

Her Secret 54

CHAPTER 54 NO.54

The Rosecliff founder's day ended with an unexpected twist for Lana, mirroring exactly the way it started. Soon, everyone was coming down from the high of the festivities to go back to their normal routines and Lana was no exception. The next day was any other normal school day or so it was supposed to be but the arrival and official introduction of Avery Myers to her school only led to her being the centre of attention.

As Lana predicted, Avery quickly became popular among her peers over her impeccable beauty and also the fact that she clings onto River whenever they are together. That action alone led to numerous rumours about their relationship to spread like wildfire.

For Lana, going back to school only meant that she had to do everything in her power to hide her injury from not only her friends and classmates but also Ray. Thankfully for her, Ray has been constantly coming home late and going into work early. She barely sees him anymore. Other than that fact, her focus is solely on the fact that she and fellow classmates were burdened by the fact that their midterms were coming up.

In a blink of an eye, two weeks have passed since founder's day. Lana's injury is healing better and faster than she expected but she opt to wear long sleeves until it's not so noticeable to the eye.

After spending a long day at the library after school with her nose buried under piles of textbooks, Lana decided that she needed a change of scenery. As she left the library, she noticed River, Avery and Luis heading towards her direction. They were deep in conversation to even notice Lana walking towards them. River's head then snapped up and met her eyes, he smiled at her for a split second before quickly relaxing his face into his usual poker face. Avery noticed his change in expression and looked towards the source.

"Hi guys." Lana greeted as she adjusted the bag on her shoulder. Luis greeted her with a small smile.

"Done for the day?" Avery asked, eyeing the pile of books in Lana's arms.

Lana nodded. "It's time for my shift soon anyway."

"Oh right! You're a forest ranger like Ray, right?"

"Part time." River interjected.

Lana nodded. "Yup. Anyway, I should get going now. See you guys around." she said, as she walked past them.

"Lana! Wait." Avery called out, causing Lana to turn to the blonde. "Do you need a ride? I'm heading in that direction so I don't mind dropping you off." she offered.

“You are?” Luis asked silently while River just sighed. “I thought we were going to study in the library?” he continued, clearly confused.

Lana smiled at Avery. “It’s fine, I can catch the bus.” she stated.

“But you are carrying so much stuff! That’s tedious is it not, especially on public transportation? C’mon, let me drive you there.” She pressed as she battled her eyelashes at Lana.

Lana took a moment to think about it but her gaze then naturally went over to River who shook his head at her the moment their gazes met. Lana then slowly mimicked his gesture before turning back to Avery.

“Don’t worry about me, Avery. I happen to enjoy taking public transport.” She smiled at her. “Thanks for the offer though!” she said as she rushed away, knowing that if she stayed any longer she might be swayed by Avery’s words—especially her charming voice.

The three watched as Lana hurried away from them before Avery turned to River with a pout and her hands on her waist. “Hey now, what was that about?” she huffed.

“What do you mean?” he asked innocently.

“You think I didn’t see you shaking your head at her? I always knew you were the jealous type but aren’t you being a tad bit overprotective?” she asked with a sly smirk.

“Overprotective? Over you?” he scoffed.

Avery groaned at River’s fake ignorance. She then looked over at Luis. “How do you deal with him?” she asked, pretending that River was not standing right there and could clearly hear their conversation.

“Trust me, Avery, you’ll get used to his stubbornness one way or another.” Luis sighed as he continued walking ahead towards the library. River decided to ignore their jest and was about to follow Luis when Avery suddenly tapped River on the shoulder. He froze when she leaned in closer to his ear.

“Between just you and me, you should probably learn how to hide your expression better. You looked like a lovesick teenager.” She whispered, her warm breath tickling against his skin.

River deeply frowned at her remark which only made her smile widen. He was reacting just the way she predicated after all. Her fingers playfully brushed against River’s cheek, her long and sharp nails scratching his skin lightly before she walked ahead triumphantly. River glared at Avery’s back as she walked away but soon came to the harsh realisation that he was in fact—a lovesick teenager.

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Lana walked into the station, eyes immediately falling to where Ray and Jack were, huddled close

together at the desk where they were deep in conversation. Before she could question what they were doing, she was interrupted with Hannah who waved enthusiastically at her from where the lockers were.

“What are you doing here? Thought you wouldn't be coming in for work since you have midterms soon?” she asked as she changed out of her top.

Lana passed by her to get to her own locker. She shoved her books and bag inside and proceeded to stretch her arms as it was aching due to the weight of the textbooks she had to carry around.

“I honestly got tired of studying.” She told Hannah with a sigh as she quickly wore her ranger's uniform over her long sleeved shirt.

