

4 | Past Regrets

Rosie POV

"What's wrong?" Sophia asked in a frenzied huff as I threw myself down on a cushioned lounge chair by the pool.

I just dragged her out here with no explanation and don't know where to even explain. I don't know if I can yet. I'm too pissed.

I threw my head back and covered my eyes with my arms so I could focus on my breathing, calming my rage enough not to run back inside and rip Julia's face off. I wanted to break both her arms and tear her lips right off of her, knowing they had once touched his.

"f**k!" I roared. What the hell do I do? Do I even have a right to be mad at her, or him for that matter?

It's not Taegan. It was never Taegan. It was Rian. The guy I've always shown only disdain for, and the one most of my friends are all over every time he's here.

Is that why it always bugged me? f**k, this is a complete mess.

I thought I hated him for being a womanizing prince, but maybe it wasn't that. Maybe I just hated him giving all my friends attention and not me.

There is no way I can hold that against him. I was so stubbornly set on being with Taegan that I didn't take any time to consider why Rian bugged me the way he did.

The f*****g mate bond is strong. Too strong, I don't even remember the reasons I was so infatuated with Taegan. Nothing about him can come into focus in my head.

Only the image of Rian can come to focus. His hooded hazel eyes and perfect face. His jaw looked so sexy, very masculine and sharp. His entire body looked more masculine and rigid. He didn't look like a pampered prince today. He looked like a f*****g man. A very sexy man. One that never had issues gaining admirers in the past. Girls probably ock to him even more now.

Then, the image of Rian with Julia hanging off his neck comes into focus, and I can't dislodge it, no matter how much I try.

And now I just left her with him. Just like that. Her lips would be on his in no time. Any woman wouldn't miss the opportunity to kiss his perfect lips if they could.

I start rubbing my chest, the ache of that thought is making it throb. If she or anyone else did kiss him, or worse, I would feel it. He's my mate. I'll feel it if he is with someone else.

What the hell am I supposed to do?

"Hey. I know I've been a b***h to you for the past decade, but since we're mates, your lips and body can't touch anyone but me." Yeah. If I say that to him and he laughs in my face, I don't know what I will do. It would crush me.

I kicked my feet against the chair, spiraling into grief. I wish I had dragged Julia out here with me so I at least know she's not trying to hook up with him again. I might have ended up killing her if I did, but that seems like a viable solution now anyway.

"Rose, you're scaring me. What the hell is wrong with you?"

Sophia pulls off my shoes, sits at the end of the lounge chair and holds my feet in her lap.

I lift one of my arms, glaring at her, knowing what she's about to do.

"Tell me," she smirks, her arms locked around my legs, one hand raised to attack.

"Don't," I sneered, "I'm not in the f*****g mood to be tick- AH!!"

I buckle over, halfway falling off the lounge as her hand starts tickling the bottom of my feet. I'm thrashing with laughter, so much that it hurts my chest.

"Fine! I'll tell. I'll tell you. Just.... STOP!"

She makes a threatening face while lifting her hand, ready to attack again. I can't keep myself from smiling at her expression. She's as threatening as a mouse to a lion. But she just knows my weakness. Tickling. The bottom of my feet are the worst. I had better just tell her before she attacks again.

"He's my mate," I blurt out.

Her eyes went wide. "Taegan?! Really?"

"No, crazy. Would I be out here thinking about popping Julia's head like a pimple if it was Taegan?"

"Julia?" Her brows pulled down in confusion. "Wait. RIAN'S YOUR MATE?!" The corners of her mouth oated up. She looks far too amused for my liking. "Seriously? The fairy prince you hate?!"

"I don't hate him!" I snapped. I added in a much quieter, tamed tone, "I just don't like the way he is with girls. I didn't know why until now."

"That's not the only reason you said you didn't like him. You said he was a weak, pretty boy that used his good looks and royal pedigree to get by."

"Shut up." I try to kick her with my foot, but she grips it tighter and threatens me with her raised hand again, her eyebrows going high on her forehead. She looks comical, but that's why I love her.

"I didn't like him. You're right. That's.....that's not the same now."

I thought he just used his title and family connections to get by. That's what I told myself at least. I don't want to voice that now, but growing up, it was the truth. It irritated me seeing him taking it easy and spending all his time when he was here irting with my friends while I was working my ass off. Now, I realize I was probably just pissed about the irting part and kept creating more excuses to hate him on top of that, since him being a irt wasn't really a logical reason.

Now that I'm thinking about it, now that I know he's my mate, I like the idea of him not being a warrior or a ghter. Both of my parents are warriors, and I know it stresses my dad out quite a bit.

I like the idea of having a mate that isn't an alpha wolf as well. Everything that was brought up as an issue of being mated to another alpha wolf seems to just fall into place when I think about Rian being my partner.

There is still one major issue though.

He's a fairy prince. He is also about to return to his own realm. The fairy realm is somewhere I can not go. No one besides the fae can. Even if I could leave my pack behind, which I can't, I couldn't chase after him, back to his own kingdom.

Callum said that Rian was dead set on going back. Do I even have the right to stop him? After how I have treated him the last several years, do I have any right to ask him to stay?

I wouldn't if I were him. I would reject myself.

He's a fae. The bond won't be the same for him as it is for me. For me, it's all consuming. For him.....

I don't know, but I bet it's something that can easily be ignored. That's why he didn't come after me. He just looked confused. He didn't even push Julia away.

Fuck, this is so frustrating.

"Why did I have to be such a b***h?!" I threw my arms over my face again, slamming my head back against the cushion.

"That's like asking a sh why it swims," Sophia snorts.

"You w***e," I growled, trying to kick her again, but she strikes before I even pull my foot away, tickling me violently, pinning my legs beneath her weight.

