

Her Secret 51

CHAPTER 51 NO.51

"Huh, so you're telling me that Aldric was your father?" Brandon asked as he finished up the stitches on Lana's arm.

Lana nodded. "You knew my father?" she asked, watching his handy work and silently being impressed by how clean and neat his needle work was.

"I know him just by name. Besides, I've only been in this line of field for like 5 years now so by the time I knew of him he was already...dead. My condolences to you by the way." He said with a light pat on her arm.

"Thanks..." Lana muttered.

"Honestly, I'm still trying to wrap my head around the fact that you are a hybrid. But you don't have any werewolf abilities?"

"Not that I know off." she said as she gestured to her arm. "I don't heal as fast."

"Hmm, very interesting. Can I make a proposal to you, Lana?" he asked, a mischievous gleam in his eyes.

Lana frowned at him, having a bad feeling about what Brandon was going to say next.

"If it involves experimenting on her, save your breath." River huffed as he crossed his arms around his chest.

"Oh? I didn't know you were her guardian." Brandon smirked.

"He isn't."

"I'm not." They said simultaneously.

"Good. Then stop butting into our conversation, River." Brandon said with a smile. River rolled his eyes and sighed. "And besides, the word experimenting is too vulgar...I'd like to think of it as exploring the endless possibilities of you, Lana, being a hybrid. It would be rather boring if the only traits you have from your werewolf side is to smell like one." He shrugged. Brandon then rolled backwards on his stool to a metal shelf nearby and grabbed some rolls of bandages.

Lana nodded in agreement with what Brandon said. A part of her was curious to see if she had other werewolf traits but so far she can most definitely rule off regeneration.

"I don't like where this is going," River muttered beside her.

"It's not your call." Brandon scolded as he rolled himself back to Lana. "It's yours, Lana." He stared at her in anticipation.

"I—"

Before Lana could reply, a loud beeping sound echoed through the room. Both Lana and River took an urgent stance while Brandon muttered out a curse. He passed the bandages to River in a hurry and rushed to the desk nearby.

"Oh shit. Shit, shit, shit! I have to go." Brandon said as he quickly removed his gloves and coat.

"Go? Go where? You haven't finished bandaging her." River called out.

"You'll just have to do it, wolf boy. I am needed elsewhere. A client of mine just sent me a red alert and if I don't go to them now, they might die. And you know what they say about dead clients." he said. When neither of them replied he let out a dramatic sigh. "I don't get paid!" he informed them quickly as he grabbed a nearby bag. He checked the contents of the bag, nodded once to himself and went towards the entrance.

"Seriously..." River muttered in disbelief.

"It was nice meeting you Lana! There's some painkillers and antibiotics on my desk, please take those before you leave. And also River, just pay me the next time you come visit. Oh, but don't come visit if Lana isn't with you! Haha, I'm joking! Not really! Bye!" he shouted back before disappearing behind the metal door.

River and Lana stared at the spot where he was standing just a second ago, completely baffled at how quickly he was gone like a puff of smoke.

"Um well...he is a very interesting person. Seems like you know a lot of unique people." Lana muttered under her breath.

River let out an exasperated sigh in response to her remark before standing up and taking a seat on the stool Brandon was on. His grip on the bandage tightened as he pushed himself closer to Lana, their legs pressing against each other.

"Let's get this over and done with." He said to her as he gently took hold of her arm.

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It felt almost ticklish whenever River's fingers brushed against Lana's bare skin. There was a soothing sensation to the warmth that his touch trailed over her. Tingles danced around the spots where he touched and Lana felt her arm unconsciously move forward to feel the pressure of his fingers against her skin.

They sat facing each other, knees pressed against each other while River's head looked down to pay attention to what he was doing as he wrapped the bandage around Lana's stitches. It was weird to see the brash and aggressive River be this gentle with her, and in all honesty she felt at peace. The silence that filled the air around them was not suffocating, it was just right. She started to be more aware of their breathing and she noticed the slight tremble of River's hand whenever it was close to her stitches.

"I can feel your stare, any longer and you'll burn a hole in me." River finally spoke.

Lana playfully scoffed at his remark. "I just wanted to make sure you don't mess up."

River looked up at her with a raised eyebrow. "How could I mess up something so simple?"

Lana gave him a half-sided smile. "Oh right, I forgot that the perfect River Attwood could never mess anything up." She joked.

River's expression changed the moment she said that as he slowly looked away. His attention went back to what he was doing. Lana felt as though he took her remark as her blaming him for something but before she could correct herself, River shifted in his seat.

"I am sorry about everything that happened." He mumbled.

"River...I'm not blaming you for anything!" she protested.

His grip tightened against her wrist, thumb placed directly on her pulse point as he could hear the steady palpitation. "You should. If only I took Ray's advice to heart, if only I asked anyone but you to drive me here, if only—I kept thinking that you are someone who is prone to getting injured but now when I properly think back, you always get injured when you are around me."

"What are you talking about...?"

"Think about it. When you fell off the slope, I was there. When you got bitten by my father, I brought you there."

"You can't be serious right now..."

"I'm dead serious." He frowned as he unconsciously placed pressure against her pulse point.

Lana stared down at where his thumb met her wrist. "Why are you doing this?" she whispered.

"Doing what? Stating facts?"

"No, blaming yourself over things that weren't even your fault? I fell off the slope due to my own carelessness. I got bitten because of my scent. Neither of those situations were your fault."

