

THE MOON AND HER SECRET

CHAPTER 9 NO.9

River grew up in a rather strict household alongside his older sister, his temperamental father and his indifferent mother. He wholeheartedly believed that the only reason he did not go insane in that household was because he had his caring and capable older sister by his side. He was home-schooled for the most of his childhood, only ever knowing the company of his sister. But in a blink of an eye, everything changed.

He was left in the care of Griffin Hayes, a tall and heavy built man with gentle eyes. River watched as his family got into a car and left Rosecliff, they left him behind. He was shoved into situations that he never experienced before while living with Griffin but with the patience and care the older man showed River, the more he adapted.

He found a friend and father figure in Griffin and soon River's grief-stricken heart of watching his family leave him was starting to heal. River met his cousin, Maddison Attwood and soon met Luis Santos as well. In their youth, the three of them were inseparable. River felt relieved that his friends were werewolves like him, he found that fact alone comforting as though he did not feel alone anymore.

When he was 12, Griffin proposed the idea of River going to school. Although River was scared of the change, he was also excited to finally experience school life as he heard a lot of stories from Maddison and Luis. Griffin was confident in River's control on his transformation abilities that they would be able to avoid any mishaps. Soon after, it was River's first day of middle school.

“Are you nervous?” Griffin asked, his voice deep and hoarse.

“I think so...” River mumbled.

Griffin let out a jolly laugh as he patted River’s back painfully. “Don’t be, boy! Maddison and Luis will be with you, but of course that doesn’t mean you shouldn’t try to make new friends, you hear me?”

“...what if the human children don’t like me?”

“Hey now, don’t call ‘em that. You’re a child too,”

“But I’m not human-”

“Shh,” Griffin said as he kneeled in front of River and pressed a finger against River’s lips. “We are all human in the town of Rosecliff. Don’t forget that.”

“River!!” a voice called out. The both of them turned to the source, watching Maddison wave happily at them. Luis peeked from behind her and greeted them with a small smile.

“Go on now kid, have fun at your first day of school.” Griffin said, ruffling River’s hair before walking towards a group of adults deep in conversation. River went towards his friends as they entered the building.

River got overwhelmed the moment they entered the building. There were so many students and the thought of being in a space filled with strangers was overstimulating River’s mind. A soft hand reached to grab River’s. He turned

to Luis who gave his hand a reassuring squeeze. River felt himself slowly calm down, knowing that he was not alone to experience this new change.

When they finally reached their classroom, River scanned around the faces of his classmates. They were energetic and loud. A group of boys were fooling around at the back, name calling each other obnoxiously. He heard someone squeal and noticed some girls talking between each other in a hushed tone. They periodically glanced over to River.

“Come on, River.” Maddison called him over as she showed him to an empty seat that was beside her. They were close to the door and River remembered how Maddison preferred the seats by the door so it was faster for her to leave once class was over. Luis sat in front of River.

Luis turned around and spoke to River. “The teacher is really nice,” he mentioned. “Don’t be afraid to ask him anything, okay?”

“Is he one of us?” River asked.

Luis and Maddison exchanged nervous glances. Luis leaned in closer to River. “Um, we don’t talk about that openly—didn’t Griffin tell—”

“He did but I was just curious. Sorry.”

“You don’t have to apologize and no, Mr. Thomas is a normal human.” Maddison said.

“As if!” someone called out from behind them. Maddison and Luis both tensed as they turned around. A girl with pigtails stood by the door, looking at them

as she entered. "Mr. Thomas is anything but normal! He is so strict, and for what?" she grumbled.

"Your...Suzie right?" Luis asked.

"That's my name! And who's this? I've never seen his before" she gestured at River as she stood by his table. She curiously studied his face, her eyes beaming with curiosity.

"He's my cousin, River." Maddison replied.

"Nice to meet you!" Suzie offered him a toothy grin. "My name is Suzie O'Brien!"

River was about to greet her back when he noticed her attention went to the door.

"Hey! Come say hi to the new kid!" Suzie waved her friend over.

"There's a new kid?" a new voice asked.

River felt his entire body tense up suddenly. A sweet sickening scent filled the air almost instantly and the more he inhaled the more suffocating he felt. He gasped aloud, causing Maddison and Luis to be alerted.

"What's wrong, River?!" Luis asked, urgency tainting his voice.

