

Her Secret 104

CHAPTER 104 NO.104

The passing cold night's air sent a harsh shiver down Lana's spine, the hairs of her back sticking up as she shoved her hands into her jacket pockets. The harsh breeze shook the trees wildly, causing stray leaves to fall down in a rather magical sight. Rustling of leaves and bushes nearby could be heard but Lana remained calm as she recognized the footsteps that were approaching her. She turned her attention to the wolf, admiring its dazzling grey coat and icy blue eyes that stayed locked on Lana's.

They'll be here soon. He told her.

Lana smiled and nodded until she noticed two more wolves pop out from behind the bushes. Avery and Luis lingered behind, their gazes turning to River before they exchanged glances. Lana then noticed why they were looking at as her eyes fell on it almost instantly. River's tail was wagging from side to side, similar to how a dog's tail swayed when they were excited. Lana found how River was acting to be rather adorable, she then felt him bump his nose against Lana's hand, prompting her to run her fingers through his soft fur. His tail then wagged more intensely than before.

Ugh, get a room you two! Avery exclaimed, which yearned a chuckle from Luis.

River turned around to glare at the two. Didn't I tell you to regroup with the others? He growled.

And miss the opportunity to see a domesticated River? Avery snickered.

Shut up!

Lana unconsciously patted River by his neck, causing him to immediately turn his attention to her. "The three of you should leave, I feel like they might get defensive if they see you around here." She told them.

We're not going to leave you alone with them. There's about 30 of them in total and there's no telling that every single one of them came. Luis told her.

"Either way, I do not think they will accept my invitation to meet them only for them to attack me here in the forest." She said.

You'll never know with these leaderless werewolves. Avery added.

"I won't deny that having you three around might make me feel less nervous about this, but I do want to talk to them without them being on guard." She said firmly.

After all, it took a long and hard time to even set this meeting up. After Lana decided that she wanted to meet the Highcaster pack before making up her mind about what to do, River and the others were against it as they did not want Lana to go into Highcaster territory. She then contacted Zane to find out

if the pack was willing to come into the forest to meet her but that was its own issue as they did not want to be in Rosecliff territory.

Both of the packs were putting their guard up against each other, since they were rival packs for the longest time. But now, Lana felt like she would be able to change that fact entirely—but that would only become reality if the Highcaster pack accepted her as their pack leader, if they didn't then—things might get ugly.

Alright, we shall retreat back to where Maddison and the others are. River told Lana after a beat.

“Thank you.” She said, scratching him lightly at the back of his ear.

If we sense that you are in trouble, we won't hesitate to come out of hiding to protect you. He told her firmly.

“I understand.”

They're here, we should leave. Luis told them, sensing their approaching footsteps.

Luis and Avery rushed ahead, disappearing behind the thick bushes and tall trees whereas River lingered behind.

“Are you worried?” Lana asked him. Even in his werewolf form, she could tell that he was deeply frowning at her silly question.

Are you sure about this, Lana...?

“Isn't it too late to back down now?”

If this is truly a trap...if they came here just to hurt you then I—

“Let's not think about that right now, okay?” she cooed before leaning to kiss him on the top of his head. “Go on now, I'll see you in a bit.” She reassured him. River backed away from her touch, his gaze lingering on her before he finally ran in the direction of where Luis and Avery disappeared too.

Lana took in a deep breath, praying that for once her instincts won't fail her this time. She wasn't sure if this would work, if she would successfully win over the Highcaster pack's hearts and minds when she was merely a wolf by blood and nothing else. According to the werewolves' law and tradition, she was the next best thing to their pack leader since they could not unanimously agree on a new one. And yet, the Highcaster pack betrayed her once—what's to stop them from betraying her again?

She straightened her posture when she spotted the first werewolf and in a blink of an eye she was surrounded by unfamiliar werewolves. They looked anxious, Lana could tell by the way they carried themselves, their ears pulled back, head lowered and eyes glancing around the vicinity. After a moment,

a large dark wolf appeared with Zane riding behind its back.

Zane hopped down and greeted Lana with a smile. She forced herself to smile back even though now whenever she saw Zane, her first instinct was to punch him.

“T-Thanks for agreeing to meet with me.” She spoke up, daring to look around the different faces that surrounded her. “You can be at ease, I did not invite you to be ambushed by the Rosecliff pack.” She reassured them. Lana watched as some of them eased their anxiety while others still had their guard up.

Well, what is it that you have to tell us, hybrid? She heard one of them ask her.

“Maybe for starters, don’t call me that? I have a name.” Lana stated in a steady voice. The werewolf who spoke earlier lowered his head. Lana wondered if they were actually nervous at meeting her compared to being ambushed by the Rosecliff pack. She was technically their pack leader and the leaders often had authority over the others. She has seen it in Griffin, in River and even in Ezekiel, at how to command their packs.

Apologies, he is young and foolish. Do not punish him for his mistake. Another told Lana, his voice in her mind was deep and mature.

“I’m not here to punish anyone. I understand that all of you were loyal to Ezekiel because he took you in...protected all of you and I also understand if some of you hate me for taking him away from you.” She muttered.

