CHAPTER 53 NO.53

"Stop the car." Lana said suddenly, causing River to give her a curious sideways glance. She was staring down at her phone intensely, the light from the screen illuminating her distressed expression. "Stop the car!" she repeated with a panicked urgency in her voice.

River hit the brakes immediately which caused their bodies to jolt forward as the seatbelts they were wearing tugged against them with a sharp pain.

"What the hell?" River asked her, trying his hardest to not yell at her for suddenly yelling at him while he was driving.

After the fireworks show ended he promised to drive her straight home. Everything was perfectly normal, with Lana chattering on about school and their upcoming midterms until a buzz from her phone caught her attention. They were almost about to reach her house when she suddenly told him to stop.

"It's Zane." she announced.

He thought that it was an emergency or something happened to Ray. But it was just the nuisance named Zane Railey. River made a face at the mention of that person's name and allowed himself to relax against his seat once again. "What about him?" he asked as he slowly parked the car to the side of the road.

"He's at my front door." She said as she peered ahead. River followed her gaze, he stopped the car a few houses down and it was easy to spot the tall man who was awkwardly standing at the door of Lana's home. "He just texted me…it would have been a disaster if you drove up and he saw you without your cast." She said as she quickly unbuckled her seatbelt.

"Or could it be that you just don't want him to see you with me?" River asked back indifferently, gaze fixated on Zane.

"What? No. Why would that be a big deal?" she called back but did not wait for River to respond. "Anyway, I'll see you around at school." she said as she pushed open the door.

"Mm." River gave her a half-hearted wave as his attention was solely focused on Zane who was now staring down at his phone. That irritating feeling crept up over him again at how Lana would easily drop everything for him. River really wanted to know what Lana saw in Zane–why did she even fall for someone like him?

"River!" Lana suddenly exclaimed as she appeared by his door and peered into the window.

River flinched from her sudden action. He was so focused on glaring at Zane that he did not even realize that she approached his side of the door after getting out of the car.

"What is it?" he asked her, trying his best to keep his voice calm and composed even though his heart was about to burst from his chest. He could not decide whether it was from the shock she gave him or the fact that she was so close to him.

She looked at him with an amused expression, silently proud of herself that she managed to see another side of River she thought she would never see. Her expression then turned into a tinder smile. "Thank you for today—"

"For what? Almost getting you killed?" he asked with a sly smile as he leaned against the door, his head nearly popping out from the window to look up at her.

Lana rolled her eyes and stood up straight. "No you dumbass, thanks for taking me up there to watch the fireworks."

"Don't mention it." he said. "Oh…you should probably remove that jacket. There's bloodstains on the sleeve." He pointed out.

"Oh right." Lana muttered as she shrugged off the jacket. She looked at him and hesitantly held it out to him.

River let out a soft chuckle. "You can keep it, or throw it out. Do whatever you want since it's yours now." he told her.

"If you told me earlier that you were giving this jacket to me, I wouldn't have ruined it with my own blood." She joked as she propped it over her bandaged arm to hide her injury from Zane. "I'm joking by the way."

"I know."

"Then why do you look so serious?" she frowned.

River pulled away from the window and stared ahead. "You should get going, don't keep that lover boy of yours waiting for too long." he told her as he avoided answering her question.

Lana sighed as she did not want to pester him any further. "Alright. Bye, and take care." she said to him before turning to walk away from the car.

"La…Oi, come back." River called out. She glanced behind when River suddenly tossed a small plastic bag at her. She caught it after a slight fumble and looked down at what it was. "Your meds." He told her.

"Oh…right. Thanks!" she beamed at him and just watching her smile at him like that truly felt like a punch in River's heart. "Oh and River, it seems to me that you are intentionally trying your hardest not to say my name." she pointed out.

He raised an eyebrow at her absurd observation. "I seriously have no idea what you are talking about." He lied.

She huffed and gave him a knowing look. "Mark my words, Attwood. One day you will call me by my name and on that day, I will be triumphant!" she boldly declared with a silly smile plastered on her face. She gave him a small wave before jogging towards her house.

River watched her silently before he caught his own reflection on the side mirror. The genuine smile he had towards her silly antics caught him off guard. He frowned, knowing the more time he spent around Lana, the more he was going to let his feelings for her show. With a dejected sigh, he turned the car around and drove away.

*

Zane quickly glanced away from the car as Lana approached him. She greeted him with a wide smile which only made him smile back at her.

"Sorry to keep you waiting!" she panted as fatigue was catching up on her body.

"Don't worry about it. I just dropped by to check on you. I actually wanted to watch the fireworks with you but Steven told me what happened. How's River and how's his dad?"

