

THE MOON AND HER SECRET

CHAPTER 8 NO.8

“Why aren’t you saying anything?” River frowned.

“Sorry, I don’t think I got the brief on how to react when someone confesses that they are a fucking mythological creature!” Lana complained.

“I get that you’re surprised but aren’t you being a bit overdramatic?”

Lana ignored his statement. “Are you going to tell me that vampires exist too?”

River was bewildered. “You do know that vampires are fictional, right?”

Lana laughed sarcastically. “Anyway, how did you become a werewolf? Were you cursed or something?” she asked.

“Stop with that curse bullshit already,” River sighed. “But no I wasn’t cursed, I was just born like this. In fact, a percentage of Rosecliff’s population are werewolves or some would prefer to call use shape-shifters. We have the ability to transform into our wolf form and before you start comparing this with useless fiction again, no we don’t need the full moon to transform.”

Lana felt a little embarrassed, wondering if River could read her mind all of a sudden. She did in fact wanted to ask him about the full moon, since a lot of fiction portrayed the moon to be significant to these nightly beasts. Lana realized that this was reality after all and she should stop comparing the two, as River said.

Nothing could have readied her for this truth and she found herself pinching the soft skin of her wrist to make sure she was not dreaming.

“So...people shape-shifting into wolves are totally normal...got it.” Lana muttered. Everything sounded like a fantasy, Lana’s mind was not comprehending the information she was getting from River properly. But she knew he was not lying, how else could she make sense of River being in her garage last night?

After a moment of silence, River approaching Lana and poked her cheek with the twig. She looked up at him, clearly annoyed by his action. “Are you alright? You’re awfully silent.” River asked in genuine concern.

Lana pushed the twig away from her face. “Yeah. So tell me what happened to you last night in the forest? How did you get hurt?”

“Ah, there was a bear-”

“I knew it!” Lana suddenly declared, causing River to jolt from shock, accidentally snapping the twig in his hand. “S-Sorry...”

River tossed the broken twig away and crossed his hands across his chest. “The werewolves in our pack take turns protecting the forest from outside threats. I was on duty last night when we noticed a bear dangerously close to the campsite. We were trying to chase it away but then I was separated from my pack. I was reckless and got injured. Then, you showed up,”

“You knew it was me? I thought you were unconscious since the wolf...um, you did not wake up at all?”

“Well...I recognized your scent.”

Lana blushed, suddenly feeling unconscious about how she smelled right now. “I-I see...then what about your injuries? You were bleeding a lot as a wolf but when you turned into human I didn’t see any wounds at all.”

“Werewolves can heal from their wounds faster than an average human. We’re stronger and faster too.” He explained.

“Wow...okay...” she muttered.

“What’s with that weak response? You still look like you don’t believe me about this entire situation. Do you want me to transform into a wolf in front of you or something?”

Lana looked at River in anticipation. She wondered how he would look like during the transformation. River frowned when he realized that Lana was rather eager for him to transform. He sighed and started to pull off his shirt.

“Woah hold on! What are you doing?” Lana panicked as she covered her eyes with her hands.

“If I transform with my clothes on, it’ll get ruined.” He said as he took off his shirt. He walked towards Lana and held it out for her. “Could you hold it, I don’t want to get it dirty.”

“No! I mean, it’s fine! I believe you so just put your shirt back on!!” The mental image of River’s body from last night flashed in Lana’s mind and she could not

help but blush. She did not know why she was acting like this, she has seen a naked man before but something about River makes her feel flustered.

River watched Lana's face turn brilliant red as she tried her best to avoid making eye contact with him. He smirked, somehow feeling a rush of power fill up his senses by the sole fact that Lana Danley was getting embarrassed at his exposed torso. He let out a small chuckle before putting his shirt back on.

"Didn't know you could get this flustered," he said, wanting to tease her even more.

"S-Shut up!"

"Yes, yes, you can look at me now, I'm dressed."

Lana peeked through her fingers before fully dropping her hands. She cleared her

throat as she felt herself slowly calm down. "You mentioned the wolf pack early, right?"

