

Her Secret 48

CHAPTER 48 NO.48

Mrs. Attwood led Lana towards the grand living room that had a minimalistic aesthetic to it. The whites and blacks contrasted against the bold dress that Mrs. Attwood wore, making her stand out behind the monotonous background. There was a dark wooden coffee table and two white leather Chesterfield couches positioned on either side of the table. Mrs. Attwood took a seat and gestured for Lana to sit opposite her.

Lana did as she was told and almost instantly two maids entered the room with trays. One placed a fine bone china teapot that was decorated with red roses on the table, accompanied with matching teacups and the other placed a 3-tier stand filled with appetizing scones, cakes and sandwiches. The two maids then curtsied and promptly left the room, leaving Lana and Mrs. Attwood all alone in the large room. Lana gulped at the sight of the extravagant spread before her, feeling her mouth salivate at the mere sight of the food in front of her.

“Lana, was it?” Mrs. Attwood called out. Lana nodded. “Don’t be shy now, you can eat whatever you want. You are our guest here after all.”

“Thank you...Mrs. At—”

The older lady held up a hand to stop Lana from continuing her sentence. “Please, call me Daphne.” She smiled as she brought the teacup to her lips. Lana nodded once and followed Daphne’s actions. She blew the hot liquid before taking a small sip and was surprised that the beverage was bursting with a floral flavour that Lana could not recognize.

“Pardon me for being too forward but your scent is rather—interesting.” Daphne suddenly mentioned, causing Lana to choke on her tea.

She allowed herself to cough out to soothe her throat before turning to look at Daphne. “I’m sorry?” Lana said, completely bewildered.

“Now, now, don’t be coy with me, Lana. You are aware of the existence of werewolves are you not?” Lana was trying to think about how Daphne found out. She was sure that wearing River’s clothes would’ve masked her scent as he said but Daphne saw right through their façade. “You see, I recognize my son’s scent anywhere and even though you don his clothes, your scent is still spilling through prominently.”

Lana gulped, yet again she was mentally cursing River that because of him she was placed in this troublesome situation.

“...to answer your question, yes I am aware of werewolves. I happen to live with one.” Lana said, hoping that Daphne would think that the scent she was smelling from Lana did not belong to her.

“Ah, I see.” Daphne said softly, though Lana could tell by looking at her eyes that she was doubting Lana’s claims.

There was a long pause after that as Daphne silently drank her tea but the silence was making Lana grow more anxious as she tried to think of a conversation starter. Her eyes then looked around the room only to realize that there were no family pictures anywhere. The only thing close to a picture was a strange black and white painting that added to the monotonous ambience of the room.

“I must say that I am a very lonely woman,” Daphne admitted unexpectedly. Lana’s attention went back to the woman as she stayed silent for her to continue. “My husband, Gregory, is always working or always bed-ridden from a variety of illnesses. He is the type who would block out everything around him just to obtain one goal and it is truly devastating to see him work his life away like this. I tried to advise him countless times but to no avail. He is simply a stubborn man.” She said with a soft defeated sigh.

Lana nodded absent-mindedly even though she had so many questions to ask yet she decided to hold her tongue and let Daphne continue her monologue.

“My children...River is so far away and always reluctant to come visit. I don’t blame him because he and his father don’t see eye to eye on many things and hence there is always a lot of tension and bickering when they are in the same room.”

Lana felt as though she was being intrusive by just listening to Daphne talk about her family like this but Lana could not help but feel slightly sorry for the woman as she has to live in such a huge house with the people working for her as her only company. The way she said that her husband was single-minded and focused on his career only made it seem that he hardly spends time with his own wife.

“You said children? I did not know that River has siblings.” Lana chimed in, hoping to continue the conversation so that Daphne would not feel like this was a one-sided conversation.

“Why yes, my first child and only daughter—Meadow.”

Lana’s eyes widened at the mention of River’s older sister. All her life Lana thought he was an only child since no one ever mentioned anything about him having a sister but then again, River did not live with his family so it made sense why no one knew about him having an older sister. Lana wondered if she too had silky smooth black hair and beautiful blue eyes just like River and Daphne did.

“That’s a beautiful name. But can I ask, where is Meadow now? Does she stay here?” Lana asked, clearly curious as to why River had to stay back at Rosecliff while Meadow could move here with her parents.

A smile appeared on Daphne’s cherry red lips but it was clear to Lana that her eyes reflected only sadness. “Wherever my Meadow is right now, I’m sure she is happy. Much happier than she would ever be if she was stuck here with this accursed family.” she spat.

Daphne’s vague reply made Lana gawk at her curiously. “What do you mean by that?” Lana asked.

