

Her Secret 103

CHAPTER 103 NO.103

Lana had never punched anyone before hence she was not expecting the pain that shot through her arm and knuckles the moment it made contact with Zane's face. she tried not to show how much she was hurting on her face, inwardly screaming until she felt River's hand reach out for hers. He ran his thumb gently over her reddened knuckles.

"Are you okay? Does it hurt?" he asked her.

Lana smiled, the pain she felt prior was already fading and she wanted to believe it was because of River comforting her. "I'm fine."

River nodded at her before he turned back to Zane who pushed himself up, patting his back to dust off his clothes.

"You have a lot of nerve to show your face back in this town. Railey." River threatened as he took a step forward but stopped moving when he felt Lana's taking hold of his sleeve.

"I came to talk to you, Lana."

"Talk? Hah!" River scoffed.

"This does not concern you." Zane growled at River who only held his intense glare.

"If you think for a second that I will let you get close to her again then you are clearly insane. Leave before I drag you back to Highcaster."

"Heh, why not let her decide things for herself and stop being so overbearing. It's honestly not a good look on you." Zane grimaced.

"Maybe if you get your head out of your ass then you would notice that Lana does not want to talk to you. Unless you want to get punched by her again, then by all means." River shrugged.

Zane rolled his eyes at River before turning his attention to Lana as their eyes made contact. "We need to talk." He repeated. "It's about the Highcaster pack." Lana stayed silent, watching him cautiously.

"Why would she care about your shitty pack?" River pressed.

"What about them?" Lana finally spoke, causing River to turn to her. "Did something happen to them?" she continued, feeling a strange feeling of fear and guilt creeping up on her the longer Zane did not answer her.

"You...even if you aren't a full werewolf, you must know the consequences of killing a pack leader,

right?" Zane asked her.

River frowned, realisation hitting him like a ton of bricks as he finally understood what Zane was trying to say. "She did not intentionally kill him!" he defended her.

"Intentionally or not, even I know that there are rules to these kinds of things."

"Shut up, Railey. What you're saying does not make any sense!"

"Let's stop bickering out in the open like this. Come in." Lana suddenly said as she walked back into the house, leaving the door open. "Hurry up." She added.

Zane walked past River, purposefully bumping his shoulder against his. River wanted to snap his neck there and then before following him from behind and shutting the door. Lana was nowhere to be seen as the two lingered around the entrance for a moment. She reappeared from the kitchen and tossed a bag of frozen peas to Zane who caught it easily.

"For your cheek. It's starting to look—terrible." She said with a hint of amusement in her voice. Zane heard River let out a low laugh before walking up to Lana. "So, continue from what you were saying from earlier." She told him as she sat down. River sat down next to her, taking hold of her hand.

"You shouldn't listen to whatever he has to say, Lana." He told her sincerely.

"Then, would you rather tell me instead? Since it seems like you know what he is trying to say." Lana snapped. River opened his mouth but closed it again, since he did not want to even believe Zane's train of thought.

Zane winced the moment he pressed the cold bag against his cheek. "I'll keep it short. The pack is in disarray ever since Ezekiel's passing. There is no leader to keep them in their place."

"Why not appoint a new leader? There must be a suitable alpha in that pack, right?" Lana questioned.

"It's not as easy as you would think. Appointing a new leader needs to be done unanimously." Zane answered. "I know this might not be my place to say this since I'm not even a werewolf. But I was raised with them and I don't want them to do something that would lead to their deaths."

"Get to the point." She said coldly.

"You have to take charge of the Highcaster pack...you have to become their pack leader."

"You have really gone insane, Railey." River hissed.

"You and I both know how these things work, River! She defeated the previous leader, hence she has the right to claim the position. If she doesn't then the Highcaster pack...my family will—I know I'm

asking too much from you after all the things that I did...that Ezekiel did to you and your family but the fault lies on you for killing Ezekiel.” He bluntly said.

River jumped up from his seat, readying to punch Zane again for even saying that to Lana especially since he knew how much she cried at the reality of her killing someone. He then felt hands wrapped around his waist, pulling him back.

“Calm down.” Lana told him firmly.

“But he—”

“He isn’t wrong. I did kill Ezekiel.”

“Because he was trying to kill you!” River justified.

“Don’t get me wrong, I do not blame you for what happened to Ezekiel.” He told her. After finding out that Ezekiel was dead by the others, Zane did not truly know how to react. He looked up to Ezekiel—he was his father figure, his role model in so many aspects but he was a severely flawed person, someone who lived in the past most of his time. He then looked up at Lana, meeting her eyes. “Either way, even as a hybrid you should follow the ways of the werewolves. Now that Ezekiel is dead, your duty as his successor is inevitable.” He warned her.

“The way you speak sounds like I do not have a choice regarding the situation.” Lana said.

“But of course, I cannot force you to do anything—”

River scoffed, remembering how Zane literally drugged and kidnapped Lana and here he was trying to pretend that he was caring and considerate of her.