“But—” Lana placed her other hand on the back of River’s, causing him to stop talking while he looked up at her. Their eyes met and for a solid second, neither of them spoke as they gazed into each other’s eyes.

“I’m going to change the topic now because if not, we’ll be going in circles.” She said. “My father banished your family from Rosecliff, that’s what your mother told me when we were talking over tea.” Lana finally asked as she awkwardly pulled her hand away from his.

River cleared his throat as he went back to wrapping her arm with the bandage. “That’s right,” he confirmed.

“Why were you allowed to stay in Rosecliff? Is it related to the responsibility you mentioned when we were in the car?”

“Hah, you have a good memory. But to answer your question, yes. Majority of the werewolves in our pack are betas and the alphas are either aged or do not have the qualities to be a pack leader. I don’t know what exactly happened between my father and yours but all I know is that when my family was banished from Rosecliff, I was given a pardon.”

“Because you have potential?” she asked.

River gave her a crude nod. “That’s basically it. That’s why I had to stay with Griffin after my family left.”

Lana wore a solemn expression as she thought about the 10 year old River being left alone by his family just because someone said so and that someone was her very own father.

“My father forced you to be separated from your own family because you had potential?” Lana muttered under her breath.

River could sense the hostility in her voice. “Don’t be mad about the past. Besides, its normal in the werewolf society because everything we do, we do for the—”

“For the pack?”

“Yea...”

“Do you—Do you resent my father?” she dared to ask him.

River thought about it for a moment as he finished up bandaging her. “I resent myself.” He finally answered as he placed Lana’s arm on her thigh and moved back away from her.

“Why?”

He looked at her and gave her a cynical smile. "Sometimes, you should really know when to stop asking questions."

Lana frowned at him as she stayed silent. She examined River's work on her arm and let out a pleased hum. She then immediately recalled another question that she was curious about ever since she found out about this person's existence.

"I found out that you have a sister named Meadow. How come you never mentioned her to anyone?" she asked. There was a beat of silence and the silence grew longer and heavier until Lana finally made herself look at River.

It was an expression she had never seen on his face before, it was like a mix of sadness and anger—of betrayal and hurt.

"What did you just say?" he hissed.

Lana felt herself tense at the sudden change of his tonality and body language. "Your mom mentioned about your...sister."

After a moment, his expression changed into a forced smile. "Leave it to my mother to talk about these things with a total stranger." He muttered.

"I'm sorry...I didn't know it was a sensitive topic I just—"

"You asked why I never mentioned Meadow to anyone?" he asked, cutting her off. Lana slowly nodded. "She's dead."

A gasp escaped Lana's lips. "I'm sorry...I didn't know...your mother didn't mention that..."

River let out a low laugh. "Because she's in denial. I doubt she ever fully accepted the fact that Meadow is gone. My parents, you see they changed ever since they were banished from Rosecliff but it only got worse after Meadow died. When I said I resent myself, what I meant was that I hated myself for not being there for her...for Meadow. I—"

"River," Lana cooed as she reached out her hand and cupped his cheek, her thumb brushing against his cheek. From her sudden action River finally noticed that he was crying.

River pulled back slightly. "I'm sorry..." he muttered as he tried to look away from her, to hide the fact that he was being vulnerable in front of her.

"Don't be." She said, her voice soft and tender. "You don't have to force yourself to be okay. You can cry, shout, scream...you can do everything if it'll make you feel better." She told him as her thumb gently wiped the tears on his cheeks.

He stared at her dumbfounded. A part of him was expecting her to make fun of him, to tease him for crying even but here she was, looking at him with a pained expression—eyes glistening with tears. His image of her features started to blur as more tears filled his eyes. He stood up shakily, causing Lana's hand to drop from his face. He moved forward and closed the gap between them.

"River?" she called out, clearly puzzled by what he was about to do.

River stayed silent as his hand went to her cheek as he allowed himself to fully feel the warmth that emitted from her body. He leaned forward to her face and she stayed completely still as she watched what he was doing. His hands moved from her cheek and slid down to her shoulder and stopped when his fingers met hers. He wrapped his hand around hers and after a pause, she tightened her grip on him as well. He then leaned his forehead against her shoulder and closed his eyes.

"Sorry...please just let me stay like this for a while." He whispered to her.

For the first time in River's 10 years of knowing Lana and her scent, this was the first time her scent made him feel at peace. There was a certain type of tranquillity that overwhelmed him at that moment and he was too afraid to even acknowledge the feeling that quickly crept up to him.

He felt Lana's free hand move up to his head, gently brushing his hair as she pressed her cheek against his head in an attempt to comfort him from the miserable state he was in. At that point, River's heart started to ache. He wanted to believe that it was because of the heavy guilt he had towards his older sister, Meadow who he failed to protect but whatever he was feeling at that moment felt completely different.

This pain, this ache, this yearning that came surging into him the moment Lana held him—he was certain that he wanted to be with her. He was in love with Lana Danley and the fact that he came to that conclusion only now made him not want to ever let her go. He was afraid that if he let her go then he had to let go of all these emotions as well.

But one thing he was certain of was that there was no sense of instincts that override his emotions or actions, it was just him—and for once in his life he felt fully free to feel this much adoration towards someone. He wanted to stay in this position forever, with her comforting scent and warmth lingering all over him. He bit his bottom lip to stop himself from crying out as he wrapped his other hand around her waist and pulled her into a tight embrace, desperately trying to convey his feelings for her through this one simple action yet he knew that it was not that easy.