

Her Secret 22

CHAPTER 22 NO.22

It was clear to Lana that both Suzie and Steven shared a rather weird hobby of gossiping and allowing their imaginations to run extremely wild but this was taking it too far even by their standards. Although they never openly spread rumours around like other people did, their ability to come to absurd conclusions often made Lana question their sanity.

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Carmen sighed. "This was why I told you to keep it to yourself. You and Steven seriously need to stop binging those shitty romance novels. It's clearly corrupting your minds." she scolded.

"Hey! They are not that shitty!" Suzie frowned.

Of course. Lana thought. The culprit was none other than cheesy and unrealistic romance novels that were slowly brainwashing them. At first, she thought it was cute that Suzie and Steven would read books together and talk about them passionately. It was as though they had their own little book club. But, now that she could see how those books were starting to influence them, blurring the lines of reality and fiction indefinitely. All Lana could do now was sigh in defeat. Leave it to the couple to over exaggerate everything.

Lana felt that the longer she stayed here listening to them talk about this, the more agitated she was going to get. She was already having a bad start of the day and would rather avoid making it worse for herself. She then stood up, causing the both of them to turn to her.

"I'm going to the restroom." She announced weakly. She walked away before they could say anything.

She wandered around the mall as she tried to look for the furthest restroom from where Carmen and Suzie were just so she could catch a breather and do some window shopping without them putting weird scenarios in her mind. But, it took Lana a long while to even notice that she left her phone at the restaurant. She sighed and decided not to go back for it.

She looked around the place, trying to pinpoint where she was. Her gaze then fell on a familiar mop of black hair. She cringed, wanting to walk in the opposite direction to avoid even looking at him, more so bumping into him. But curiosity, as always, got the better of her and her gaze wandered over to the person standing beside him.

The person was tall with long and wavy blonde hair. Her skin was tanned and had a healthy glow to it. She was beautiful, Lana thought, just like a model she often saw on magazines and billboards. Watching her and River stand side by side made her realize that they were a gorgeous couple. Perfect in every way, and it made Lana rather insecure with her own image.

Lana did not get the chance to ponder any longer as she stilled when her eyes met River's. She quickly turned the corner only to bump harshly into someone. "S-Sorry!" she said in a hurry, looking down at the tiled floors as she tried to sidestep away from the person she bumped into.

She felt the person's hand gently grabbed onto her wrist, causing her to look up from shock. "Lana?" he called, his hazel eyes sparkled like freshly polished gold with a galaxy of greens swirling around his pupils. It was enchanting, bewitching her even as she found it hard to look away from his alluring gaze. Lana was tongue-tied. Not only was she standing extremely close to Zane but she could feel the warmth emitted from his body through the palm of his hand.

"Z-Zane..." She forced herself to speak, looking away from him when she realized that she had been staring into his eyes for a long moment.

Zane chuckled at her strange reaction but his interest went to the sunglasses she was wearing. "Is this some kind of new fashion trend? To wear sunglasses indoors?" Zane teased as he let go of her wrist to playfully tug at the corner of her sunglasses.

Lana laughed awkwardly as her hands went to adjust the sunglasses on her face, not wanting to show Zane the terrible eye bags that tainted her face. "S-Something like that." She mumbled bashfully, not daring to look at Zane's face anymore.

"What brings you here today? Are you alone?" he questioned happily.

Lana shook her head. "I came with Carmen and Suzie..."

"Oh? Where are they?" Zane asked as he looked around.

For some reason, Lana was afraid that Zane might spot River if he kept looking. She did not know why that would've been an issue but at that moment, Lana pushed herself forward, particularly hugging Zane as he took a couple steps back from the impact. His hands went to Lana's waist as he steadied her.

"I'm sorry!" Lana cried, feeling her face heat up as she tried to pull herself away from him. Zane's grip around her did not loosen.

"Hey, are you alright? Do you feel sick or something?" Zane asked, his warm breath tickled her cheek. Lana felt herself melt just from how deep Zane's voice sounded by her ear. She knew that she would go crazy if she remained in this position, so she pushed herself away from Zane. Once they parted, she immediately missed his warmth around her body.

"I'm fine...I just felt dizzy for a moment." She lied, as she steadied her posture.