Hannah watched her curiously. “Understandable but hey, won't you be hot in that?” she questioned.

“Nah, it's gonna be dark soon anyway.” Lana reassured even though she could already feel herself getting warm from the extra layer of clothing. She would usually just wear a simple tank top under her uniform but she did not want to risk exposing her arm to Hannah who she knew would make a big deal and this would lead to Ray finding out as well.

Hannah then shrugged and pulled out her bag. “Well, I'll be heading out now. Ray and Jack seem to be discussing something serious but they told me not to worry about it, so that's not my problem now.” she said, completely disinterested with whatever the two men were talking about.

“Okay, take care on your way back.” Lana called out.

“Mhm, thanks. There's not many campers out tonight, only a small group of friends who came with an RV. So there's not much for you to do anyway. Relax and clear your mind from all that studying and what not” She told Lana as she headed to the door.

Lana always knew that Hannah was never a fan of exams but she never imagined her to advocate not studying. “Gotcha.” Lana said with a thumbs up.

“Oh!” Hannah suddenly exclaimed as she rushed to Lana, pushing her further away from the two men. “How's Zane? Any new updates?” she asked in a hushed voice.

Lana let out an awkward laugh. Ever since that night, Zane and Lana have been texting each other almost every day. They would talk about normal things like what they had for lunch or school related topics, but sometimes Zane would ask her silly questions like what superpower would she want or if she preferred to go on holiday to the mountains or an island. Hannah caught Lana texted him one day and decided to pry. Lana, knowing that she can't just lie her way out of the situation, told Hannah that she's texting her crush.

“Same old, same old.” Lana smiled.

Hannah let out a disappointed groan. "When are you going to make your move already? You know one day he'll just run out of questions to ask you right?"

"I don't even know if he is interested in me like that..." she muttered, still in denial at the reasons behind Zane's actions.

"Please, you are literally just as dense as Ray is whenever someone is flirting with him."

"Oh? I'm dense now, am I?" Ray asked, suddenly appearing behind the two girls who jolted from his voice. Hannah let out a startled yelp before twirling around to face Ray.

"Ray...Hi..."

"Hi, Hannah." Ray smiled as he gestured at his wristwatch. "Bye, Hannah."

Hannah chuckled nervously before scurrying away from them and towards the front door. "Bye guys, see y'all tomorrow!" she called as she rushed out.

Ray sighed and turned back to Lana. "I wasn't expecting you to come in for work today."

"It was a spontaneous decision. Should I have not come?" she asked, wondering if Ray would actually chase her away and make her study.

Ray shook his head which opted Lana to feel relieved. "No, I'm glad you are here. Although, it wouldn't kill you to text me about these things, you know." he nagged.

"Haa, sorry about that."

"No worries. But come on, there's something we want to talk to you about." Ray said as he walked back to the desk where Jack was staring down at a map with his brows knitted.

"Is there trouble in the forest?" she asked as she followed him.

"Yea, something like that." Jack muttered as he pushed the map towards Lana and Ray. Lana peered down, noting how there were multiple red circles at one section of the map. Before she could say anything, Jack pushed over three more maps with similar markings on it. Lana reached out for one and examined it.

"This is?" she questioned as she realised that the circles were almost at the same spots over and over again but the dates written on the maps were different, there were four maps in total and the dates go back to four days ago.

"Last week we have been finding an increased amount of dead wildlife at the marked location. Every

time we clean up, the next day more carcasses appear at the exact same location.” Ray explained.

“That’s troubling. Could it be a bear or...maybe some psychopath?” Lana asked, hoping that it was the former as she did not know how to deal with the fact that a potential murderer was on the loose in Rosecliff. The longer she stared at the maps, a strange feeling started to creep up on her. The sole fact that whatever was doing this keeps leaving the carcasses at the same location was rather strange.

“We think that the culprit could be a werewolf.” Ray suddenly said. Lana nodded absent-mindedly before reality struck her. Her head snapped up to look at Ray, surprised that he would speak about werewolves so openly like this. She nervously turned to Jack.

“Oh right, you don’t know.” Jack suddenly said when he noticed her reaction. “I’m a werewolf as well, Lana.” He confirmed.

Lana looked at the two men in disbelief but the more she thought about it, the more everything made sense. Whenever Ray disappeared, Jack would always be there to cover for him. Even on the day Lana found out Ray was a werewolf. At this point, Lana should know better than to be surprised whenever someone close to her was revealed to be a werewolf.

“...of course.” Was all Lana could muster to say, fully knowing that she does not have the leisure to be surprised and questioning whenever someone she knew since she was a kid happened to be a werewolf. At this point, she just had to accept that this was her new reality.