

CHAPTER 1

The Beta of the Rwirwe pack dragged his Alpha and lover down the dark hallway and into her room. He nudged her towards the bed and followed immediately covering her body with his. Without wasting time, he began unbuttoning her blouse trailing light kisses all over her exposed skin. She lifted her hips to aid the movement, when he made to pull her leggings off. Immediately he discarded it, she was onto him. Locking their lips together and began kissing her ardently.

"At some point, we have to stop doing this," Tommy declared leaning in to peck her lips once again contrary to his words. He loved sneaking around with Rhey, but there was also a pang of crippling guilt in the pit of his heart, every time he thought of his mate. The one he hasn't even met yet.

"You don't want to ever stop," Rhey countered wrapping her strong arms around his neck and pulled him down against her. "You want this, just as much."

Tommy grunted but didn't bother denying what they both knew to be true. He captured her bottom lip between his teeth applying slight pressure on it just as she loved. Rhey moaned deep in her throat and circled her legs around his waist, locking him in place.

"Our mates," Tommy blurted making Rhey groan.

"What about them?" She asked exasperatedly.

"They are somewhere out there, it's not fair to them." Rhey had always admired Tommy's sound reasoning but it wasn't appealing at the moment. She wanted to scream we are mates to shut him up, but she decided against it.

"Stop being such a baby," she scolded instead, "we are two consenting adults having fun. I am sure they will understand." She reached out to unbuckle his belt and opened his zipper with her thin long ngers. All the doubts in Tommy's mind ed, when Rhey raised her hips grinding against his bulge.

"If I didn't know better I would think you are on heat," Tommy teased pulling back to stare at Rhey's brown eyes as his ngers pushed the loose nappy curls behind her ear. Rhey's heart missed a beat. Was it that obvious? She wondered. It was true she was in heat but only she knew that. It's a common ordeal for a she-wolf who has met her mate, to go into heat every three days in a month until they complete the mating ritual. And Rhey is no exemption to the rule. She has been experiencing it ever since she discovered Tommy was her mate three years ago. In the beginning, she hid away during those days taking some concoctions thanks to her witch, but after hooking up with her mate one time, nothing else could quench that thirst.

Tommy's eyes clouded with concern when he realized Rhey's demeanor had changed. She looked uncertain unlike a moment ago when her eyes were blazing with sheer lust. "Are you okay?" His thumbs caressed her cheeks lovingly,

"I am ne," Rhey mumbled, trying to sit upright.

"Come here," Tommy wasn't convinced by her 'I am ne' bullshit. He pulled her to his chest and circled his arms tightly around her shoulders "You know you can tell me anything, right?"

She nodded, not trusting herself to speak. It's moments like these when she regrets lying to her best friend and lover but thinking of her mother always gets her back to her initial resolve. Mates are a weakness, something she can't afford as an Alpha queen.

"I have to go," she attempted to pull out of his arms but Tommy wasn't letting go.

"Is it because of what I said?" He asked referring to his earlier statement on how they should stop fooling around. "Forget about it," he added quickly before Rhey could reply. "I love you Rhey, I know you are not my mate and I shouldn't feel this way, but I do."

Rhey's eyes snapped to his, when he mentioned the L-word. She had warned him several times about it but Tommy never stopped declaring his interest in her. She leaned in, bumping their foreheads together. "Thomas..." she trailed as Tommy brushed his lips on her's, lightly. "I know you don't love me Rhey," he began but she cut him off with a vigorous head shake.

"You are among the few that I love and you know it."

"I know," Tommy responded, "but it's not the same." Rhey exhaled deeply, staring at the man who owned her heart but would never know.

"You were right, we can't do this anymore. We have to think of our mates." She claimed harshly. But even as she said the dumb words her wolf was growling in her head, 'he is our mate dumbass'.

Rhey ignored her wolf and kept her unwavering gaze on Tommy who looked wretched. Her heart tore for him and she ached, hating that she was the reason behind his sadness. "I am sorry Thomas,"

"Don't be, it's not like we are mates anyway," Tommy muttered stepping past Rhey, leaving the room in a hurry. He was hurting too much to stay around the one woman he loved. Though it stung hearing her put a stop to whatever they had going on, he knew she didn't owe him anything.

He quickly shifted, shredding his clothes in the process and howled in pain. 'We will nd our mate someday,' his wolf encouraged sharing in his misery.

Left alone in the room, Rhey broke down letting silent tears decorate her cheeks. Her wolf spared no insults for she didn't like hurting their mate. Not that Rhey liked it either.

Over the years her wolf sought solace in the fact that she and Tommy were fooling around.

She believed with time Rhey will learn to love and accept their mate. But after seeing how things ended between the two, the wolf couldn't help but feel scared. What if she lost her mate forever because of her stupid and stubborn human?

If she wasn't so afraid of Rhey carrying out her rejection threat, she would have found a way to let Tommy's wolf know the truth. That she is indeed theirs.

The retired Alpha, Ryan, was heard calling his daughter's name loudly in the hallways. He hadn't seen her since the day before and as a father, he missed his daughter. Rhey composed herself quickly upon hearing her father's loud voice and wiped away the damn tears with her sweater before responding, "coming, papa."

"Baby girl," Ryan called immediately Rhey came into view.

"Father," she stepped in his stretched arms and circled her arms around his waist laying her head on his chest. Ryan felt her emotions and tightened his hold rubbing her back soothingly. "What's wrong, baby?"

"Just Alpha stuff," she whispered, "where were you yesterday?" She asked trying to steer the topic of her,

Ryan pulled back and draped his hands over her shoulders and guided her towards the balcony. "I visited lily," he breathed out uneasily watching his daughter's face for anything that would let him know how she felt about his new lover.

