

Her Secret 50

CHAPTER 50 NO.50

“Um River, this doesn’t look like a hospital.” Lana dubiously said as River drove into what seemed to resemble an industrial area.

“Thought you didn’t want to go to the hospital.” He called back as he stopped the car in front of an abandoned factory. Lana looked at him doubtfully, thinking that maybe after all the times she has caused problems for him, he is finally sick and tired of her. He is about to abandon her in the middle of nowhere and strangely she doesn’t blame him for wanting to do that. “What’s with that look? Are you thinking that I might just leave you here?”

Lana gasped as she was slowly starting to believe in her theory that River could read her mind. “No...” she squeaked.

River rolled his eyes as he got out of the car. “I’m rather tempted to be honest.” He whispered. Lana gawked at him in disbelief. “Come on, let’s go.” He called out to her as he walked past the open gates, ignoring her hurt expression.

Lana sighed and looked down at the mess her hand was in. She trusted River for a lot of things so far, so why should she doubt him now. She pushed herself out of the car, feeling rather lethargic as she forced herself to keep up with River’s quick pace.

“What is this place?” Lana asked him as she looked around the vicinity. “It’s an industrial area right? But it’s too quiet...where’s the sounds of machines and stuff?”

“It’s not very easy to explain.” He admitted.

“Try.” She frowned.

He groaned in annoyance at Lana’s persistence. “Just think of this entire area to be somewhat like a black market...but for werewolves,”

Lana’s head snapped back to River. “What? Black market?! It’s illegal then??”

River sighed. “Unlike Rosecliff, it’s easy to gain access to medical care and things like that because there are werewolves in charge but it’s the opposite for werewolves in the city. And this place was formed to support them.” He explained.

“So...is it illegal or not?” she pressed.

River sighed once more. He was seriously starting to think that ever since his life got tangled with Lana’s he has been sighing more often than before. “Depends on who you ask.”

“Oh shit...” she whispered to herself at what she was walking into. Lana was wrecking her brain at that moment but slowly she could feel the sudden pain erupting from her arm. At least she could feel less anxious about Ray finding out about the incident with River’s father if she got her wounds treated at a place that did not keep any records.

Thinking back, River was right about how in Rosecliff many werewolves were in high positions like Ray being the head of the forest rangers, Dr. Kelley being the head doctor at the hospital and even Griffin who is a beloved figure in the community who works closely with the town’s mayor. A shiver ran down Lana’s back the more she thought about it. Although she never really cared to find out who was a werewolf and who wasn’t in the community, the fact that they blend so well to human society was rather intriguing to her.

The two then approached a large red factory gate and River knocked on it three times. The loud banging sound echoed around the quiet area and Lana unconsciously took a side step so she was hiding behind River’s tall frame.

“You scared?” he asked her with a hint of amusement in his voice when he noticed her action.

“Nah, not at all,” she muttered meekly, but in actuality she was incredibly scared. “Um...I know it’s a little late to bring this up but wouldn’t it be a problem if I went in there? Since my scent is um, such a hassle?”

“Nah, you don’t have to worry about that.” River said just as the door was slid open. A tall, lanky man wearing a bloodied lab coat stood at the other side of the gate. By the look of him, he was probably slightly older than River and Lana. His dark hair was pushed back with a bright pink bandana and when he saw River he raised an eyebrow at him. His dark eyes then peered behind him to look at Lana. “Brandon here is a human.”

“Tsk. It’s Dr. Young to you, mister.” His attention went back to River as he frowned at him. His eyes scanned River for a moment and he then proceeded to scratch his chin. “Well, you don’t look injured and I find it hard to believe that you came all this way just to say hi. Oh? Could it be that you miss me—?”

River completely ignored Brandon’s chattering as he sidestepped, revealing Lana who at that point was still hiding behind him. Brandon’s eyes widened when he saw Lana’s arm which was wrapped in a bloodied cloth.

“H-Hi.” Lana greeted as she gave him a weak smile.

After a moment, Brandon nodded. “Mmm. Come in.” he said as he walked back inside. Lana glanced at River who gave her a reassuring nod. The two then followed Brandon in.

Lana was half expecting to see somewhat of an abandoned factory when she walked through those gates. Littered with debris and dust, broken machine parts laying forgotten but to her surprise, there was none of that. The inside of the building did not match the outside at all. It truly resembled a hospital

with the same fluorescent lights illuminating the area and the strong veil of antiseptic lingered around.

Lana shuffled slightly to River's side. "Is he a qualified doctor?" she whispered to him.

"I heard that." Brandon called out to them suddenly, causing Lana to jolt. "Don't worry, cupcake, I may be an underground doctor but I am still very much qualified. I could show you my certifiants if you want. Wait actually, I'm not really sure where I left them..."

"Right...wait, cupcake?" she muttered. She glanced at River who just shrugged at her.

"Take a seat, I'll be right with you. Gotta change out of these real quick. The client I was with earlier was a squirter, it took me a while to even clean the place up." He said as he dramatically gestured to his lab coat. He disappeared behind the partition to change while Lana remained frozen at her spot, trying to comprehend what Brandon just said.