Lana nodded even though her mind was screaming at the fact that Zane wanted to watch the fireworks show with her. "Both of them are fine!" she said as she pressed her bandaged arm close against her chest, glancing down to make sure the jacket covered any trace of the bandage around her arm.

"That's good to know. But who was that in the car…?" he asked her curiously.

"Oh! Um, it was…" Lana immediately blanked. She knew she could not say it was Luis or Maddison because the chances of Zane meeting them back at the town square was rather high. She had to think of someone quick before Zane grew suspicious of her and River. "It was a friend of River's, apparently she's a new student…" she told him when the image of Avery suddenly popped into her mind.

"That was nice of her to drop you off. But you should've called me, I could've picked you up from River's place."

"I didn't want to bother you…since you must be tired after having a long day." She said, not trusting herself to look at Zane in the eyes.

"Honestly, just being around you takes the fatigue away." Zane said with a serious tone.

Lana let out an awkward laugh since mentally she was thinking the same thing. The moment she got close to Zane and started talking to him, her entire body felt refreshed. But the fact that Zane was saying

that to her made her feel doubtful.

"You shouldn't tease me like that." She said as she tucked a strand of her hair behind her ear and stared down at the ground.

"But I'm being serious." He admitted, causing Lana to look up at him. "I really wanted to see you today, Lana. But I guess I missed my chance." He said in a low whisper.

"…but you're here now, seeing me right before your eyes, right?" she said hesitantly, unsure what Zane actually meant when he said that.

Zane smiled as he moved closer to Lana. His hand reached to caress her cheek as his thumb lightly brushed against her skin. Lana froze under his touch. "I suppose you're right." He whispered. His eyes then trailed down to her lips but something caught his eyes as he looked down at her shirt where it was stained. "Is that…blood?" he asked her as his hand involuntarily moved to examine the stain on her shirt.

Lana gasped in realization as she pushed Zane's hand away from her but this sudden action caused her to drop the jacket she was holding along with the bag that held her medicine. Zane's eyes widened at the sight of her bandaged arm.

"Shit…" she muttered under her breath as she tried to think of how she was going to get herself out of this sticky situation. She bent down to pick up the fallen jacket but Zane was faster as he caught her by the wrist of her bandaged arm and pulled her upright. Lana was too shocked to react to Zane's harsh approach.

"Lana, what happened to your arm?" he asked her as he stared at her bandaged arm.

"It's nothing, just a little accident." She said to him, trying to pull herself free.

"Did he do this to you? Did River—?" he hissed.

"What? No!"

"Then tell me what happened. You weren't injured the last time I saw you…" he asked, looking down at Lana with those puppy dog eyes.

Lana gulped hard, feeling horrible at the fact that she had to constantly lie to Zane when all he ever did was worry about her wellbeing. "I'm just clumsy…" was all she managed to tell him in response.

Zane studied her expression and slowly let go of her wrist. He then bent down to pick up Lana's fallen items but Lana knew that if Zane saw the blood stains on the jacket or even the medication, he was going to question her further. Lana dove down swiftly and snatched the items from the ground. Zane stared at her in complete shock.

"Um well—it was a very hot day and it might stink of sweat so…" she muttered as she hid the jacket behind her back.

Zane let out a small chuckle. "You know Lana, of all the years I've known you one thing never changed about you." He started.

"And what's that?" she asked, feeling a bead of sweat trickling down her forehead.

"You suck at lying."

Lana's eyes widened. "Zane—" she started but Zane held up a hand which caused her to keep quiet.

"It's fine if you don't want to tell me what happened but as long as it wasn't him who hurt you then…I won't pry anymore."

"It really wasn't him." she confirmed almost instantly.

"Okay. I believe you." He gave her a firm nod. He then glanced at his phone. "It's getting late. You should get inside and rest." He suggested.

"I'm sorry…" she mumbled.

Zane laughed. "Hey, don't be. I'll see you at school tomorrow." He said as he moved away from the door so Lana could open it. She silently unlocked the door and pushed it open. "Lana." Zane called suddenly, causing her to turn around.

Zane approached her, his hand brushing against her cheek as he leaned forward. Lana felt her heart jump as his lips pressed on her cheek. He pulled away, their foreheads touching while he gazed into her eyes. Lana could only stare back at him, unmoving as she felt time slow down around her the longer she stared into his hazel eyes.

"Goodnight, Lana." He whispered. He then pulled away and walked back to his car that was parked in front of her house. Lana stood there for a moment completely dumbfounded. She watched as he waved at her before he drove off. She slowly turned and walked into her house, closing the door behind her and locking the locks. She then fell to her knees and let out a joyous screech at the fact that Zane Railey just kissed her on the cheek.