

## Her Secret 62

### CHAPTER 62 NO.62

The atmosphere in the station was tense with an uncomfortable silence that lingered around them. Everyone was standing around the station except Griffin who sat on the couch with his partner, Rene. Lana personally has never spoken to Rene but she has seen them once or twice before. Griffin looked up when Lana and Avery walked into the station and gave them a small smile.

“Seems that it’s one issue after another huh, Lana?” he asked with a low chuckle. Now when Lana was actually looking at his human form, it was evident that he had gotten thin and his face was paler than usual. It was not that long since she last met with Griffin, so seeing the evident change in his physical appearance made her question what exactly happened to the man in front of him.

Lana shifted her weight as she froze in her spot with Avery standing close to her. “I’m so—” she started by wanting to apologise but Griffin held a hand up which caused her to stop talking.

“You don’t have to apologise. Neither of you do.” He glanced at Avery. “I take full responsibility for what happened today.”

“Grif...” Rene said softly as they held Griffin’s hand in a comforting manner.

“If only I was more transparent with everyone, this could have been completely avoided.” He continued. “Well then, we have a lot to talk about so I’m going to start with explaining the whole situation with the Highcaster pack to both of you. I’m guessing both of you at least know the gist of it right?” he looked at the two girls.

“Territorial disputes?” Avery asked. “Been there, done that.” She said indifferently. Lana raised an eyebrow at Avery, suddenly curious to know what she meant by that.

“Hold on, I’m sorry to cut you off Griffin. I get why Avery needs to know about the situation but I don’t see why she needs to know as well. The others waiting outside are already questioning why we were with her in the first place.” Maddison chimed in. Maddison’s words felt like a dagger into Lana’s heart.

“The two Highcaster werewolves wanted to take her away. It seemed that someone knew about Lana’s identity over there.” Luis interjected almost instantly, causing Maddison to frown at him. Lana noticed the surprised looks on the others’ faces when Luis announced it.

“It could be that they were just curious over her scent.” Maddison brushed him off.

“I wish that was the case but no, I heard them talking and they mentioned someone’s name...” Luis paused, trying to recall the name the Highcaster wolves mentioned countless times.

“Ezekiel.” Lana said aloud, causing the group to turn their attention to her.

“What did you say?” Jack asked with a confused expression.

“The name...they mentioned was Ezekiel. They said something along the lines of ‘Ezekiel’s stray mentioned about a human who smells like an alpha.” She said. This revelation led to another long and tense silence to loom over them.

“So, are any of the grownups going to tell us who Ezekiel is?” Avery voiced out suddenly.

“...to put it simply, Ezekiel is the Highcaster pack’s leader.” Griffin told them.

“Of course he is.” Maddison said with an annoyed tone. “Well, it seems like you are involved in this entire mess after all. Aren’t you glad, Lana?” Maddison asked with a forced smile on her lips.

Lana was about to talk back when he noticed Avery talking a step forward, blocking Lana’s view of Maddison.

“Why haven’t you mentioned this Ezekiel before?” Avery sighed. “I think you have a lot of explaining to do, Griffin.” Avery said.

“Yes, of course. It was never my intention to keep this from any of you. Most of the adults know of Ezekiel but I always thought that I never needed to drag you youngins into this mess.” He explained. “The Highcaster pack is a fairly new pack, before that they were...they were a part of the Rosecliff pack. Ezekiel he...”

Griffin frowned, somehow finding it hard for him to continue the story as he felt slightly faint. Rene was quick to notice as they reached for the mug of water on the table and passed it to him.

“Ezekiel was a troublemaker, he never really abided with the rules of the pack and this attitude problem of his only got worse when he and the previous pack leader, Aldric got into a massive fight.” Rene continued the story. “After the fight, Aldric rallied up some other werewolves who were not so happy with Aldric and they left. A few years after that they—”

Griffin squeezed Rene’s arm which caused them to stop talking. Lana noticed and unconsciously she turned to where River was standing. He too looked over at them curiously, wondering what Rene was about to say before Griffin stopped them from continuing.

“Long story short, Ezekiel abandoned this pack and created his own but he only ever had one goal in mind and that is to take over the forest from us. He never succeeded because we outnumbered their little pack of misfits but now that’s a different story. Not only are their numbers growing and ours dropping, but I’m...” his words trailed off as he let out a deep sigh.

“So the Highcaster wolves weren’t lying about you?” River suddenly spoke.

“I’m sorry I had to reveal this to you in such an abrupt manner but...I am sick. Every day goes by with me

getting weaker and Ezekiel knows that fact. This entire situation with the dead animals was him sending me a message...a warning that he will strike when our pack is at our weakest.”

Lana glanced at Avery whose theory came true after all. She thought that Avery might look proud over that fact but she wore a serious expression, one that Lana has never seen before.

“This...doesn’t make sense. Why didn’t you say anything when this started happening in the first place?” Maddison asked, even though her words were harsh it was evident that she was physically distressed over the information that Griffin is sick.

“I did not want to believe that he would be so bold as to send his underlings this far into our territory. I also thought that I could deal with this mess without involving any of you as I mentioned earlier but things just escalated beyond my control.”

“What illness do you have, Griffin?” River asked, his voice calm and composed but Lana could see how his hands were balled up into tight fists, she could see that even though he was wearing a hard mask he was clearly taking this news badly. Griffin is still a father figure to him after all.

Griffin looked up to River and gave him an apologetic smile. “It’s cancer.” Another silence loomed over as River stared at Griffin in disbelief.

Lana felt her chest still when she heard it but she then looked around at the room, noting how Ray and Jack remained silent while Maddison, Luis and even Avery was in shock to hear about this. After a beat, Avery noticed what Lana was looking at and turned to the adults.

