



23 | Roller Coaster

Thank you @nikibookgram for the electric poster! 160

Chapter 23: Roller Coaster 182

You're in my head, Luke Dawson. 190

These last few weeks were some of the most thrilling days in my memory. The trouble, the pain, the laughter. It was a roller coaster that I didn't want to end. 26

Is this what your world is like? If so, thank you. It made me feel alive. 55

I met you three weeks ago but I've known you my whole life. And not in an ' our souls are eternally connected kind of way. I mean literally, you have been my next-door neighbor since kindergarten. 165

I wish you could see me in the same way I see you. 137

It scares me. There's nothing to cling to, no hope that this would happen again. I think about that night at the lake, when we were so close to... well, you know... 152

I can see now why everyone is obsessed with you; why they want to be around you, become you. I bet it gets tiring. You don't ask for it. I hope you don't think I'm one of them. 13

"Move out of the way, nerd." 30

"Can your sweatpants be pulled up any higher?" 30

I wasn't even wearing sweatpants. 144

At least things were back to normal. I liked normal. Normal I can deal with. 1

After the lake incident, Tamara left me alone. Stacey never mentioned the photo again. They backed off. It was now back to the regular teasing. 1

Most of the time though, it was nothing. No one noticing me, no one caring about me. I was invisible, and the only drama I saw was on Netflix. 260

Apple Cabin was no longer the center of the action, as Austin used to say. 1

Mostly, I missed them. They made every day exciting. When Luke was around, he made people feel like there was nowhere else to be. 29

The days merged together. Since Khloe had volunteered to be Luke's co-counselor at the beginning of the summer, Mr Woodhouse tasked her with helping me in the cabin from time to time. She would come over to help clean and take care of the campers. 1

She complained about it, of course, but wasn't particularly spiteful. 5

It was just part of the job, I guess. 2

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"Ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls, children of all ages... **This** is the final wrap up to our summer together!" Mr Woodhouse yelled into the microphone. Today he was channeling a circus ringleader. 194

We were in the open-air theater for our last all-camp meeting. Parents filled the benches around the wooden stage, eager to collect their children quickly but Mr Woodhouse was turning a simple 'goodbye' into a grand finale. The campers had mixed emotions. Some were excited to leave while others were in tears. 20

The 'This one time at summer camp... stories had already begun. 27

I sat in the back, squished in the last row. Every seat in the theater was filled. I remembered sitting, at the beginning of summer, in a row by myself when Luke walked in on Mr Woodhouse mid-speech. He'd reluctantly joined me - barely remembering my name. 92

Mr Woodhouse was awarding trophies to the standout campers. The most shocking win was Dupree for the Camp Spirit Award. Mr Congeniality... to the boy I bribed every morning to separate from his iPad. I guess even kids can put on a good show. 63

"A warm thank you to all our little beavers! And now, let's give a standing ovation to our wonderful counselors who help make this camp click. It's now time to award the Counselor Cup. After a fair and democratic vote, the Counselor Cup goes to...." Mr Woodhouse pressed a button and a pre-recorded drum roll blared through the speakers, "to my beautiful niece, Tamara Woodhouse!" 130

Fair and democratic my ass. 224

Tamara joined her uncle on stage to accept her award and thank the audience. The ceremony ended sooner. Parents started to file out, dragging their kids behind them. I said goodbye to my Apple Cabin campers, wishing them a happy third grade. 213

People around me were dispersing with their friends or family. I trod through the rows carefully, not wanting to get anything stuck to my shoes. The ground was covered in ribbons and melting candy. 5

"You're going to see him, aren't you?" 134

Tamara blocked my path, looking effortlessly beautiful in a tank top and high-waisted navy shorts. 20

"Who?" I asked, surprised she was talking to me. 2

"Luke. You're going to see Luke." 14

I stared at her. I still couldn't believe that someone as popular and beautiful as her ever thought I could be a threat. 1

"I don't think so," I said, "We may live on the same street, but we come from different worlds." 11

She flicked her hair and her lip gloss sparkled. "Before this summer, that was probably true. But I think you've crashed into his world now." 205

"Why are you saying this?" 1

"I shouldn't have called you a whore," she apologized, lowering her voice now that there were parents around, "I'm not usually like that, but my emotions were caught up in Luke. I never expected to fall for someone so quickly. He's younger than me and a total playboy..." 179

Her words trailed off mid-sentence. I don't think she thought through what she was going to say to me. This seemed like some kind of closure to her. 1

Where was the ombudsman when we needed him? 177

"I don't think the two of you would last if you ever got together but... I do think he cares about you. You're all still in high school and I'm going to college with mature people now so let me give you some advice. Every girl in town will be falling over Luke and I'm not foolish to think he's going to sit like a virgin all year. If anyone should have him, why can't you?" 177

Because I can't. 11

Can I? 12

"Let me put it this way," she said, "No one breaks up with me. If he did it for you, you better be special. So you best go get that boy." 136

A/N: Tamara's comment came out of left field right? I'm the author and I was surprised... haha well half surprised. Ok, not surprised at all. 14

Want to know the inspiration behind this? Follow me on Instagram for more @NatalieInACorner ;) 1

17