

2 Unexpected Mate

Rosie POV

"It's so badass," mom snickers while checking out the already healed tattoo showing on my shoulder. Werewolf healing made it heal right away. It's on full display in the tted mermaid party dress, that looks more like a prom dress Aunt Sim had commissioned for me by a new fairy tailor she has been raving about. "Your dad know about it yet?"

By mom's smile, I can tell she already knows the answer to that question.

"I'm an adult now," I crossed my arms stubbornly. "What is he going to do?"

"Pout a lot. Don't worry, baby girl. I got your dad taken care of. He can't hold you to a standard he didn't even hold himself to."

"He did get a tattoo when he was still 16. Right?" Aunt Sim chortles. "What was it again? A snake?"

"Worse. A snake coiled around a wolf's paw. He thought it was badass," mom chokes.

"Is that what that thing on dad's upper arm is supposed to be?" I gaped. I always asked him but he told me it was "a mistake", Nothing else. Just that it was a mistake. I thought it was a ball of yarn.

"Yep. Grandpa Jared told him he couldn't get one because they were tacky."

"He sure showed him," Aunt Sim chuckles. "Did it hurt?" she runs her ngers over the blue buttery gracing my skin.

"Nope. Barely felt it," I grinned.

"Of course you didn't," mom rolls her eyes. "You didn't even inch when we got our belly buttons pierced."

I didn't. I really have a high threshold for pain.

"You look gorgeous, hun," Aunt Sim nished the last of my curls in my hair. "You'll be turning heads for sure. Who knows? Maybe you will nd your mate from one of the visiting packs."

I smiled coyly, running my ngers through my hair to loosen the curls. "There is only one visiting pack ocial I'm interested in being mates with." I've never kept my crush on Taegan a secret. He didn't either when we were young kids.

That changed over time, but he still keeps up a healthy friendship with me.

He visits Miami a couple of times a year, usually. I know he and Callum went to work on their pack's mining plots in Alaska with Phoebe, their pack's future Beta. She had just graduated from college the spring before last and all their parents wanted them to work to run part of the business together for a year as a test run for taking over the pack soon.

Because of that, I haven't seen Taegan in over a year, and my excitement is almost bubbling out of me now.

He might think we aren't mates, but I don't want to let my hopes die just yet.

"Rosie, honey," Mom pushes the hair around my face behind my ears. "He already told you you weren't mates. Don't get upset when you see it for yourself."

"Mom," I pushed her hands away. "I wasn't 18 yet. I still could be."

She shakes her head. "Your dad knew I was his mate the moment he turned 18. Even before that, there was a connection there. It was a bit blurry for us, because of, uh, just the s**t going on with our parents, but it was still there. The stronger your wolf genes, the earlier you just know, Rosie. Taegan said he knows you're not his mate."

"But I feel a pull!" I tried to argue. "I do!" Ever since I got my wolf, whenever they visit I just felt this unsettled feeling in me. It's like my body just knew my mate was near.

No, I don't feel tingles and sparks, but I wasn't 18 yet. Taegan might not think we are mates. Fine. I'm still not ready to admit we are not. After tonight I will know for sure. After tonight, if it's not him..... then I will give up.

Maybe....

Okay, I will. But not until I know for sure it's not him.

"Just don't be too disappointed, baby," Mom rubs my back.

I gave her a dry smile, not wanting to be pacied.

"Why would she be disappointed? You look hot as hell and you're 18 now. Your mom and I can be your wingmen at the club later tonight," Aunt Sim bumps me with her hip. "Being single in Miami is nothing to be disappointed about."

"Is that right, my love?" A smooth voice purrs from the open doorway of my parents' bedroom. Uncle Vincent was leaning against the frame with a sultry smile on his face.

Mom rolls her eyes but I sigh along with Aunt Sim looking at him.

Thank f**k he isn't really my uncle, because I get sinful thoughts looking at him sometimes. I don't know anyone unmated who doesn't. His unyielding devotion to Aunt Simone on top of his raw sexuality is hard not to nd attractive.

He may not be my real uncle, just like Simone isn't my real aunt, but it looks like they will be real family soon. Even now, my brother Reese is probably off with their daughter, Karina, making out in some deserted room or closet. They are both so sure they are mates, even though they have about a year and a half left before they can confrm it.