But Rhey gave nothing away, her expression was well guarded which didn't surprise Ryan for she learned that from him. "You know at some point you will have to tell me what you really think about her," he chuckled at Rhey's pursed lips and her dramatic eye roll.

"She is your business father, not mine."

"She will be your business too when she moves in with us." Ryan shot back leaning on the rail and faced forward an action that Rhey imitated.

"How soon are we talking about?" She asked warily,

"A month or two,"

"What? You can't be serious." Rhey screeched horried at the idea of sharing her father with another woman who wasn't her mother. Ryan caught a glimpse of Rhey's honest reaction towards his lover. "You hate her," he concluded with a sigh,

"I don't," Rhey argued with a frown. She indeed had nothing against the brilliant Dr.Lily, "I just don't like her for you. Must she move in with us?"

Ryan contemplated his next words carefully for he didn't want to ruin his relationship with Rhey. Apart from the fact that she is his only child, she is also the only constant reminder of Catherine, his late mate. "I will forever love your mom,"

"I know dad," she answered honestly, "I am just not ready to see you replace her."

Ryan sucked in a breath, as he had initially thought Rhey wasn't over her mother's death. He rubbed his palms together exhaling deeply and turned to face her, "will you ever be ready?" He asked seriously and Rhey shook her head sadly tears pooling in her beautiful brown orbs. Ryan couldn't stand seeing his baby girl sad so he pulled her in for an embrace.

"Oh, baby," he groaned dropping a kiss on her hair. "I am sorry," that did it for Rhey, she started sobbing out loud. Nothing will ever let her forget the terrible ordeal she went through as a child.

She had witnessed the three women who meant life to her get torn apart and could have been killed as well if her uncle Logan hadn't intervened. As a child, she witnessed horror beyond repair, and despite Ryan's attempt to show her other beautiful aspects of life, Rhey was forever scarred. "I miss them, Papa," she moaned amidst hiccups.

"You and me both." Ryan squeezed his daughter tighter, willing himself to take her pain and bear it instead. "I failed to protect them, I am sorry."

Rhey pulled out of her father's embrace, wiped her face, and exhaled deeply. "It's not your fault Papa, it never was." She insisted truthfully. She took her father's hand and kissed the back of his palm, "you are the best thing in my life and I love you very much."

It was Ryan's turn to be emotional. Rhey rarely showed her sentimental side but whenever it happened Ryan is always ooded with immense emotions. "I love you, baby."

Father and daughter hugged each other basking in their love for one another. That's how Logan and Michael found them when they walked in.

"Can I get a hug too?" Logan teased his niece and was stunned when she stepped out of her father's arms into his.

"Hey, are you okay?" He asked because he had expected her to ip him off like she always does. He wasn't used to a meek Rhey.

She nodded in his embrace silently before moving to Michael and gave him a brief hug. When she exited the room, Logan turned to Ryan in alarm.

"What's wrong with her?"

"She hates Lily,"

"Ooh," Logan mumbled with a relieved sigh. Ryan shot him a mean look which his brother shrugged nonchalantly. "No one likes Lily,"

Ryan's attention shifted to Michael, his brother's mate. He too shrugged his shoulders without a word and diverted his gaze.

"Why?" Ryan asked, sounding astonished because Lily was a good person and quite lovely too.

"She is not Cate," Logan offered simply. And it was true. The whole pack adored Catherine for she was a pinnacle of goodness. Her kindness and grace were something to marvel at. She single handedly ended decades of a feud with their neighboring pack with just a simple talk with the other Luna. When she died, a void that couldn't be lled was left behind. And that's what everyone in the pack felt.

"Why didn't you say anything?" Ryan accused his brother,

"I thought you were just having fun," Logan defended, raising his hands in a surrender move. "I never truly believed you would mate with someone else..." He trailed off when his mate jabbed his belly.

"We can't expect him to be alone forever, babe. It's not fair." Michael murmured lowly, but Ryan heard it perfectly.

Logan scratched his head awkwardly and ran his ngers through his tangled curls exasperatedly. "I guess I am just not ready to see Cate replaced, it feels like a betrayal."

Michael moved closer and rubbed his mate's back. He felt the same. Anyone who knew Cate would have felt the same. But he knew it would be unfair to expect Ryan to live in solitude because of that. "Your brother deserves this, babe."

Logan nodded, hating himself for what he had just told his brother. He did deserve to be happy after all the pain he had been through.

"I am sorry, bro. It was insensitive of me to argue against Lily. If she makes you happy, then go be with her."

Ryan watched his younger brother's remorseful expression and smiled. Logan always spoke his mind and never apologized for it which made him the most lovable person in the pack besides his Catherine. It was strange and funny seeing him struggle to apologize for something he didn't believe in but it showed just how much he loves him.

"Don't be sorry, Cate set a high bar." He shrugged, "it took me sixteen years to even consider going out with someone."

Logan chuckled, "she surely did."

The two brothers bumped sts and Michael joined in hugging both on each side. "So when are we meeting Lily ocially?"

Ryan just laughed and said, "after everything I have heard today, I am not sure you ever will."

"Come on bro," Logan persuaded as they pulled apart,

"You hate her," Ryan retorted,

"I don't hate her," Logan argued, "I just don't like her for you."

"I have heard that before," Ryan blurted, pocketing his hands while Michael asked, "from Rhey?"

"Who else?" Ryan asked with a scoff making Michael chuckle heartily.

Rhey and Logan were like two peas in a pod. He should know for he helped raise her since Cate died and he is mated to Logan...