"Yes,"

"Does that mean the whole alphas and betas exist in the pack? I read a research on pack mentality and how the alphas lead the betas and what not, so I was wondering if it's the same concept for you um...werewolves?"

"Yea, in a sense. Alphas and betas do coexist in the packs."

“Alphas...plural?”

River nodded. “But ultimately, in a pack there is a ‘true alpha’ which you can consider as the pack leader.”

“What are you?”

“Hm?”

“Are you an alpha or a beta?” Lana questioned.

River gave her a sceptical look. “Why the sudden interest?”

“I’m just asking, sheesh, you don’t have to tell me if you don’t want too.”

“Okay, I don’t want too.”

Lana rolled her eyes. “So, is that all? Is the information dump over?”

“There are more details but I think we should stop for today. I don’t wanna overwhelm your tiny brain,” he said as he started to walk towards the car.

“Hey, fuck off!” Lana grumbled before jogging to catch up with him. She glanced up at his expression and saw a small smile on his lips. She looked away, somehow feeling that she was not supposed to see that expression on him. It seemed strange to see River, of all people, smile. Even though Lana still thought River was an obnoxious piece of work, she still felt grateful that he took the time to answer her questions honestly.

“Do werewolves exist outside of Rosecliff too?” she suddenly asked.

“Yeah, but the first werewolves came from this forest. We consider this place where we originated from. Our pack leader would remind us that we are bound to this forest, to this town. We have our duty to protect our home. But of course, throughout the years some werewolves migrated to other towns and even the cities and some were banished from the pack.”

“Banished?” Lana asked. River stayed silent and Lana decided not to press further.

“Our population has been decreasing over the years.” He suddenly stated.

“Why is that?”

“I’m not sure, probably the lack of capable alphas? Or some werewolves wanting to be with humans instead.”

Interspecies relationships. Lana thought. “That’s allowed?” she asked.

River shrugged. “I guess?”

“You’re not sure?”

“I’ve only heard bits and pieces of such stories, but yea, it is a possibility.”

“Mm...” Lana was deep in thought, now that she finally has the answers she was looking for, more questions started to pop up in her mind. Never in a million years would she think that the mundane, never changing Rosecliff

carried such a big secret.

She wondered who else in the community knew, or better yet, who else in the community were werewolves. Was she really raised in a town where werewolves coexisted with humans but never knew it? The entire situation was indeed overwhelming her.

“Is it okay for you to tell me all this?” she asked hesitantly.

“If I didn’t tell you, you’ll keep pestering me about it right?” he huffed. Lana stayed silent, knowing that his words were 100% true. “I guess I trust you enough not to tell anyone about this.” He admitted.

Lana grinned. “I’m surprised the almighty River Attwood trusts me,”

“Don’t push it, I’m already starting to regret it.” He frowned.

Lana laughed and walked ahead so she was standing in front of him. She held out her hand with her pinkie extended. “I promise I won’t repeat anything I’ve learned today to anyone,” she boldly declared with a sweet smile.

River stared at her pinkie for a second, he looked away, not wanting to show Lana the smile that crept on his face.

“What are you, a child?” he teased. Lana was about to fight back but watched as River hooked his own pinkie around hers. She looked up at him, noticing his expression was soft and gentle. She felt her heart skip a beat. River moved his pinkie away and grabbed Lana’s with his thumb and index finger. “If you lie, you’ll have to cut this off, right?” he smirked.

Lana snatched her hand free from River's hold. "I won't lie!" she fumed.

River's hand went to his mouth to once again hide his smile.

As the both of them approached River's car, there was a question that lingered in her mind. She mentally tried to assess the pros and cons of asking River the question but in the end she thought maybe River would humour her for one last question.

"I have one more question," she called out, making River paused before he opened the car door.

"What is it?" he asked.

"...why, um, why do you hate me so much?" she finally asked. She looked down at the grassy dirt ground, too afraid to meet River's eyes.

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