

Her Secret 46

CHAPTER 45 NO.45

The day went by slowly and completely uneventful. The two avoided talking to each other, in Lana's case she did not want to purposely agitate River in any way since he was already acting strange. But for River, he just couldn't bear the shame and guilt of what he did last night while thinking about Lana. He thought that the longer he avoided her, the better it would be for his own sanity. An hour into their duties Mrs. Hathaway came to check up on Lana, only to be understandably confused when she saw River at the booth.

Her attempts to make River go home to properly recover and rest failed miserably as River stubbornly told her that he would rather be here helping out than staying at home being bored. After his declaration, Mrs. Hathaway could not find any other reason to ask him to go home. As per usual, she brought the two snacks as a token of appreciation. This time, it was two big slices of cherry pie.

After that, the amount of people buying tickets lessened and Lana's lack of sleep the night before was quickly catching up to her. She felt her eyelids grow heavy as her body fully leaned back against the chair she was on. She mentally told herself to stay awake, to distract herself by counting the number of red balloons she could see or pinching her thighs and arms to stay awake. Neither method was helping as her body was screaming at her to just rest her hand on the table and doze off.

River was quick to notice Lana's fluttering eyes. Her head swayed slightly and he knew that she was falling asleep. He opened his mouth to call out to her but before he could even say anything, Lana's upper half was falling forward as her head was about to meet the table in front of her at a rapid speed. The impact would've probably woke her up completely and even made her forehead a little sore and red but River rushed to her side almost immediately. In his attempt to soften her blow, he reached out his left hand out and caught her head before it could slam on the table.

Lana jolted awake as she pulled herself up. She stared at River in horror as realization kicked in.

"I'm sorry...!" she bashfully said to him.

River sighed as he started to believe that Lana just had a knack of getting herself in harmful situations. First, she fell off a ladder, then she fell off a slope and now she almost slammed her head on a table while falling asleep. A part of him thought that maybe he should've just let the latter happen just so Lana would feel embarrassed for the rest of their day together and learn a valuable lesson to be more aware of her surroundings.

"You good?" he asked as he went back to his seat. He flexed his left hand, trying his best to ignore the feel of her skin on his palm. Even though he only touched her for a mere second, he could feel his body burning up.

"Yes." She answered almost immediately.

“You can go to the haunted house canopy and take a nap if you want too. Luis told me that people from different teams did that from time to time.”

Lana shook her head frantically. “I’m awake now! Really.”

River replied with a crude nod. From the corner of his eyes she could see her rummaging through her bag to look for something. Lana pulled out a packet of gummy bears and ripped the packet open. She shoved a few of the sweets into her mouth before hesitantly reaching out towards River to offer him some.

He looked at the packet for a moment before looking back at her. He then smiled, although due to the mask he was wearing, Lana couldn’t tell what his reaction was. He then reached out to grab a gummy but he stopped when he noticed Maddison running towards the booth with a distressed expression. Lana noticed as well and instinctively stood up from her seat to find out what was going on. She then realized that Steven was running from a distance, trying to keep up with Maddison.

“River!” she huffed when she finally reached the booth. “Where is your phone?! I’ve been trying to call you!”

The urgency in Maddison’s voice made River stand up. “I left it in the car. Why? What’s going on?”

“It’s your—”

She was interrupted as the panting and huffing Steven reached the booth as he leaned against the table so he would not fall from how exhausted he was. “It’s your father!” he blurted out dramatically.

River frowned as he turned his attention back to Maddison. “What about him?”

“Your mother texted me saying that she couldn’t reach you. According to her, your father has fallen ill.” She explained.

The four of them then turned towards Mrs. Hathaway as she jogged towards the booth. “River!” she called out. “I just got word from your mother. She wants you to…” her words trailed off when she noticed the shift in atmosphere. “I’m guessing you already know.” She muttered as she tried to calm herself.

“Let’s go! I’ll drive.” Maddison said.

“But what about the baking competition?” Steven whispered at her.

“Baking competition?” River asked as he never heard of such a thing from Maddison before.