River was panting heavily, his hand went to cover his mouth where he could feel the drool dripping down his chin. Something was wrong and h

e wasn't sure what was causing this. He could hear Maddison and Luis call out to him, deep with worry, but his head was a jumbled up mess. He tried to respond to them, to call out for help but he couldn't form any words as he felt himself tongue-tied by the overpowering scent. He felt his eyes burn with tears and his stomach felt knotted. He groaned in pain.

"I'll get Mr. Thomas!" Luis cried as he ran out of the classroom.

"What's wrong with him? Is he sick?" the new voice called out. River glanced at the girl, her hazel eyes made him feel as though time stopped. He was drawn to her in a unexplainable way. He wanted to reach out to touch her skin but most importantly he felt the sudden urge to mark her. River's mouth parted slightly, wanting to quench this sudden thirst.

"River? Can you hear me? What's wrong?!" he heard Maddison call as she shook his body to gain his attention. But River couldn't take his eyes off the girl before him. He reached out to her, watched as her brow furrowed into a confused expression.

His hand was caught midway by someone else. River was tugged out of his seat harshly. His attention snapped towards the person holding his hand. It was Griffin, out of breath and sweat dripping from his forehead. "Come with me, now!"

River allowed himself to be dragged out of the classroom, the last thing he saw was the girl looking back at him, clearly confused at everything that happened. Griffin took River to the nurse's office and shut the door behind him. He gestured River to lay on the bed. He plopped down on the hard bed,

feeling himself gain full control of his body now that the sweet scent from earlier had subsided.

“That lass...” River heard Griffin’s low voice. He turned his head only to realize that he was talking in a hushed tone to the school nurse.

“She’s Ray’s...”

River couldn’t heard their conversation properly, but he had a feeling they knew what happened to him back in the classroom. “Griffin...” River called out, his voice strained.

Griffin went to River’s side immediately. “Here, drink some water.” He said as he offered the bottle to River. He grabbed it but did not attempt to drink it.

“What happened to me?”

Griffin glanced back at the nurse. “Answer this first River, did you smell a sweet scent?”

River nodded. “My entire body was hurting. I hated it...”

“Has he experienced his first rut yet?” the nurse interjected.

“He is 12, Maribel.” Griffin firmly stated.

Maribel held her hand up to calm Griffin. “The only sane conclusion is that whoever emitted that sweet scent tiggered River’s first rut.”

“What is that?” River asked.

Griffin sighed. “We’ll talk about this later, just get some rest now and we’ll go home.”

“What about school?”

“You can start tomorrow, rest now.” Griffin patted his head and pulled the nurse aside. River closed his eyes, feeling exhausted as though he just spent hours running around. The ache that formed in his throat and stomach was now completely gone, making River wonder if it happened at all or was this entire thing just a messed up dream.

“I’m telling you the truth, Griff, aside from River, Luis and Maddison, there aren’t any other werewolf children in that class!” Maribel said in a harsh whisper.

“So make me understand why did this happen in the first place!? Luis and Maddison are both betas. The only explanation to why River could’ve reacted like that is another—”

“Hush! Lower your voice!”

Griffin ran his fingers through his hair. “Look, if I didn’t see Luis running earlier I would have been too late to stop River from attacking the girl. I need you to be honest with me so we can avoid things like this.” Griffin sighed.

“Oh my god! I don’t have any reason to lie to you! Go talk to Ray, he’s her guardian currently and he told me she’s human so—”

“Okay, fine, I’ll talk to him but...”

Griffin’s voice was slowly fading and River felt himself being swept away by sleep. His eyelids grew heavy and the grip he had on the bottle water loosened. A lot of things happened on his first day of school but he couldn’t even experience a normal school day. He hope that once he wakes up, Griffin will explain everything to him.

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“River...?”

River looked up at Lana’s distressed expression. He was silent for too long to the point where Lana thought he didn’t hear her question. But River had his own fair share of questions. Why would she ask him that, he pondered. Does it really matter to her if River liked her or not? Now that he thought about, why Lana? From middle school till now, it has always been just her who made River slowly lose his sanity with the scent that emitted from her body.

Even Griffin could not explain to him why exactly that was. Lana Danley was the greatest mystery that was presented to River and in the end he opt to run away and avoid her instead of figuring out the answers to endless questions.

“We should head back to school now if we don’t want to miss recess.” River finally spoke as he entered the car. He did not even try to hide the fact that he was ignoring her question.

“...right.” Lana muttered, feeling like a complete fool. Of course he hates her,

why wouldn't he?

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