

Her Secret 100

CHAPTER 100 NO.100

Everything happened so fast that River, who thought he was as fast as the wind, could not comprehend the events that unfolded. From his peripheral vision he could see the Highcaster werewolves panicking and getting agitated that their pack leader just fell off the cliff.

Ezekiel is dead!

Retreat! Our leader is gone!

He could hear them falling apart before ultimately turning around and running away with their tails between their legs. As for River, he held his breath the moment he saw Lana's smile. He knew she was going to do something reckless but he never expected her to jump. The fall is high and River did not see either Lana's or Ezekiel's heads pop up after they landed into the water.

River! A voice called out in his head, causing him to finally snap out of the trance he was in. It was Ray, who was frantic and panicking as he looked around trying to spot Lana from the bottom of the cliff. Do you see her?!

An overwhelming sense of guilt filled River to the point where he felt sick to his stomach. He did not want to believe that Lana was dead but anyone who fell from this height...it would take a miracle for them to survive.

I'm going down there to look for her. River told Ray before rushing ahead, trying to navigate himself through the forest to find the fastest path to reach the river. He did not need to look behind him to realise that Ray, Avery and some others were following him close behind.

It took them longer than expected to reach the river, the exact spot they saw Lana and Ezekiel fall under. They looked around, sniffed for their scent and soon realised that Lana scent was hardly there—no, her scent was not present at all.

What the hell...? He heard someone grumble. I'm not the only one who can't smell her right...? Avery complained.

Ray shook his head, ears falling back in defeat. Neither can I...

That's impossible. River thought to himself as he dove into the freezing water of the river in front of him. He swam around, eyes opened and sharp to spot any movement around or any signs of Lana or Ezekiel. When he did not see anything, he swam back to land and was greeted by the others.

Anything? Avery asked.

River shook his head. They could've been washed away further from this part of the river. He told them,

gesturing at how long the river ran for. I'm going to look for her.

She could be...what I'm trying to say is that the fall was not a short one. I think the possibility of Lana being... we should be prepared for the worst case scenario.

Avery muttered, finding it hard to even convey her words properly as she did not want to believe them herself.

That's enough. Those who want to head back are free to do so. But I will continue to look for her until I find her. That's all.

River told those who followed him down. He then walked ahead, body feeling heavy due to his wet fur but at that point he did not care.

All he cared about right now was finding Lana because he knew that his mind and heart would not rest until he saw her once again. He did not want to believe in Avery's words but deep down he silently agreed that there was a possibility that Lana did not survive the fall. But the mere fact that her body was gone, almost vanished from thin air and even her scent was hard to pick up was enough to make him think that maybe, just maybe she was out there in the forest somewhere, too far for them to sense her. The thought alone filled River's mind with hope, false or not, he wanted to believe that she was still alive.

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A small sneeze escaped from Lana as the cold breeze passed by. The fire she started was somewhat helping warm her body up but her dress was still soaking. She glanced over to where Ezekiel's unconscious body was, wondering if she would remove his clothes before he freezes to death. She stood up from her spot and went towards him, wondering why she was trying so hard to keep him alive when she was barely alive herself. She was freezing, thirsty, fatigued and she had a feeling that she definitely broke a rib from her fall off the cliff earlier.

Her hands went to unbutton Ezekiel's soaking wet vest and shirt but she flinched away immediately when he stirred awake. He stared up at the sky for a long moment before his hand slowly went towards his head.

"Don't touch it." Lana warned him. Due to how much he was bleeding and his clearly exposed wound, Lana thought that it would be better to wrap his injury and hence she destroyed her dress to get some cloth to wrap around his head.

"You..." Ezekiel started. Lana sighed, not really in the mood to get nagged or insulted by him. "Of all the things that I foresaw that could've gone wrong in my plan—I never once thought that you would be stupid enough to jump off the cliff and drag me along with you."

"Yea, yea, do you want an apology or something?" she absent-mindedly said.

“What happened after we fell?” he asked, ignoring her snarky response.

“Don’t know.” She shrugged. “I woke up over there by the stream and found you—like that.” She gestured to his head.

“Ah...”

“Does it hurt?” she asked him, eyes fixed on his injury. He was bleeding so much until the cloth she wrapped around his head was soaked with his blood.

“...I don’t really feel anything.” he replied truthfully. “How funny it would be if I met my end here.” He said with a forced chuckle as realisation kicked in.

“I was thinking the same thing,” she muttered.

“Why...are you taking care of me?” he asked her after noticing the fire crackling beside them.

“I’m not really taking care of you...I just didn’t want your death to be on my subconscious if I were to just leave you bleeding by the stream.”