"I'm a what?!" She demands, not letting up, even though I'm screaming for relief, begging her to stop. "I couldn't hear you. What am I?"

"You're..... You're a..... A NICE LADY! NOW STOP!"

My top half is halfway on the ground, ailing as I laugh uncontrollably.

"I am a nice lady," Sophia nally stopped, dropping my legs from beneath her weight onto the ground with the rest of me. "Remember that. This nice lady is the only one who can put you on your ass."

I laugh as she helps me up, but my heart still feels heavy. She must know, because she pulled me into a erce hug.

"It's going to be okay, Rose. If you want, I can go and pop Julia's head like a pimple for you. I don't mind. I'm not going to be alpha."

I laugh at the image of Sophia trying to be mean to anyone. Her go-to move is a tickle attack.

"It's okay. I really can't blame her."

"That doesn't mean you don't want to kill her," Sophia smirks.

I shrug, unable to deny it.

"Want to head back in?" She asks me. "Or do you want to sneak away from your own party? Want me to kidnap you and take you to get a froyo or another tattoo to piss your dad off with?"

"No," I grinned. "Thank you, though."

After getting my shoes on and Sophia helping me to look less of a mess since she was the one who practically dropped me on the ground, we headed back in. She is staying by my side, gripping my hand in support.

She knows I don't want to accidentally hurt one of my friends in a possessive rage if they start in on Rian, so she leads me away from the dining hall to the adults still lingering in the foyer and front rooms.

I see Callum in the distance inside of another room farther away, glued to Aunt Sim as usual, but I don't see Rian or Taegan anywhere. There is an awkward tension in the air too.

I tried not to create a scene. I tried to keep my agitation in check until I got outside. Did people still notice what was happening?

My nerves started getting the best of me. Not knowing what happened to Rian when I left is eating at my gut. I don't see Julia anywhere either.

Sophia could tell that I was searching for them. She pulls me in closer to whisper in my ear. "Brinley just mind linked that Julia's parents took her home. I guess your prince told her off and scared her pretty badly."

A deep sense of satisfaction rests in my chest. I was about to go crazy thinking Rian and Julia snuck off somewhere together. It feels good to hear that he did push her away, even though it was after I left.

I still don't know where he went, though. I'm nervous about nding out but I need to know.

Reese and Katrina come down the stairs hand in hand, trying to sneak by unnoticed. Kat's lips are swollen and looking a little rough, and Reese has a smug look on his face. I can just guess what they had been doing.

I stop Reese as he tries to get through to the dining room.

"Hey. Are you just getting here now?"

He shrugs. "Who wants to know? Did mom ask where I was?"

"No. It's not a mystery what you were up to," I winked at Kat, who blushed deeply. She's so cute, especially when she gets ustered. "I was wondering if you knew what was going on? If you knew where."

"Taegan went?" Reese tries to nish my sentence with a wise-ass smirk.

"What? No. Not Taegan. Rian. I was wondering where Rian was."

For a minute my brain went "Taegan who?" since I was so worried about Rian.

"Lady getter 9000? I haven't seen him. Why? Did he piss you off over something stupid again?"

I grow lowly in my chest, making my younger brother laugh.

"What? You get pissed at him for the stupidest things every time they're here. Doesn't she?" He looks to Kat for conrmation.

The corner of her mouth lifts up, but she just shrugs, even though I can tell she is in agreement with Reese.

"Seriously, Rose. Leave the guy alone. The way you get overly sensitive about what he's up to makes me think that you actually like him and not his boy-wonder nephew."

Sophia snorts a laugh, trying to contain it. I send her a warning look, but she just sties more laughter.

"What?" Reese looks between my disgruntled expression and Sophia's amused face.

Kat's eyes go wide after a few seconds, then she pulls Reese down to whisper something in his ear. He mirrors her surprise and then looks back at me.

"No. No way. Is he....?"

"Go away," I growled, turning away from the twerp. "You're no help."

"f*****g hell, this is priceless," Reese calls after me. "Congrats, sist!"

I ip him off, while inwardly hoping Vincent catches him and Kat before they sneak in to mingle with the rest of the high schoolers and try to act like they were there the entire time.

Sophia and I searched for Rian in a few more rooms while I tried to dodge conversation with everyone as much as possible. I probably seem rude, but I don't care at the moment. I need to nd him. It's eating away at me not knowing where he is.

I nally nd Taegan talking to Mitch and Mark Meyers back in the dining room, but Rian isn't with him. He's not with Callum either, who is still standing with Aunt Simone.

Sophia's eyes keep lingering on Callum the closer we get to them. Callum must feel her gaze, because he looked up with a perplexed expression, staring back at us. I'm about to just go ask him where Rian might be, but then the powerful scent of the sun and sea overwhelms me again, like it did before, Rian is close. I can feel it.

I turned around, searching the larger foyer of the packhouse, and my eyes instantly connected to his. It's like there is this new radar inside of me, and the second he gets close, my whole body just wants to gravitate towards him.

His eyes are intense, strained in the corners. His mouth is set in a grim frown, and my anxiety starts to set in.

He must know by now that we are mates. I'm sure he gured that part out. He might have pushed Julia away, but he didn't seem happy to see me again. He looks brooding, or maybe he is mad about the whole situation. I don't know.

It's my own fault. I don't even know how to make this right or how to apologize for how aggressively bitter I have always been towards him.

"Wow," Sophia whispered softly. "I thought maybe the bond would override everything, but he doesn't look happy. I'm sorry, Rose. We can still get out of here if you want."

"No," I shook my head softly. "I don't want to run away."

What I want is to know exactly what to do right now. Do I try and convince him to accept me, or do I let him go back to his own world where he can be happy and live the life he wants as a prince?