

Her Secret 27

CHAPTER 27

The days of preparing for the founder's day celebration passed by in a blink of an eye and soon it was the morning of the first day of Rosecliff's Founder's Day. Lana woke up early in the morning to get ready, not wanting to be tardy on the first day. She dressed in a casual outfit that she would be comfortable wearing for the entire day. She wore a simple black t-shirt and dark jeans paired with her favourite sneakers. She decided to tie her hair up in a ponytail and finished her look with a white Rosecliff cap she got when she was in middle school.

After checking the mirror if her simple makeup look was alright, she grabbed her bag pack which was filled with essential items such as a water bottle, some penicillin and some light snacks and headed downstairs. She went to the kitchen to grab some fruit for her breakfast. Ray was already awake and dressed in his rangers uniform. He leaned against the counter as he sipped his morning coffee and his eyes lazily skim-through the newspaper that was in his free hand. His attention went to Lana when she walked in. There was a heavy silence that followed.

Ever since that particular day, Lana and Ray never really talked to each other aside from the casual greetings and Lana informing him about important matters such as how she was getting to school or getting to her part-time job. It was either she carpoled with Carmen or took the public transport.

Ray on the other hand, always seemed like he wanted to approach Lana ever since that day but never knew how too especially since Lana was making it clear that she was avoiding him. He does not blame her for doing so. He wanted to give her all the time she needed to process the situation but on some days, he just wanted everything to go back to normal.

"...Good morning," she heard him softly greet as she was deciding which fruit she wanted to take from the bowl. She decided on a red apple and turned to face him.

"Good morning." She said with a small smile. "Happy Founder's Day."

Ray let out a small laugh. "Happy Founder's Day to you too. Do you need a ride to the town square?" he offered.

Lana's plan was to take the bus there since Carmen and Suzie had to be there earlier then she had to. Lana pondered for a moment, knowing that some part of her wanted to fix things with Ray. She was fully aware that her behaviour was childish but at that time she just wanted to comprehend all the overwhelming information that was shoved into her face. But now, all the anger and the disappointment she had towards Ray for keeping such a secret from her had died down.

She nodded. "Sure." She said as she slowly munched on her apple.

"What team are you on? I'm guessing since you aren't in your ranger's uniform that you must be

assigned somewhere else?" he asked, wanting to make conversation with her after days of silence.

"I got ticket booth duty. But I'll still be helping you guys in the treasure hunt today after my shift. That's what Mrs. Hathaway told us, after all."

Ray nodded as he set the newspaper aside. "That's great...I'm glad..." his words trailed off.

"Ray? What's wrong?"

"Ah no, it's nothing...well I was just afraid that you still hate me for everything...Lana I'm really sorry about—"

"No. Please don't apologize. I'm sorry for being such a jerk towards you." She interrupted as she went towards him. "I just needed some time to take everything in and I shouldn't have treated you like how I did. So, please forgive me." She muttered as she leaned towards him, wrapped her arms around his waist and hugged him.

Ray was silent for a moment, surprised by Lana's sudden declaration. He then placed the cup in his hand on the counter and wrapped his hands around Lana. He was never a person who enjoyed physical touch like this but today, with Lana's in his arms, he felt as though he never wanted to let her go. He loves her, even if she was not his flesh and blood, there was never a day that went by without him adoring her like she was his own.

"I love you, Lana." He whispered.

Lana laughed against his chest and squeezed him tighter. "Hey, that's my line." She said, her voice muffled. "I love you more, Ray." She added.

Ray laughed at the girl's remark. He then closed his eyes to prevent tears from escaping. The burden of being hated by someone he would do anything for has finally lifted and he felt a wave of relief washing over him. At that moment Ray thought, if only he could freeze time, he would want this moment to last forever. No worries, no burdens, just him and Lana in their own bubble.

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"You and River...?" Ray asked hesitantly after Lana told him that she had to work with River at the ticket booth. A part of him was worried that her alpha scent might cause River to do something rash but the other part of him wanted to believe that River was capable enough to suppress those urges like he did for a whole 10 years.

"Hah, yeah, sadly." She muttered in response.

Ray silently drove ahead as they made their way to the town square. "...do you not like him?" he dared to ask after he noticed how annoyed she looked when she mentioned his name.

Lana shifted in her seat, tugging against the seatbelt that was pressed against her chest slightly. "It's not that I hate him...I just can't stand him. Like I don't get why he can't just be nicer to me? I understand that my smell annoys him or whatever but still..." she complained.

Ray let out a chuckle. "Are you nice to him?" he questioned.

Lana frowned. "What does that mean?" she asked him. She was offended that Ray would even think of blaming her over her relationship with River. She only treated him the same way he treated her so why should she be nice to him when River is anything but nice to her.

