

Her Secret 34

CHAPTER 34 NO.34

The moment River and Lana arrived back at the station, the rain started to fall in a light drizzle. A second later, thunder boomed from the distance and was quickly approaching their area, the rain fell down against the roof harshly. Everyone, rangers and volunteers alike were cramped inside the station as they waited for Ray to announce his decision regarding the event tomorrow.

Lana leaned her head against the pillar as she watched Ray make his way to the centre of the room. Soft hushes were passed around the room until everyone's attention was solely on Ray. He cleared his throat and scanned the documents in his hands.

"Due to the rain, we will be postponing tomorrow's scheduled hunt to a later time, probably around the afternoon. The ground will be soft and unsteady because of the rain so we want to avoid any accidents that could possibly happen. Other than that, we will also be downsizing the hunt zone so it will be in a controlled environment." He took a deep breath. "Are there any questions?" he asked, looking around the room.

Murmurs filled the room in an instant and people looked around and shook their heads. Ray then dismissed the group and one by one they left the station. Some were well prepared and brought umbrellas with them while others just ran towards their cars, getting drenched in the process. Lana then noticed Ray beckoning to her and River who was standing at the other side of the room. They approached him without even sparing a glance at each other.

"What's up, Ray?" Lana asked.

"Since we'll be downsizing the zone, we won't need the extra hands to help out. So, the two of you don't have to help out tomorrow. Could you inform Maddison and Steven that they don't have to help in the morning as well?"

"Okay," Lana said as she pulled out her phone to text Steven.

"Understood." River nodded as he followed Lana's lead and quickly sent a text to Maddison.

"But if you guys have time to kill, I hope you will participate in the treasure hunt tomorrow. It's a good team building exercise." Ray smiled as he patted both River and Lana's shoulder. Lana almost dropped her phone from Ray's sudden action. She and River exchanged quick glances before averting their gazes away. Ray noticed the sudden tension in the atmosphere and quickly cleared his throat. "Not together of course! Come separately or...not..." he blurted nervously.

"Right..." the two muttered simultaneously.

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The rain continued pouring heavily that night even after Lana and Ray reached home. Lana's body was getting heavier by the second and all she wanted to do was crawl into her bed and allow her fatigue to consume her. At least she found some solace at the fact that she did not have to spend the entire day tomorrow with River like she did today. Since she would be free after ticket booth duties, she started to think about what she could do to kill time tomorrow.

She could go around and have fun at the festival by herself but there are only so few things that she could do alone, not that she minded. She often found a certain form of solace whenever she could do things by herself. But a festival was something she wanted to enjoy and make fun memories with her friends.

She remembered that Carmen and Suzie also had a half day tomorrow and decided to text them and ask them about their plans tomorrow. But as Lana laid on bed freshly out of the shower, she found it hard for her eyes to concentrate on the text message she was writing in the group. The sound of the pitter pattering rain echoed through her room like a hypnotic rhythm, the distant sound of rumbling thunder soothed her mind and soon Lana fell into a deep slumber.

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The blaring sound from her alarm clock caused Lana to jolt awake in a sudden fright. She fumbled blindly to stop the annoying sound, knocking down a few items that were on her bed side table. She let out a groan at the idea of cleaning up the mess later. Once she finally stopped the clock, she checked her phone. Her eyes widened when she noticed that it was already 7am and that she was going to be late if she did not get ready at that instant. She jumped out of bed, fumbling around to avoid stepping on anything that clattered her floor and rushed to the bathroom.

After getting out of her shower, she quickly put on a similar outfit as yesterday but this time she wore a deep forest green shirt. She left her cap on her bed, completely forgetting about it until she was halfway down the stairs with her bag unzipped and her hair dishevelled.

Ray was at the door when Lana came down. He gaped at her appearance but held his tongue when he saw Lana's glare, as warning to not say anything to her.

"G-Good morning..." he said hesitantly.

"Is it really a good morning?" she called out sarcastically as she tossed her bag to the couch, a few items falling out. She groaned as she realized that it was her own carelessness that kept leading her to become increasingly irritated with the things that were happening. She decided to deal with her bag later as she dug through the drawers to locate where she placed her spare hair ties. "I feel that it's a bit of a shitty morning," she grumbled, more to herself than to Ray.

"You must've been really tired last night to oversleep, huh? I hardly ever see you do that, even when you were a kid." Ray pointed out as he helped her with her search, although he was not quite sure what he was looking for. "Oh by the way, there's someone at the door for you." He added casually.

“Who?” she asked absent-mindedly as she finally found the hair ties she was looking for, holding it up in front of her like a well-deserved trophy.

“Hmm...what was his name again? Hmmm Ryland?” Ray thought about it long and hard. Lana paused what she was doing to recall if she even knew any Ryland. She knew for a fact that there was no one by that name in her grade.

After a moment, she shook her head. “I don’t know any Ryland. Are you sure it’s not someone trying to sell us something?” she said to Ray as she smoothed down her hair as her fingers masterfully braided it to the side.

“Oh wait, curse my forgetful mind! It’s not Ryland.” Ray said with a soft tap on his own forehead. “It’s Railey! Zane Railey!”

