened at such a sight. "I didn't expect you to cry." He said matter-of-factly.

"Didn't you say you wanted to see me cry?" she rebuttal drily.

River choked out a chuckle. "Not like this." He said to her as his hand from her waist trailed up to her cheek, where his fingers lightly wiped the tears. Lana did not know how to even react as she forced herself to stay absolutely still. "But honestly...at this point, I'm convinced you have a memory of a goldfish."

Lana sulked as she pushed River's hand away from her. "Are you serious right now?" she said in a harsh whisper, clearly baffled at his ability to even think of bantering with her at a time like this.

"It seems to me that you keep forgetting I can heal faster than a normal human." River reminded her.

"Your body went limp!" she hissed. At the same time, she was indeed trying to hide the fact that she actually did forget about that major fact.

"When we fell, I hit my head pretty hard. Obviously I would lose consciousness for a bit." He explained with a tired sigh.

Lana's attention then went to his broken arm. It still looked twisted and she was certain that it was broken. "What about your arm? Will you be able to heal that too?"

"Yeah, but it'll take some time." He replied. "Hey, listen. Since a lot of people saw us fall, we need to pretend that I'm still hurt."

Lana frowned. "You are still hurt." She said as she gestured to his arm.

"Yeah, but I'll be fine in a few hours but—" River stopped talking when he noticed commotion above the slope.

"Lana! River!" a familiar voice called out. Lana looked up and felt the sense of relief wash over her body.

"Ray!" she called out in joy as she forced herself not to cry from the overwhelming comfort Ray's presence gave to her.

"We're coming down! Just stay put okay!" he called back, reassuring Lana that everything was going to be okay with just those simple words.

"Remember what I said." River told her as he closed his eyes. "Pretend I'm still hurt even after everything has settled."

"Do you want me to turn on the waterworks again?" she asked sarcastically.

River smiled at her remark and for some reason Lana felt a sting in her chest. She remained silent until the two were rescued. She continued to look at River as his body was put on a stretcher by the paramedics that were called to the scene. Her gaze never left him even when she was surrounded by the people who cared for her and was clearly worried over her well-being. She recalled them asking her questions but she does not recall answering any.

There was an ambulance at the entrance of the forest and she watched as they placed River at the back.

"Ms. Danley, can you hear me?" someone called out. A sudden flash of light into her eyes broke whatever trance she was in. She blinked one and then twice before she finally looked around her surroundings. Carmen, Suzie, Steven and Zane stood a distance away from where she was as they watched her, deep in concern.

"Is she in shock?" another voice asked. Lana turned to Ray who stood beside the paramedic.

"She doesn't seem to have any external wounds but she is not showing any signs of being in shock." The paramedic said.

"I'm fine. Honestly." Lana finally replied.

Ray sighed in relief when Lana finally responded since she was unresponsive for the longest time.

The paramedic switched off the flashlight and placed it back into her bag. "We should still go to the hospital just in case. Just to be sure you don't have any internal wounds." She suggested.

Lana shook her head. "No, I'm really fine. I'm not injured at all." She said firmly. Both Ray's and the paramedic's gaze fell to her bloodied hands.

Lana was not sure what happened next as her attention went elsewhere but after a moment, the paramedic left and Lana watched as the ambulance River was in drove off. She could feel the familiar burn of her eyes and throat as she felt the need to cry again. Even after everything that happened, she never got the chance to thank him for saving her and that fact alone was making her feel frustrated with herself.

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Ray took Lana back to that station as she was still clearly shaken up by the events that happened. He had to tell her friends to give her some space as they wanted to check up on her, thankfully they were understanding and decided to wait outside. He made Lana sit on the couch as he wrapped her with a thick blanket. He went to make something warm for her. He placed the cup of tea on the table as he reached out for her hands and wiped the blood that stained them.

After he was done, he pondered on what he could do to make her feel better. She knew that River is a werewolf and that he was never in any life threatening situation. Ray thought that maybe she was more shaken up due to her own safety but it was clear to him that she kept looking at River as he was taken away to the hospital.

"Lana?" he called out to her as he passed the cup of tea to her. She looked up at him and slowly took the cup in her hands.

"I'm sorry, Ray." She said as she stared at the steam flowing out of the liquid.

"Whatever for?" he asked as he sat down beside her.

"I should've been more careful." She mumbled.

"It was not your fault that the ground collapsed, Lana. If anything, it was our own negligence. We should've cancelled today's hunt completely." He said with a sigh. In all his years working as a ranger, this was the biggest accident to have happened and he could not believe that Lana of all people almost got seriously hurt if it was not for River's quick thinking.

After the accident, the rangers had to clear everyone from the forest to avoid another accident from happening. The event was properly cancelled and the rangers and volunteers were busy cleaning up the

vicinity.