That’s where you are wrong. We do not hate you for what happened to Ezekiel. One way or another we all knew that his plans—his ideas were going to get him killed. He was not a just leader as he was willing to sacrifice us all for his own benefit. The same voice told her.

She then finally spotted who was talking to her, a medium sized wolf with caramel brown fur. “If you were aware of that, why did you still stay loyal to him?”

Maybe it’s because you aren’t a full werewolf so you won’t understand it but he created a pack for us misfits and for that we naturally had to do everything to repay him. One said, Lana recognized this werewolf, he was one of the werewolves who attacked Luis that one time when some Highcaster wolves trespassed into Rosecliff territory.

Lana smiled, she silently agreed with him that she could never fully understand how these werewolves thought about certain issues and that only meant that she had a lot more to learn. “Even if I’m not a full werewolf, I understand how it must hurt to not know where you belong. I know that if I agree to become your pack leader, some of you won’t like that. So I have a proposition for all of you.” She said, eyes lingering on Zane.

“What do you have in mind?” Zane asked.

“Come and join the Rosecliff pack. All these while you were being dragged around by Ezekiel because he wanted to take control of this forest for his own personal agendas but now that he is gone, you don’t have to follow in his footsteps. This can be a new beginning for all of you, you can finally—come home to this forest again. I know that this might not be what some of you want but I cannot become your pack leader and I don’t want you to be leaderless and get in trouble. All of you deserve a second chance.” She told them.

She felt out of breath, noticing how she did not pause for a breather throughout the entire thing. There was pure silence that followed and Lana was immediately disheartened. Was Ezekiel’s influence over them that strong that they were willing to continue his fight even when he was dead? Would they risk their lives just for the sake of loyalty? She then wondered if she should have just declared to be their pack leader only to force them to join the Rosecliff pack.

And what of the Rosecliff pack? Are they willing to accept us even though we were rivals for the longest time? The brown wolf asked.

“Of course they are.” Lana agreed.

How can you be so sure? You are not even a part of their pack. A new voice asked.

Isn’t it obvious? She’s the Rosecliff pack leader’s mate. The black wolf beside Zane spoke.

“...is that a problem?” she asked.

No. we don’t really care what you do. Humans and werewolves have been becoming mates for quite some time now. Although, you are the first hybrid we have met. The black wolf said.

“So...do you accept the proposition?”

Why would you do this? Do you not hate us for working for the man who killed your parents? Who tried to kill you? Another asked.

“As I said, I believe everyone deserves a second chance.” She then looked at Zane and sighed. “...Well, maybe not everyone.” She muttered, causing Zane to let out a defeated sigh.

Can we have time to discuss this among each other? The brown wolf asked.

“Of course.” She nodded. She then let out a gasp as he transformed into his human form to talk to Zane. Lana quickly turned her back to them. The man was rather fetching in his human form and she could not help but to blush at the fact that she saw his—her thoughts were interrupted when she felt a chilling gaze on her. she looked ahead only to find familiar icy blue eyes glaring at her.

Lana glanced behind, noticing how the Highcaster wolves were still deep in conversation. She then slowly made her way to her wolf, who was clearly mad at her. “What’s wrong...?”

Did you really blush after seeing another man's naked body? He huffed.

"I was surprised, that's all." She countered. River then transformed into his human form and Lana, almost by instincts now, looked away.

"Why are you looking away?" he frowned.

"Why are you flashing me?!" she panicked.

River then took hold of her hand and squeezed it. "I'm disappointed that you'd even look at other naked men, Lana."

"I wasn't doing it on purpose!" Lana scolded as she turned to River. She then noticed his smug smile. "Were you seriously teasing me...at a time like this?" she complained.

River then pulled her close, hand going to her head as he brushed his fingers through her hair. "You seemed nervous, I was just trying to calm you down."

"By pretending to be possessive?" she raised an eyebrow at him as she relaxed her head against his hold.

"What do you mean, pretending?" he asked her with an innocent smile. His eyes then shot up to where the Highcaster wolves were and backed away from Lana. He transformed back into his werewolf form.

I think they made their decision, go on ahead. He told her before walking deeper into the forest.

Lana took in a deep breath once more, still able to feel the warmth of River's hands against her skin as she made her way back to the others. They turned to her when she re-emerged from behind the bushes. She was glad that everyone was in their werewolf forms once again.

"Where did you go?" Zane asked.

"Um..."

You don't have to hide it, we know that Rosecliff's pack leader and some others are here in the forest with you. The brown wolf said.

"They are only here as a precaution." She added.

We know.

"Have you decided?"

“They agree to your terms, about joining the Rosecliff pack.” Zane told her.

“That’s great—” Lana wanted to celebrate, she was about to toss aside all the worries that were piling up over her shoulders.

“But.” Zane interjected. “They do not want to pledge their loyalty to River.”

“Then...all of you will still be leaderless. The reason for you to join River’s pack is so you’ll have a place to call your own, right? I don’t think the Rosecliff pack will agree to your terms—”

We want to pledge our loyalty to you, Lana Danley.