“Shut up!” she hissed at Steven. “It doesn’t matter, let’s just go.”

“But you were really excited for it! Since River can’t drive himself to the city because of his arm, why not ask Lana to drive him instead.” Steven pressed. Lana froze at the mere mention of her name.

“Steven, I swear to God! The baking competition doesn’t matter right now! And this clearly is a family matter so stop butting it!” she scolded. Steven frowned.

“You entered a baking competition?” River asked with his eyebrows raised. Even though he felt the urgency of the situation, he knew that his father always had health complications and this was not the first time his mother told him to come over to visit. Using his father’s health as an excuse to make River visit them in the city was something his mother loved to do and River wasn’t sure if she just did not know how to ask him to come over normally. He recalled her calling him in the middle of the night because of his father’s health but when he reached, his father only had a common cold.

Maddison glared at Steven before turning back to River. “Yes, I entered a baking competition because I was bored. But things change and I can always withdraw myself from it.”

“I didn’t know you knew how to bake.” River muttered, clearly intrigued by this new revelation.

“Me neither.” Mrs. Hathaway chimed in.

“Right? When I found out, I pushed her to enter ‘cause the grand prize is freaking 5 grand!” Steven said excitedly.

“Are you guys serious right now? River, your father—!”

“You and I both know how dramatic my mother can be when it comes to my father’s health. I’ll call her back after this and find out what’s actually going on. I doubt she even told you guys what the problem was when she called, right?” he said as he looked at Mrs. Hathaway and Maddison. The two shook their heads.

“She only mentioned that he was ill.” Mrs. Hathaway added.

River nodded. “So, Maddison, stay and enter the competition.”

“But what if you really have to go to the city? Luis is swamped with his duties and I’ll—”

“Lana can do it!” Steven chimed as he pointed at her. “This can also be a way for you to repay River for saving you and besides, his arm is broken because of that entire situation.” Steven smiled after his blunt statement.

“It’s fractured, not broken but you are...right...” Lana muttered, clearly aware that River could easily drive himself.

Maddison made a face as she exchanged glances between Lana and River. She was waiting for River to refuse the idea of making Lana drive him to the city but River stayed silent.

“Well then, that’s settled. Steven, will you be able to take over Lana and River’s shifts if they need to head out?” Mrs. Hathaway asked.

“Of course!”

Maddison reached out to grab River’s arm. She quickly dropped her hand when she accidentally held his supposedly injured side. “Wait River...are you sure about this?” she muttered as she glanced over to Lana.

“Don’t worry. I don’t think it’s that serious. If anything, I’ll just take an off day from school tomorrow and go visit them.” He reassured her. “But Maddison, now that I know you enjoy baking, I expect some tasty treats from you.” He said with a hint of mischievousness in his voice.

“Sure...” she muttered in defeat.

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Mrs. Hathaway and Maddison left after River went back to the car to retrieve his phone. Lana stayed at the booth with Steven who chatted about how he was amazed when he found out that Maddison had that side of her. He always saw her as the cool and edgy type and even when they had shifts together, she never talked about herself. It was always Steven babbling about random things to get rid of the silence that would loom over them. Lana laughed as she felt that to be rather similar with her experience dealing with River. Although the major difference was that Maddison was not being a complete jerk towards Steven for talking to her.

Lana then noticed River approaching them with his hand clenching hard against his phone. She was certain that it was about to crumble in his grip if he did not loosen it. Now that he removed his mask so she could see the annoyed expression that was tainting his face.

“Oh yikes, he looks like he is about to murder someone.” Steven whispered to Lana. “It’s probably bad news...right?”

Lana stayed silent as River stood completely still in front of the booth. The menacing aura around him caused both Steven and Lana to hold their tongues. He then slowly turned to Lana.

“Hey, I need you to drive me to my parent’s place.” He said through clenched teeth.

Lana could tell that he did not want this but since Steven was right there, he couldn’t just lie his way out of this. This was probably just a ruse to make sure Steven doesn’t grow suspicious about River’s injury.

“Okay.” She replied instantly but to her dismay, it was not a ruse at all.