“I really thought he was dead...” she suddenly said. “His pulse was dropping and he wasn’t opening his eyes.”

“Lana...he is a werewolf, remember?”

“Both of you keep saying that as if werewolves are indestructible or immortal even and yet my father died, didn’t he? He was a werewolf, right?” she choked in a sob. “Even if you guys can heal faster or whatever doesn’t mean that you can’t get hurt!”

Ray was made speechless by Lana’s sudden mention of her father, of Aldric. After revealing everything to Lana, he was certain that she would find her own way to cope with everything but now watching her breakdown only made him realize that she was just burying these emotions deep inside her without properly addressing them. Ray felt as though he failed her. No matter how strong he thought Lana was, he should’ve made the effort to make sure she was actually doing okay with everything.

Ray wrapped his arms around Lana as he pulled her into a tight embrace.

“It’s okay now, everything is alright. I’m sorry that you had to go through that, I’m sorry for everything.” He cooed, gently brushing her hair with his fingers. He did not know how to approach the topic of her father since he himself had been avoiding even thinking about Aldric’s death. Sometimes he felt that it was easier to live on when he did not think about Aldric, because the more he pondered over him, the more he felt grief taking over his body.

They say time heals all wounds but to Ray, not even all the time in the world would heal the void inside him created by the loss of Aldric.

He then felt Lana squirm under his hug and pulled away. She looked up at him with teary eyes and smiled. “I’m sorry about that...I guess I was really going in shock.” She joked.

Ray frowned at her attempt to lighten the mood. “Then we should’ve gone to the hospital.”

Lana brushed him off as she sipped on the tea. “Speaking about hospitals...will River be alright? If he suddenly heals, wouldn’t the doctors be shocked?”

“You don’t have to worry about that. The head doctor there is Dr. Kelley and he is a werewolf as well. He will attend to River.”

“Dr. Kelley is a werewolf too?” she asked, her eyes widening. “I just thought he was a very hairy person.” She muttered to herself.

Ray laughed. “Well, you have to see him in his wolf form. He is the shaggiest of us all.”

Lana smiled at his remark. She was slowly starting to feel better but in her mind she kept reminding herself that the first thing she had to say to River when they met again was 'thank you'. No matter how he treats her, she has to thank him for saving her because if she doesn't, her guilt would eat away at her.

"Your friends are waiting outside. Are you up to meeting them? I could always send them away if you want to rest more." Ray said.

"No, I'm fine now. Could you let them in?" she asked him as she placed the cup on the table. Ray nodded and went to the door. Once Ray gave the thumbs up for them to enter, Suzie and Carmen barged in and ran towards Lana. They plopped onto the couch as they hugged her.

"We were so worried!" Carmen said.

"Are you okay now? Do you want me to kiss your boo-boo's?" Suzie asked in a completely serious tone.

"Hey you two! Be careful with her!" Steven scolded them.

Lana allowed herself to laugh at their silly antics. She spread her hands out wide so she could hug both of them back. "I'm fine! Haha, you guys worry too much."

"Um, obviously we would be worried! You fell off a cliff!" Carmen countered.

"It was a slope!" Lana corrected.

"River broke his hand! If he wasn't there, I...I can't even imagine what would have happened to you!" Suzie bellowed as she pulled away from the hug to glare at Lana's casual behaviour.

Even though Lana knew River's hand would fix itself sooner than later, the others did not know that fact. She decided to stay silent and nod as the two nagged at her to be more careful in the future.

"By the way, I'm still surprised that River even did that. He put himself in harm's way to protect you." Carmen noted.

Lana let out a nervous laugh. "Well, he does seem like that kind of guy..."

"I guess we can never judge a book by its cover right? Even if he openly dislikes you, he is still a swell dude." Suzie added.

"I wonder if River will let us sign his cast?" Steven suddenly said, bringing the three girls' attention to him.

"Seriously Steven?" Suzie frowned at her boyfriend's inability to read the room.

He shrugged. "I'm just curious if he is that kind of guy or not. But in all seriousness, I'm glad you are okay Lana."

"Thanks Steven," she smiled. She then looked past Steven, noticing the open door. "Where's Zane?" she asked them.

"Oh, he is outside. He said that he would wait until we were done. He is a worried mess." Suzie pointed out.

"Please, if anyone was a mess it was you." Carmen huffed at Suzie.

"Shut up!" she glared at Carmen and then turned to Lana to smile sweetly. "Should we ask him to come in?"

Lana shook her head as she got up from the couch. She placed the blanket that Ray wrapped around her shoulders on the couch. "I want to get some fresh air, so I'll go talk to him outside." She said with a small smile to her friends. She noticed Ray's concerned expression as she passed him. She gave him a thumbs up to reassure him that she was alright. She inhaled deeply as she stepped out of the station, bracing herself mentally and physically to face Zane.