Aunt Sim struts over to his side, and he practically whisks her off her feet, no doubt taking her somewhere to prove to her that being single is not preferable. Not when she is mated to him.

Going to his nightclub lled with sexy vampires just like him doesn't sound half bad seeing him and Aunt Sim together. Uncle Vince worships everything about my Aunt Simone. Everything. He uses his sexy vampire mojo to keep her spoiled and endlessly happy.

Seeing a mated couple outside of the normal pairing of two wolves has always intrigued me. Not just because of Simone and Vincent, but because of all the other inter-racial couples in our pack. Even our Betas are a gay wolf/vampire couple.

It's always amazed me to see that the mate bond isn't bound by race or any other limits. Love is love, and if two souls are a perfect match, that's all that matters.

When all of us are nished getting ready, mom takes my arm and walks with me down to the main oor to start greeting guests. The party has already started, but mom and Aunt Sim, who is still busy with her mate, both say it's better to be late to your own party than early.

Mom has me greet several ocials from other packs, other alpha's children eyeing me appraisingly, and young single men, no doubt sent to nd out if the single female alpha heir of Crystal Moon Pack might hopefully be their mate.

There are lots of looks of disappointment so far.

After a while of playing my part as the alpha heir, welcoming the visiting guests to my party, Dad sees mom and me, and his eyes light up with pride. That is until he takes me in for a hug and sees the tattoo on my shoulder.

I prepare myself for his wrath, but mom is true to her word and tells him to shut up before he can say anything. She mind links something to him that has his tense jaw loosening and the re in his eyes cooling in no time. It's replaced with a hungry expression as his eyes rake down her body, and I don't want to even imagine what my mom told him.

"You're not off the hook," he mutters in my ear when mom inted away to hug Melody, a fae friend of hers. "We will be speaking about this at training in the morning. In excruciating detail."

"Come on, Dad. It's pretty. Isn't it?" I turned so he could see it better.

"Hmph," he grunts, but he still runs his ngers over the design. "You are like your mother too much sometimes."

"Really? Mom always says I'm too much like you," I smile sweetly, wrapping my arms around my dad's waist.

"Yeah, yeah," dad caves, hugging me back and kissing the top of my head. "You're still doing suicides until you pass out tomorrow."

"That might take a while," I smirked. "I can outlast you, I'm sure."

"Are you trying to make your punishment a competition?" He laughs. "So, so, so much like your mother."

"That's why you love me so much," I said. "I'm your favorite."

"My favorite daughter," he counters with a lazy grin, and I know I am in the clear now. "That's also why I know you are going to be a good Alpha for the pack one day."

"Because I'm like mom?"

"Because you got the best of both of us." He holds my face in his large hands. "Happy birthday, my erce little girl. Even with a tattoo, you will always be my baby girl." He tenderly presses his lips to my forehead before rubbing his nose with mine.

I knew dad couldn't be too mad for too long.

Grandpa Tommy interrupted our moment with a glint in his eye. I'm sure he was just to pick on my dad, and makes a show out of spinning me around in his arms to wish me happy birthday.

Grandma Elena, after forcing her mate to put me back on the ground, gives me a peck on the cheek, then walks to where my mom and Melody are standing talking with some of the Lunas from other packs.

I'm passed around to all our family members, going through many of the same birthday greetings. After slipping away from Grandpa Jared and his questioning about colleges, I nally am able to join my friends hanging out around the transformed dining hall near the punch bowl. Someone spiked it, I'm sure. The guys are snickering too much while mixing it with the spoon.

"You survived!" Sophia laughed. "I saw your dad checking out your tattoo."

I shrugged complacently. "What can he do? Like I said, I'm an adult now."

"Yeah you are," Lenny, a future warrior I graduated with winks at me.

I ip him off. I don't date or even irt with guys in my pack. That's something both my parents were always sure to instill in me, especially as the future alpha. It's disrespectful to their future mates and I should never give my pack members any reason not to trust me.

"I want to see your tattoo," Brinley gushes, turning me around so my back faces her. "How pretty! The detailing is amazing. It almost looks real."