"Hey now, don't get upset with me. I'm just saying that maybe you should just ignore him when he is giving you attitude. If you respond with hostility then no wonder you two are always fighting like cats and dogs."

"You make it sound like we are children fighting in the playground or something." She sighed.

"It does sound like that to me." he bluntly replied.

Lana groaned aloud. "Fine! I'll be nicer to him." She proclaimed.

"Kill them with kindness, right?" Ray smirked.

Lana rolled her eyes. "I'd rather just kill him," she mumbled.

Ray let out a nervous laughter, unsure if Lana was joking or completely serious.

He pulled over a few blocks away from the town square. There were already a bunch of cars parked around it and people making their way to their designated booth and stalls. Lana unfastened her seatbelt and leaned towards Ray to give him a quick kiss on the cheek.

"I'll see you later," she said.

Ray smiled. "Bye, have fun with your booth duties with River."

Lana groaned again at the mention of his name. She got out of the car, waved at Ray before she walked off towards the square. Ray watched over Lana until she disappeared from his view. He silently prayed that nothing bad would happen to her today especially since she was clearly agitated already at the sheer thought of spending time with River.

As Lana made her way to where the ticket booth was, she checked her phone for the time. She was 20 minutes early, since she had to be there by 7:30am to set up for the morning crowd. A sudden presence behind her made her turn around, it was River.

He wore a plain navy shirt and dark jeans with a black sling bag across his shoulder. But what caught Lana's attention was that he too was wearing the same white Rosecliff cap on his head. Lana made a face when their eyes met. She fully turned around and smiled at him.

"Good morning. Happy Founder's Day!" she greeted him with forced enthusiasm.

River frowned. "Right..." he said as he walked ahead.

Lana's face dropped immediately. It was so early in the morning and he was already being a jerk. She continued walking a few steps behind River, not really keen at the idea of walking beside him.

"Lana!!" A voice suddenly called out. Lana turned to the direction of the voice and spotted her friends waving at her. Suzie, Carmen and Luis were all together in matching black t-shirts and dark pants. Luis smiled and waved at River as they approached the duo.

"Morning!!" Suzie excitedly greeted the two. Lana greeted her friends back.

"Are you a part of the haunted house team too, Luis?" she asked him.

Luis nodded. "Yup. We're heading over to do our makeup." He bashfully replied.

"Makeup?"

"We get to be the monsters in the haunted house!" Carmen said.

"Not me though," Suzie pouted. "I have ticket duties."

"We're on the same boat then," Lana said in an attempt to comfort Suzie who was clearly upset she did not have the chance to scare random visitors like the others did.

From the corner of Lana's eyes she spotted Zane making his way towards the group. He smiled brightly and waved at Lana when their eyes met. Lana straightened her posture and meekly waved back. River noticed her sudden change and frowned.

"I was wondering why you guys were grouping up over here." Zane said. "Mornin', Lana. River." He greeted the two, his eyes flickered at the tops of their heads when he noticed they were wearing matching caps. Zane's hand itched at his side, the thought of removing Lana's hat came to his mind in a sudden flash. He smiled to make sure his expression was calm and collected as he silently wondered why he would even think of doing that.

"H-Hi Zane..." Lana muttered. His full attention went back to her.

River gave Zane a crude nod and looked away. Luis and Carmen then excused themselves and walked away to get into the costume and makeup. Suzie lingered around to tell Lana and River to come to the

haunted house if they have time. She then jogged ahead to catch up with the others. There was an awkward silence that followed when Lana was left alone with both River and Zane.

"A-Are you going to be in costume too, Zane?" she asked.

"Yes! I'll be playing a zombie." He happily announced.

"That's so cool!" she exclaimed.

"Hah. How is that cool?" River interjected suddenly. "But I suppose playing the role of a mindless creature suits you, Railey." He sneered.

Lana gaped from shock at River's unexpected insult. Before she could say anything, Zane laughed. "I admire that you can openly be this honest with me, River." He smiled.

River smiled back, clearly trying his best to hide his annoyance. "I'm only stating facts."

"I appreciate that." He replied. He then turned his attention back to Lana. "I hope you'll be able to drop by the haunted house when you're free, Lana."

"I would love to! Although, I admit that I get jumpy very easily." She said bashfully.

"Then, I'll make sure not to scare you too much." He beamed.

River sighed aloud as his hand went to grab Lana's bag. He then tugged her towards him, causing her to stumble to his side. "We should get going now." He told Zane as he dragged Lana away.

She allowed herself to be dragged by River since she did not want to show her raging side to Zane. She turned back to look at the confused Zane and waved at him. "I'll see you around!" she called out before pushing River's hand away and straightening her posture. Once they were further away from Zane, Lana was ready to scold River for being a rude asshole and also for manhandling her yet again.

"What the fuck..." her words completely vanished from her thoughts when she looked at him and noticed how River was staring ahead with a furious glare.