After realizing that Brandon's passing comment might be affecting her, he proceeded to guide Lana to the hospital bed and helped her get on it, his hand carefully holding her elbow to give her the support she needed.

"Thank you." She muttered.

"No problem," he whispered as he pulled his hand away from her and took a step back. Now that they were in this makeshift hospital of Brandon's, his sense of smell was being hindered by the multitude of chemicals in the premise. He could still recognize Lana's scent but it was not as overwhelming here.

"How much do you trust him? This Dr. Brandon err... I mean Dr. Young?" Lana questioned in a hushed tone, not wanting Brandon to hear them.

"I trust him with my life." River boldly declared. "Besides, in his field of work, he needs to know how to keep secrets or he'd be dead by now."

Lana chuckled awkwardly at River's sick sense of humour but by the look of his serious expression, she knew that he was not joking. A sudden thought then came to Lana at that moment.

"Oh!" she suddenly exclaimed.

"What is it?"

"Your cap...I accidentally left it at your parents' place." She told him. The cap of his that she was wearing went flying to the ground when Gregory tackled her to the ground. From the sudden chaos that ensued, Lana completely forgot to take it with her when she was escorted out. "I'm sorry...and your jacket too, the sleeve is ruined..." she sulked.

"...you can't be serious right now?" River asked in complete disbelief.

"I'll get you a new one! A new jacket and a new cap..." she said, hoping that he wouldn't get mad over such a thing but by the sound of his voice she was pretty sure he was mad. But unbeknownst to Lana, River was more baffled by the fact that she would apologize for something so silly and clearly was not even her fault.

"I don't need a new one, you idiot."

Lana gasped as his sudden name calling. "You don't have to call me that—"

"Why the hell are you apologizing over something that wasn't even your fault?! If anyone should be apologizing it should be me. Ray warned me about not taking you...about not getting you close to my father and I—I didn't think my father would be able to smell your scent from upstairs. It's my fault that you were dragged into this mess." He said to her.

"What do you mean Ray told you? He knew about what happened between our fathers...?" she muttered softly, more to herself than to River.

"Of course he did, Ray was Aldric's right hand man."

"Wait...you knew too? Everything about whatever happened between our fathers?" she asked. River stayed silent. After a beat, he averted his gaze from her. "River...?" she called out to get his attention.

"I'm back!" Brandon's sudden booming voice made Lana flinch from shock. She was pretty sure that she might get a heart attack from this whimsical doctor in front of her. She turned to the doctor who was now dressed in a clean lab coat along with a pair of blue medical gloves. A mask now covered his face with only his eyes exposed. The sound of squeaky wheels made Lana look down at the movable metal cart Brandon was pushing towards her. She could also see the layout of different medical equipment on the tray.

"Well then, let's see what we're dealing with here." He said once he approached her. He pulled a stool towards the bed and sat down. Lana held out her arm to him as he carefully removed the cloth from her arm. Due to the dried up blood around the area, Lana could feel that stinging sensation when Brandon pulled the cloth away.

"Ow..." Lana hissed quietly. She then turned to her side where River suddenly appeared, looking down at her with genuine concern. She gave him a smile. "I'm fine," she reassured him.

"Yikes. I would not use that choice of words for your situation, cupcake. This is some bite mark." He muttered under his breath, he then glanced at River. "Did you bite her..."

"No!" both River and Lana said in unison. They exchanged glances and quickly looked away.

"She just had an altercation with—my father. Or more like he attacked her."

“Gregory did?! Why the heck did he attack her?” he asked in total shock. He then turned to Lana. “And why the heck were you fighting him in his werewolf form?” he asked her as he started to clean the dried blood from her arm.

“It’s a long story.” River muttered and Lana nodded in agreement.

“I have all the time in the world. Well not technically, unless another client walks in but since no one else is here, I’m all ears!” he enthusiastically said to the pair.

River sighed as he sat next to Lana on the bed, their knees brushed each other slightly. “Well, it’s not really my story to tell...” he said as he looked at her. Brandon then turned to look at Lana as well.

“Ooh, how mysterious. I love me some story time. Working here all alone really takes a toll on you in the long run so I was thinking maybe I should be like a two-in-one surgeon slash therapist to my clients. What do you two think? Werewolves have issues they need to talk about too, right?” he beamed at them.

“Um...that sounds really out of the box?” Lana said carefully, unsure if he was being serious or not. Brandon nodded happily and then turned to River for his reply.

“What she said.” River mumbled followed by a deep sigh. After all this time, he still does not know how to properly deal with Brandon’s eccentric behaviour.

“Fantastic! I knew the two of you would be on board with this idea. You can be my first two-in-one client, cupcake. Now tell me, what’s your story?” He purred at her teasingly.

Lana smiled sweetly. “I’ll tell you everything under one condition.”

“Yes?” he batted his eyes at her.

“Stop calling me cupcake. I have a name.”

Brandon’s lips twisted into a mischievous grin. “Do tell, what’s your name, cupcake?”

Lana’s eye twitched as her smile widened. Here she thought that River was the main definition of annoyance but it seems to her that another contestant just entered the running.