Zane tried his hardest to ignore River’s attitude towards him. “Just know that packs without a leader are dangerous.” He told her. He then moved towards the coffee table, wanting to place the bag of peas on it before leaving.

“Keep it.” Lana said, causing him to freeze halfway. He then retracted his hand, pulling the bag of peas closer to him.

“Please consider what I’ve told you and I’m sorry for taking up your precious time.” He told them before turning to the door and leaving.

The moment Zane left, River quickly turned to Lana. She was deep in thought as he had expected. “You don’t have to do the things he said, Lana. It’s probably a trap he and the Highcaster pack are plotting against you for revenge or something.”

“So you’re saying that he is lying?”

River paused, whatever Zane had told Lana was the honest truth. Ever since Ezekiel died, River, Ray and the others had talks about the situation but they were all confident that the Highcaster pack would be able to find a replacement for Ezekiel. But now that Zane, who was in hiding for the longest time, dared to return to Rosecliff to tell them about the state of the Highcaster pack...it can't be a coincidence.

"Your silence is enough for me to understand how serious this is." Lana mumbled.

"You don't owe them anything."

"I know. But he is right about them being dangerous, right? If no leader is there to keep them in check, they might just go wild and hurt the townspeople or they might even come for the forest and hurt you or the others...I—"

River pulled her into a hug as she was slowly panicking from her overthinking. Her face was pressed against River's chest as she focused on the rhythmic sounds of his heartbeat. "Breathe." He whispered against her hair.

She did as he said, inhaling and exhaling to calm her heart but she could not stop thinking about what Zane had told her, about what Ezekiel had told her too. Ezekiel knew that this would happen since he wanted to tell her about this before he died but he never had the chance to convey his message. Lana silently wrapped her arms around River. "What should I do?" she asked, her voice muffled.

"For now, you should rest." He told her.

Lana pulled away and frowned at him. "After getting told that I need to be the pack leader to your rival pack? Rest is not on my list of things to do right now." She huffed.

"Then...we should confide in Ray and the others." He told her. "Would that make you feel better?"

"Mhm," she hummed before shoving her face against his chest again. Her sudden actions made River jolt from shock before he started patting her hair.

It was one thing after another, he thought. He was convinced for a short moment earlier that he could finally have a peaceful time with Lana after everything that had happened to them in the course of a few days but now—things were only getting more complicated due to how the rules in the werewolf society worked. Could Lana even be a proper pack leader for that band of lost and angry werewolves? Would they listen to someone who was just a werewolves by blood, who couldn't even transform? Deep down, even though River knew she had potential to become a strong alpha, what she needed the most was time and it seemed that time was never on Lana Danley's side.

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"Well, I would say that I'm shocked to hear this but I'm not since we literally talked about the potential

of this happening.” Avery stated nonchalantly as she lazily twirled a strand of hair between her fingers.

“If we think about it logically, Lana did not technically kill Ezekiel. The fall from the cliff caused his injuries, not Lana.” Ray debated.

“But ultimately, Lana was the one who pulled him off the cliff which led to him being injured which led to his death.” Maddison countered.

Lana sat there in silence as the others continued their conversation that was not going anywhere. All she kept hearing was the constant reminder that she did kill someone and she was not sure if her consciousness could handle that right now. Even if it was in self-defence, deep down Lana felt like the anger that she tried so hard to push aside after finding out the truth behind her parents deaths played a part in her decisions that night.

A squeeze of her hand caused her to break free from her thoughts as she turned to River who looked down at her with a concerned look.

“What’s wrong?” she asked him.

“I asked you, what do you think about the situation?” Avery’s voice called out, causing Lana to turn to the blonde. “But it seems like your mind is elsewhere?”

“No...I’m thinking about the same thing all of you are.” She sighed.

“If we look at the situation as a way to end the territorial disputes then Lana becoming the Highcaster pack leader would be beneficial to both packs.” Luis chimed in, bringing his rationality to centre stage.

“But there’s no saying that they would listen to her.” Maddison argued. “Let’s look at this in a hypothetical sense where Lana does agree to become the pack leader, it only takes one alpha to challenge her and since she can’t transform into a werewolf then she’s basically going to die.” Maddison quickly turned to Lana. “No offence.”

“...none taken.” Lana muttered as she completely agreed with Maddison’s take on the situation.

“Werewolf politics sure are as confusing as human politics.” Avery muttered, flipping her hair away as she sighed.

There was then a silence that followed as everyone in the station was deep in thought. Lana was truly in a predicament as so far all she had learned from the other’s opinions was that if she agreed to become pack leader, there is a possibility of her dying in the hands of her own pack members. But if she disagreed then there will be a possibility that the pack might run amok and create chaos which could still lead to Lana and her loved ones being in danger.

With a heavy sigh, Lana stood up which made River stand up automatically as well. “There’s no point in

me sitting here thinking about the 'what if's'." she announced.

"What's your plan then?" Maddison raised an eyebrow.

"I guess I'll just go to Highcaster and meet the pack." Lana smiled but slowly regretted her words as she saw the faces of the people around her drop.