Zane studied her expression, causing Lana to look everywhere around the vicinity but refused to look forward to meet his gaze. She was certain he would be able to call her bluff if their eyes met, even if she

was wearing sunglasses. She unconsciously took a step away from him, afraid that he would be able to hear her heart threatening to escape her chest.

“Is there anything I can do to help?” he asked, genuine concern reflected behind his eyes.

“N-No! I’m fine! Really! I’ll just head back to where Carmen and Suzie are...sorry for all that...” she mumbled as she gave him a weak wave. She turned her body away from him but felt a tug against her sleeve.

Zane slowly let go of her sleeve and gave her a pleading expression. “At least let me walk with you back to them. I’m worried about you.” He said followed by a charming smile.

Lana gripped her thigh painfully, hoping that if this was a dream she would really appreciate waking up right now before her heart failed her. She was truly baffled by how surreal Zane Railey felt to her. He is beautiful, he is kind, he is everything Lana ever wanted in a partner and yet all she could do was bury her emotions deep within her as she was certain that he would never, never in a million years, feel the same for her.

He is nice to everyone. Lana reminded herself. He would look at anyone with those caring and concerned eyes if they were in trouble. Lana was not special. She repeated in her mind over and over again to pull herself back to reality.

“I wouldn’t want to bother you...” Lana finally replied.

“Hey, you’re not a bother at all! We’re friends aren’t we? Besides, I only came to the mall to run a few errands. I’m done now anyway.” He smiled as he patted Lana on the shoulder, his hand lingered on her shoulder for a moment. “So, let me spend some time with you?” he asked for permission.

Lana was starting to get overwhelmed by the butterflies fluttering in her stomach just from his subtle touch. “Are you sure?” she asked meekly, actually feeling faint now as she tried her hardest to calm herself.

“100%!” he beamed as he dropped his hand from her shoulder. “Lead the way.”

The heat and sensation his touch emitted remained on Lana’s shoulder for a long time, it was a small gesture yet she could not stop thinking about it. She pulled herself together and finally nodded in response to his offer.

She then walked ahead with Zane following beside her. He made small talk with her, talking about school and the upcoming founder’s day. Lana smiled and listened but she did not dare to speak as her mind was screaming at her and her heart was painfully beating by the mere fact that he was beside her, close enough to touch. But Lana would not dare to reach out.

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River was not going crazy, he was certain that he saw Lana. Their eyes met even though she was wearing sunglasses but she disappeared almost instantly. He frowned as he walked ahead mindlessly, hoping to spot her for some strange reason. He could not pinpoint whether or not he had an urge to solve this curious case of the disappearing Lana or if he just had a strange urge to see her. He tried to focus on her smell, but Avery's scent was masking it by how close she stood.

"River?" Avery called out, wondering what caught his attention.

River stopped in his tracks when he saw Lana. He frowned, watching as she was pressed against Zane. A part of him wanted to walk away and mind his own business but another part of him, the irrational part wanted to approach them and interrupt whatever they were doing. From where River was standing, they looked like a couple in their own little bubble. His hands clenched into a fist as he tried to get rid of that thought. He still could not understand why he felt this way whenever he saw Lana being all shy and timid around Zane.

He felt a tap on his shoulder and this broke whatever trance he was in. He forced himself to turn to the girl who was standing beside him. "Sorry..." he muttered.

Avery raised an eyebrow, confused as she has never seen River act this way before. She looked towards the direction he was looking at before and her eyes fell on a girl wearing sunglasses talking to a tall man with golden brown locks. Something about that girl piqued Avery's interest. She had a rather particular scent that she could smell even though she was a distance away from her.

"That girl..." she started. Her words were interrupted when River took hold of her wrist, pulling her attention away from the two to look at him.

"Let's go." River huffed, dragging Avery away towards the opposite direction of where they intended to go.

"A friend of yours?" Avery asked as her eyes fell on where River's hand held her wrist. Almost as though he finally realized what he was doing, River pulled away his hand, causing Avery to drop it to her side.

"No. Not at all." he replied instantly.

Avery smiled. "Sounds like you know her though? Or more like...trying to avoid her?"

"I don't know what you are talking about," he sighed.

Avery shrugged as she quietly followed him from behind. She knew that even if she pushed River about this topic, he would keep avoiding answering her. Typical River. But she couldn't help herself as she glanced over to the girl once again. A small smile played on Avery's lips as she tried to memorize the girl's face and especially her scent.