The hair tie in Lana’s hand snapped, sending the elastic to hit Ray’s on the chest. He watched Lana freeze, as though the mention of that name alone was enough to stop her from functioning.

“...Lana?” Ray called out, a hint of worry in his voice as he picked up the forgotten band on the floor.

“What did you just say...?” she asked him, enunciating her words slowly. She wanted to believe that she misheard what Ray said earlier.

“...Zane Railey is at the door for you.” He repeated carefully, as though he was dealing with a wild animal that was about to launch at him if he made the wrong move or in this case, said the wrong words. He watched in silence when Lana shuffled her way to the door quietly and looked out the peephole. She then quickly turned back to Ray with a rather comical expression on her face.

She could not decide whether to be happy to see Zane standing there or freak out at the fact that she was not presentable at all. And the time was ticking down, if she was late for booth duty she knew that not only will Mrs. Hathaway give her an earful, she would have to deal with River’s snarky ass as well.

“Stall him.” She blurted to Ray in a low whisper, afraid that Zane could hear her from the other side of the door.

“What?” Ray called out, clearly confused.

“Please just stall him while I get ready! Take to him about...something!” Lana begged as she rushed back upstairs, tripping over herself a few times in her haste. She knew that she seriously had to deal with her hair situation.

Ray sighed at the situation he was forced into but silently he did not mind helping Lana out. He opened the door, where the boy was staring absent-mindedly at the sky. When he closed the door behind him Zane turned to the older man.

“Hello Zane.” He greeted.

“Hi, Mr. O’Kane...?” Zane said hesitantly, feeling as though this literally just happened when Ray answered the door the first time. Even though Zane was pretty sure Ray did not remember his name the first time around.

“Lana’s still getting ready so I’m here to inform you to wait a little longer.” Ray said with a smile as he wrecked his brain on how to continue this conversation long enough so Lana would have time to get ready.

Zane glanced at his wristwatch. “That’s fine, I don’t mind waiting. I’ll give her ride to the square too since we’re going the same way...if that’s okay with you?”

Ray nodded to himself, happy that the boy in front of him was at least courteous. He recalled seeing Zane around town but never had any reason to talk to him. He never even knew that he and Lana were friends. By the way Lana was reacting earlier, Ray had a feeling that the two of them aren’t just friends. But if Lana was dating someone, he thought she would at least tell him. Ray then frowned at the idea and Zane noticed the change of his expression.

“Is...that a no, sir?”

“No. No, I mean sure you two can go to the square together if that’s what Lana wants.”

Zane beamed. “Okay!”

“But...”

Zane’s face dropped. “But?” he repeated, mentally preparing himself for bad news for some reason.

“Tell me this Zane, are you two perhaps...dat—”

Before Ray could finish his sentence, the door was roughly pulled open. The two of them turned to it and watched as Lana tried her best to hide the fact that she was panting. She then smiled when she made eye contact with Zane.

“H-Hi. Morning, Zane.” She panted, hugging her bag closely to her chest.

Zane could not help himself but admire how beautiful yet chaotic Lana looked since she was a panting mess. She must’ve been running around to get ready fast and Zane found that rather adorable. Even so, her hair was perfectly braided to the side. Her shirt tucked into her dark jeans and she gripped on her bag pack as though it was about to run away from her. Zane smiled.

“Hey, sorry for dropping by unannounced. I texted you earlier but you didn’t reply.”

Lana's eyes widened at what Zane just said. She quickly rummaged through her bag and pulled out her phone. There were multiple text messages and calls from her friends but there at the bottom was Zane's message.

"Um, I'm so sorry! I overslept and..." her words trailed off when she noticed that Ray was still standing there, listening attentively as though he was part of the conversation. Lana could feel her cheeks burning at the fact that she showed Ray this side of her. "Ray? Shouldn't you be going to the station now?" she asked through her forced smile.

Ray looked down at his watch and shook his head. "Not really, it's still early..." he muttered.

"Are you sure about that??" she pressed, hoping that he would get the hint she was trying to tell him. She loves Ray but right now she just wanted to catch her bearings and find out why Zane was even here at her house in the first place. And she would rather not have Ray watching her the entire time like some strict parent.

"Yes...oh!" Ray said in realization. "I'll be heading inside first to get ready for work. You two be safe and it was nice meeting you Zane." Ray spat out the words in a rapid speed which he often did when he was too nervous. He reached out, grabbed Zane's hand and gave it a firm shake. He then leaned down and allowed Lana to give him a kiss on his cheek.

"Bye, I'll see you later." She whispered to him.

Ray nodded twice and went back into the house, leaving Zane and Lana alone at the foot of the entrance. There was an awkward silence that followed until Zane cleared his throat.

"Can I give you a ride to the town square?" he offered.

"Yes!" Lana said, a little too eagerly. "I mean...sure, I appreciate that." She corrected herself as she looked down to hide her reddened face from Zane. Zane on the other hand, found Lana's reactions to be unbearably adorable and the fact that she blushes easily only made him want to stare at her and admire her features even more.