“How...admirable.” He joked. “Are you aware that your actions led us to this point?” he asked her.

“...You were going to push me off the cliff. It was self-defence.”

“I don’t think that’s the right word.” He sighed. There was a long pause and Lana thought he fell back unconscious. “Tell me, Lana, are you happy now?”

“What?”

“If I were to die here, you’ve successfully avenged your parents, right?”

Lana never thought about that, she knew that all these while she had to bury her emotions deep inside so Ezekiel could not get through and play mind games with her. She was mad and hurt when he told her the truth about her parents, all she wanted was to hurt him like how he hurt them but now, staring at him as his eyes struggled to stay open, lips blue and breathing uneven—happy was the last thing she would describe herself right now.

“You should rest—save your breath.” Lana told him.

“Do you know what happens when a pack leader is killed?” he asked her, ignoring her advice.

“...a new pack leader is assigned.” She answered.

“Then, do you know what happens when an alpha kills a pack leader—intentionally or unintentionally?”

“No, I don’t.” she bluntly stated, not sure where he was going with this topic.

Ezekiel laughed although it sounded like he was choking. Lana then noticed his hand raising weakly to beckon her to come closer to him. She hesitated for a moment, wondering if he was going to attack her when she had a guard down but he was weak and dying. His wounds were healing slowly and Lana was sure that no amount of healing would save him now. Lana made her way closer to Ezekiel, kneeling by his side. Once she was close enough, she let out a soft gasp when she noticed that he was crying.

“I loved your father.” He blurted, struggling to properly enunciate his words. “All my life I pushed the idea of perfection on him and when that idea started to sway—I turned my back on him.”

“...mhm.” Lana listened to him, even though he changed the topic she knew that this was more important for him to say right now. Was this his way of atoning for what he did to her parents? Lana could not help but to feel her chest tighten painfully.

“If only things...ended differently.” He uttered weakly as his eyes closed.

“Rest now, Ezekiel.”

She noticed a smile on his lips. “It’s funny, I thought you would be more hostile towards me. Is this...pity? Are you pitying me, Lana?”

Lana opened her mouth to reply but she then flinched when she heard rustling of the bushes around her. She got to her feet, wondering if it was a bear who approached them due to the scent of blood but the moment she saw grey fur and those blue eyes, she could not help but to feel extremely relieved.

Lana! River called out to her as he rushed towards her.

Lana went towards him as well, the thought of hugging his soft and warm fur gave her a sense of delight. But just as she could embrace him in his wolf form, River transformed into his human form and pulled her into a tight hug. She winched from the hug when she felt his arms around her ribs. He pulled away almost immediately as he hands went to face, scanning her for injuries.

“Are you...okay?” he asked her, eyes glistening as though he was about to cry at any moment.

“I’ll survive.” She smiled at him, relishing in the warmth that his skin emitted. “Um...you know I can see everything right?” she joked about his naked form.

River let out a sigh, amazed that Lana could be joking at a time like this. River then pulled her close, pressing his lips against her forehead as his hands gently wrapped around her body. “I’m glad...you’re okay.” He said, struggling to keep down a sob.

"I'm sorry for worrying you..." she said, her voice muffled from her face being pressed against his chest.

River wanted to reply to her but he then noticed Ezekiel laying there and pulled away from their hug. "Ezekiel..." he muttered under his breath. River turned his attention to Lana who had a relieved look on her face.

"Ah! Ezekiel...he is injured. We need to get him to a hospital or something." She told him as she pulled away from him to go back to Ezekiel's side. River stared at her for a moment, trying to understand why she was worried about the man who tried to kill her earlier. He wanted to ask her but decided to hold his tongue as he reached for her wrist before she got too far from him. He then gently pulled her back towards him. "River?" Lana called out, clearly confused.

"He...he's gone, Lana." He told her hesitantly. It was not hard to tell since River could not hear him breathing or see his chest moving. And the scent of blood and death lingered heavily around him.

"No, that's not possible. I was just talking to him earlier, like a second before you showed up." She said nervously, trying to get River to let go of her so she could go and check up on Ezekiel.

"Lana..." he cooed out softly before pulling her into a hug once more.

"No..." Lana felt strange. Her heart was aching, her body trembling. She soon found herself crying from her burning eyes. But why? Was she truly mourning over Ezekiel's death or was she relieved that this was finally over? Her parents' murderer is dead now and they could finally rest in peace so why did Lana feel like this. Her legs gave way as she felt herself falling but River's sturdy grip held her in place. He held her in his arms with her body trembling harshly as she cried and cried until fatigue finally caught up with her.