“We lived in Rosecliff all our lives. I was born and raised there, Gregory was born and raised there. We were strong and capable alphas in the pack, everything we did, we did for the pack and for the sake of the forest...”

“Why are you...I don’t understand—” Lana muttered, she then stopped talking as she watched Daphne. Daphne was clearly changing the stories she was telling Lana in an erratic manner which started to confuse Lana even more. She watched as the older woman stared down at her cup of tea for the longest time until she finally looked up at Lana.

“Do you know what it feels like to not belong, Lana?” she suddenly asked her, catching her off guard. Lana’s mind immediately went blank from the sudden question, she opened her mouth to say something but before Lana could reply, Daphne continued on with her rant. “Rosecliff was where I belonged. Rosecliff, the people, the forest, everything there was my home.”

“If that’s the case, why did you and your husband move to the city?” Lana dared to ask.

“How much do you know about us werewolves, Lana?” she questioned Lana instead of answering.

“I know as much as my guardian and River tells me.” she answered truthfully.

“I see. Well, in a pack there are multiple alphas but there is only one pack leader.”

“Yes, I am aware of that fact.”

“But do you know how a pack leader is chosen?” she asked.

Lana shook her head. “I would assume that the alpha chosen to be a pack leader has to be strong and capable to be a leader in the first place.”

“That’s exactly it and pack leaders are often unanimously chosen by the pack. But sometimes there is discord among the alphas when some think they are better suited to be leader than others and when this happens, a challenge is inevitable.”

“A challenge? Does that mean like an actual fight to claim the title?”

“Naturally.” she said with a wave of her hand. “And do you know what happens when the challenger is defeated?”

Lana was quick to remember her conversation with River when he told her about werewolves in the first place. He told her how some werewolves left on their own accord while others got banished from their packs. Lana nodded once. “They get banished, am I right?”

“Yes, it’s good to know that you are quick to catch on. When a werewolf gets banished they have to

leave the pack and the town along with their mate and their children. It's a punishment to the alpha who challenged the pack leader—to be completely stripped of your home. Isn't that such a cruel fate?"

"Is that what happened to you and your family?"

"Yes. That is exactly what happened. Our family was banished from Rosecliff when my power hungry husband challenged the pack leader at that time." She confirmed. "Us werewolves, our entire purpose is to protect our pack, to protect our forest and for that to be taken away in a blink of an eye, do you know how much that affects our sanity?" she asked in a low whisper.

"No, I don't..." Lana said quietly.

"Of course you wouldn't know, dear. That's simply because you are not a werewolf. You humans are not bound to the sense of duty like we are."

Lana flinched slightly from Daphne's harsh words but Lana could not help herself to wonder how much of Daphne's words were true. Lana, even though she was not fully a human nor was she fully a werewolf she often felt like she was bound to that forest and to that town. Could that be a sign of her ancestry or just her reluctance to leave her one true home.

"I'm sorry if I might sound rude, Ms. Daphne but why are you telling me all of this? I'm just a friend of your son's and if I'm being completely honest, we aren't that close and—" Lana babbled on, feeling incredibly troubled at the fact that she has just learnt something so personal about River and his family.

Daphne let out a low chuckle which made Lana stop talking. She then looked up at Lana with a fierce gaze and Lana flinched slightly. "Why, you ask? Because, dear Lana. Your scent...you smell just like the alpha who banished my family." She said with a malicious tone.

Realization hit Lana instantly but before she could say or do anything, a piercing scream was heard from a distance. Both Lana and Daphne turned to the source in complete shock.

"What was that?" Lana asked as she quickly replaced the teacup on the table. Her gut was telling her to run as the adrenaline pumped through her veins rapidly.

Daphne stood up as she looked at the door. "That sounded like Meg, one of our maids." She muttered to herself as she approached the door.

Lana felt her chest tightened as she started to think of the worst case scenario. Silently, she prayed that River would appear just so she could have some sense of solace. She watched in silence as Daphne pulled open the door slowly and in a blink of an eye, a large wolf with black and white fur charged its way through the door, pushing Daphne down to the ground from the sudden impact.

"Gregory!" Daphne cried out but the wolf did not bother to spare her a glance.

The wolf's glare was directed straight at Lana's direction as she remained frozen from shock. She stared back at the wolf that had drool dripping from its mouth as it bared its fangs and snarled at her. She knew she had to remain calm, no sudden movements to agitate the creature but she also knew that the wolf in front of her wasn't any normal wolf, it was a werewolf. Everything happened almost instantly after that and Lana could not even comprehend what exactly was happening. All she remembered was that she could hear Daphne's desperate cry as the werewolf lunged towards Lana.