“Did the two of you know?” Avery asked, looking at Ray and Jack. They stayed silent as they avoided her gaze.

“Please, I told them not to say anything. Don’t be mad at them.”

“How long have you known about this? Your cancer?” River questioned.

“A few weeks ago.”

“...I’m sorry but if you said that no one else outside of this room knew about your situation then how did Ezekiel find out?” Lana dared to ask even if she sounded rather dismissive about Griffin’s situation, something was not adding up.

“Isn’t it obvious? Whoever Ezekiel’s stray is, he or she is probably living here in Rosecliff and feeding this Ezekiel person information. We have a traitor in this pack.” Avery said. Lana silently agreed to her statement.

“Hold on! That doesn’t matter right now!” Maddison declared. “If Griffin is sick then what about the pack...we need a strong pack leader to guide us! Without one we will...”

Griffin stood up, causing Maddison to hold her tongue. "I am aware of that, Maddison. That's why, with all of you here as witnesses—I am stepping down from my role and will appoint a new pack leader."

"But...we don't have any other alphas who are as strong as you." She muttered hesitantly.

"We do." He said, looking directly at River. Everyone then turned their attention to him as he stared back at Griffin clearly confused at this sudden announcement.

"...can we talk...privately?" River muttered, and without waiting for Griffin's response he walked straight for the door. He walked past Lana who caught a glimpse of his expression. She was not sure if he was about to break down in tears or turn completely hostile and she had a feeling that even River himself was unsure about what he was supposed to feel at that moment. After a beat, Griffin followed River out of the station.

"What the hell...?" Maddison said under her breath the moment Griffin left. Luis went towards her as the two spoke in hushed voices.

"You know, I left the city because there was too much drama happening with the packs over there." Avery suddenly told Lana. "But oh boy is it even messier here. Plus, Rosecliff was a massive anomaly," she said, eyeing Lana.

"What happened to respecting other's secrets?"

Avery smirked as she leaned closer to Lana's ear. "I may look stupid, but I think I can guess why you smell the way you do."

Lana stood still, unfazed by Avery's sudden closeness. "Say it then." She snapped as she started to feel annoyed over how much Avery was prying into this.

Avery rested her head against Lana's. She took a deep breath, allowing herself to enjoy the sensation she felt building up inside her every time she got a whiff of Lana's scent. "Are you by any chance related to Aldric?" she asked, her voice low and hoarse. Avery then looked up, noticing that Maddison and Luis were watching her cautiously. She smiled at them and backed away from Lana. She looked down at the shorter girl, patiently awaiting her reply.

"What makes you say that?"

"Aldric was very...notorious in the werewolf society. Even when I was in the city, I would hear stories about how strong he was as a pack leader. Everyone talked about going to Rosecliff to be under him and every available alpha wanted to be his mate."

"And?" Lana asked, forcing herself not to change her expression, even in the slightest.

“Well, there were rumours about him going around, you know. About how his mate is—” Avery stopped talking when she noticed how Ray kept glancing at their direction.

“Are you pausing for dramatic effect?” Lana asked sarcastically, causing Avery to chuckle.

“No. We can continue this talk another day. I am a very patient person after all.” She said with a flip of her hair.

“Is that another lie?”

Avery smiled at her. “That’s for you to find out, right?” Lana frowned. “Anyway, you should go talk to Ray. He has been looking over her like a concerned parent. I’m not sure if it’s because he is wary of me or because he really wants to talk to you but doesn’t know how.” She shrugged at Lana.

Lana glanced behind her, catching Ray’s gaze before he quickly looked away. “Right.” She said as she turned around and walked towards him.

Ray immediately straightened his posture when he noticed that Lana was walking towards him. He looked around the station as though to pretend he was not hoping that she would approach him in the first place.

“Ray, can we talk?” Lana said softly to him.

“About what?” he feigned ignorance.

Lana sighed. “I know you are upset that I lied to you—”

“Upset is an understatement, Lana!” he snapped. He then noticed the others watching them and cleared his throat. He then reached out to grab Lana’s hand and pulled her to the back of the station where they were alone. “I don’t understand why you just couldn’t listen to me when I told you to stay out of this mess. What are you trying to prove here by doing something so reckless?”

Lana swallowed hard, feeling her throat dry up as her eyes burnt. It wasn’t her first time getting scolded by Ray but in the past it was over silly mundane things that parents get upset with their kids over like not doing the dishes. But this time, Lana could see how frustrated Ray was. She could hear how his voice quivered from anger.

“I’m sorry. I wasn’t thinking...I just really wanted to help you out since you seemed really stressed about everything and I didn’t want you to keep overworking yourself.” Lana murmured as her vision got blurry with her tears. She wasn’t sure if she was crying because she was getting scolded by Ray or if everything that happened earlier was catching up with her. The fear, the anxiety, the panic, the smell of blood, the sound of the wolves growling and howling, everything—all at once came back to her in the form of a painful ache in her chest.

“Lana...” Ray whispered when he noticed her tears.

“I-I’ll accept any punishment...” she forced herself to say as she choked down a sob. Ray then pulled her into a tight embrace.

“I was worried sick when I found out you were out there from Avery. I was so worried that I thought my heart would just stop beating...just the thought of you being hurt...I wouldn’t know what I’d do.” He said, his voice cracking as he tightened his grip on her. “I’m just glad you are okay.”

Lana allowed herself to cry in his embrace as her shaky hands wrapped around Ray’s warm body. In the end, all Lana wanted to do was help them solve the problem because she loves the forest as much as they did. Slowly, she started to accept that even if she could transform like the other werewolves, she was certain that she was bound to this forest. Even if she told herself that she did everything to help Ray, she knew that deep down she felt as though it was her duty to protect this forest.