

THE MOON AND HER SECRET

CHAPTER 17 NO.17

Throughout their remaining shift together, Lana noticed how Ray was moving around constantly. He never stayed inside the station for too long, especially when Lana was there. She did not want to overthink the situation but it was hard for her not to do so when Ray was making it obvious that he was avoiding her. He would not even look at her general direction.

Lana pondered on whether he was mad at her or if he thought she was mad at him. Either way, she knew she had to do something to fix the suffocating air that was slowly creeping on to them.

"Your shift's nearly over right? You should go and pack up." Hannah suddenly mentioned.

Lana glanced at the wall clock, it was nearly midnight. She then looked around the station, not even a bit surprised when she did not spot Ray. "Do you know where Ray went?" Lana asked Hannah.

Hannah shrugged. "Last I saw, he was outside talking to Jack."

"Right..." Lana muttered as she went to pack her belongings from her locker. She noticed the front door being pushed open and peaked at it from behind her open locker door. Ray walked into the station with a fatigue-ridden Jack following him close behind. Ray caught Lana's gaze for a mere second before turning away to bid the other rangers goodnight.

Lana waved bye to Hannah before brushing past Ray to go wait outside by

the car. She leaned against the cool metal of the car door as she stared ahead at the barely visible path towards the forest. She closed her eyes, listening to the calm breeze passing through the leaves and caressing her skin. She felt the hairs of her hands raise from the sudden chilling sensation.

She suddenly recalled her conversation with River, when he mentioned how the werewolves were bound to this forest. Now when she was pondering about the meaning behind those words, Lana started to believe that maybe she was bound to it as well.

She always thought that the feeling she felt when she was in the forest was elevated due to her constant need for escapism. Her need to run away from her mundane routine, stuck in a constant loop in this mundane town. But the recent events that surrounded her immediately changed her notion of reality.

Lana is bound to this forest, that much she is sure of. No matter how many times she tried to leave, it kept pulling her back in. Whether it be in the form of sentimentality of growing up in the town where her late parents lived or pure curiosity to make the unknown known. This town, this forest, everything and everyone around it is entangled in a twisted web of secrets and mysteries and one day she wants to unveil it all. But for now all she wanted was some peace.

A snap of a twig made her jolt forward, dropping the bag in her hands to the ground. She turned to the source only to find Ray. He seemed startled by her sudden action.

“...I didn’t mean to scare you.” He slowly said as he leaned forward to pick up her bag. He dusted the dirt from it before passing it back to Lana.

"No, you didn't. I'm just a bit jumpy." She replied as she retrieved her bag from Ray's grasp and hugged it to her chest.

"Are you alright? You must be tired after everything that happened."

"Which thing are you referring too?" she muttered.

"Hah, Lana I get that you're mad at me for keeping this from you but—"

Lana quickly pulled the passenger door open and hopped in without letting Ray finish his sentence. "Let's just go back and talk there. It would be a problem if someone overheard us, right?" she said as she shut the door. She glanced at Ray's disheartened expression before he made his way to the driver's seat. She felt a strange pang in her chest, knowing that she hurt Ray with her words made her consciousness yell at her to apologize. But that would not change the fact that she was still mad at him for keeping her in the dark.

The car was filled with smooth jazz music when Ray turned on the car. Lana leaned her head against the window, her gaze never faltering from the dark path towards the forest. The longer she stared at it the more she began to wonder what the difference was between being bound to something and being trapped.

"You'll tell me everything, right Ray?" Lana muttered, her chest was irritatingly heavy as she tried to push away the abundance of mixed feelings that was engulfing her person.

"Yes, everything." He replied.

"No more secrets?"

"Yes...no more secrets." He repeated as he drove out of the parking space.

"Okay then, but Ray..." Lana closed her eyes. "You look really cuddly as a wolf," She uttered suddenly.

There was a long silence between the two, to the point where Lana thought Ray did not hear her. Ray then let out a long sigh. Lana glanced at him, the passing streetlamps revealed Ray's glistening eyes and tear-stained cheek. Lana turned her body fully to him, ready to ask what was wrong with him. Ray then smiled fondly.

"You really are Claire's daughter..." he said in a whisper as he stared ahead. In his mind, Lana was certain that he was reminiscing of the times he spent with her parents. They were his closest friends when they were younger but now, the memories he had of them only haunted him.

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The car ride back home was filled with heavy silence from Lana and Ray, with only the soft murmurs of the radio filling the atmosphere. Lana did not know what to say after Ray's statement so she opted to stay silent. The closer they got to their home, the more anxious she felt. She would finally have the full picture of the secrets that Rosecliff had and she did not know if that thought alone made her glad and scared.

She was certain of one thing, her life was going to change no matter what she found out from Ray. She couldn't continue her life normally anymore now that she knew that the entire situation she was in was far from 'normal'.

Ray pulled into the driveway and parked the car. Lana did not waste any second as she pushed the door open and hopped out of the car. She made her way to the front door as she fished for the house keys that were in her bag.

"Lana!" Ray called out.

"Yea?" she called back as she pulled out the key. Her gaze then drifted to the door that was already open. Through the small creak from the open door, she could see the living room lights were on. She felt her heart still, panic quickly consuming her. "Ray, the door is open." She called out, her fight or flight senses were kicking in.

"...well, I forgot to tell you. We have company." He said as he appeared behind her.

Lana let out a relieved sign but immediately frowned at Ray's nonchalant attitude. Lana tried to think of all the people Ray would be comfortable letting in the house unsupervised and no one came to mind. She decided to see for herself as she pushed the door wider and went inside.

She froze the moment she saw four figures loafing around her living room. Three of them were seated on the couch that looked too small for that many people to sit on and one stood by the fireplace, gazing down at the picture of her parents. Their eyes were on her simultaneously when they noticed her

walk in.

“Hello, Lana. It’s been a while.” The tall cheery man said followed with his signature contagious smile.

His shaggy ginger hair and thick beard made him look like the typical friendly lumberjack. Lana recalled meeting him a few times whenever he would come over to visit Ray but other than that she would not have expected him to be associated with this whole werewolf business. Although, the longer she stared at him, she couldn’t help but wonder what he would look like in his wolf form.

“...Hi, Griffin...” Lana greeted dubiously.

Her gaze then went to the couch once more, where her eyes met with River’s.

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