"Thanks. I went to the artist the Meyers brothers go to."

"No wonder," Brinley sighs. "Those two are way too hot to be old business men."

"They're not any older than my parents," I laughed. "They are also mated, so watch it."

"Lucky woman," Brinley eyed Mitch and Mark Meyers with their mate, Hadley, from across the room. The men are trying to keep their twin girls under control while Hadley talks to Lilly, her sister-in-law. The Meyers brothers are actually triplets, but Matt, the other brother, came from his own egg and Mark and Hadley are identical twins. Matt is the Gamma of the pack, and the other brothers work under Hadley at the resort they own on Miami beach.

The resort is where Taegan, Callum and Rian are staying. Taegan always insists on staying there for some reason.

Probably because of stupid Rian. His prissy ass probably would rather stay in a resort on the beach than here in the packhouse. We don't have room service or turn down the beds.

I'm tempted to run over and ask Hadley if she knows when Taegan will get here. I know they landed in Miami earlier today. I felt it. That familiar pull that warned me they were close.

That feeling I get is one of the reasons I can't believe just yet that Taegan isn't my mate.

Taegan is strong. He has the strongest Alpha genes you can get, and he has other powers on top of that. That has to be why I can always feel it when he and his family are here. There can't be any other explanation other than him being my mate.

Right?

"They're here," Brinley squeals, staring at the entrance to the dining hall.

All the girls around me are squealing and buzzing, and most of the guys are groaning in disappointment.

They don't build men down here like they do in Blue Cliff. At least not any that look like my cousin, Callum, and Taegan. Both of them are massive, with perfectly muscular and powerful bodies and auras that would make weaker werewolves tremble.

Wow. Even Rian has lled in a lot since I last saw him.

Like, a lot, a lot. His shoulders are much broader and his face isn't as pretty as it once was. His jaw is more dened and his muscles are pretty impressive too. Almost as massive as Callum's, though still fairly smaller than Taegan's.

Taegan is unmatched in that department.

I tried to remain calm, trying to look as mature as I possibly could, as I started making my way to them, giving Sophia a knowing grin before I walked away from my friends.

I'm about halfway to them when this overwhelming scent overtakes me. It's like the sweet smell of the beach in the early morning. Well brine and sunshine with a hint of tropical owers enveloping me in a warm embrace.

My eyes go dark, searching for the source as the telling words leave my lips in an ever-soft whisper. "Mate."

The scent is coming from them. The three men that just walked in. My heart skips inside my chest, thinking all my hope has come to fruition, but as Taegan and Callum stop to talk to my dad, letting Rian walk ahead of them, I realize it was not Taegan at all.

Rian stops short, and is also staring at me with wide eyes, their hazel hue boring into my face. He is taking me in, with amazement and something else. Something I haven't seen in him before. It's not a proper or prim look in his eyes at all. It's tameless and possessive.

The desire to go to him is so strong that I almost give in. My body and the beast within me are demanding I claim him. Every cell in my body is screaming that this man is mine.

Before my body can move on its own, a woman's voice sounds from behind me.

"Rian!" Julie squeals, running up to him and latching her arms around his neck. "It's been so long! Why didn't you call me?"

A deep, low growl starts to vibrate in my chest, just low enough for Julia to miss it, it seems, but I can tell it doesn't go unnoticed by Rian.

Rian looks ustered, his wide eyes moving between her and me. He keeps opening his mouth to say something, then closes it, like a damned sh or some s**t.

That's when the reality of this situation hits me.

Taegan is not my mate. He was right all along.

Rian is. Rian is my mate, and not only is he not a f****g werewolf, he is the prince of a fairy kingdom that is set to return to his own realm soon.

And he has one of my friends that he has already hooked up with hanging on him like he belongs to her.

This isn't right. This isn't how it should be.

Everything about this is wrong. My head is trying to reason this out, but my heart and the bond are almost demanding me to tear apart my own friend to claim a guy I never even liked.

What the hell am I supposed to do?

What else can I do? After a nal glare and a deep snarl of bitterness, I turned around and walked away, grabbing Sophia and heading outside to get some fresh air so I could think without his scent tormenting me.