

## Chapter 1: Rose

“Every heart sings a song, incomplete, until another heart whispers back. Those who wish to sing always nd a song. At the touch of a lover, everyone becomes a poet.”

– Plato” -

“Rose! Wake up!” Auntie Maria screamed from downstairs.

Rubbing her tired eyes, Rose turned to the side of the bed to peer at her digital alarm clock. The time read 8:00am. With a small groan, she got out of bed wondering how she had slept through the alarm for 7:30am. Maybe it was because Rose absolutely abhorred waking up early. Quickly getting ready for school and grabbing a piece of toast on her way out, Auntie Maria screamed after her.

“Rose darling, be home on time today, we have some people coming over for your 16th birthday party tonight!”

Rose was startled by this revelation: since before Rose could even remember it had always just been Auntie Maria and her. She was told her parents had died in a tragic airplane accident, leaving Rose in the guardianship of her mother's sister, Auntie Maria. Auntie Maria for the most part was not very social. In fact, Rose couldn't even remember the last time her aunt had ever had any company over. She was a very private lady who loved her space. Even Rose wasn't allowed out much, sending Auntie Maria into ts of rage the few times she had tried sneaking out to parties. It wasn't worth the disappointment or the worry she caused her loving aunt. Of course, Auntie Maria realized she couldn't keep Rose holed up in the house so she always tried to do something special over the weekends or during extended holidays that Rose would get from school. They never went anywhere too far from home, but Auntie Maria always tried to take her to concerts or the beach. The two ladies would go out for movie nights or to special events going on in the nearby museums. It had become a tradition to go somewhere over any holiday Rose got from school. A few times, Rose had asked to go somewhere out of the country like England or Paris but Auntie Maria always got nervous about travelling too far. Rose decided that maybe her aunt had some type of phobia when it came to travelling for an extended period of time on an airplane. However, both still had fun whatever they did together. Young and full of life, the ladies enjoyed each other's company, especially since Auntie Maria wasn't all that much older than Rose.

Getting out of the car Auntie Maria had bought for her, Rose hastily ran her ngers through her mahogany curly ringlets as she eyed her longtime crush, Jake, standing in the parking lot. With sandy blonde hair and light blue eyes that made all the girls go crazy, Jake was one of the most popular boys at school. He was also a senior while Rose was a lowly junior in high school. However, that didn't stop her from falling head over heels for him. It wasn't like this crush was going to lead anywhere anyway. Auntie Maria always kept a watchful eye on her charge and seemed to disapprove of Rose dating anyone. On the few dates she had been on, Auntie Maria would call her constantly, worried that the boy was an ax-murderer. Even Rose's best friend Erica thought her aunt was a tad too paranoid.

For the most part, Rose was a good girl who didn't go out much, concentrated on her studies and had a few crushes on guys that didn't go anywhere. Realizing her aunt was probably a little eccentric or probably had her heart broken and didn't trust men, Rose kept her head down and kept her love life to herself for the most part. Unfortunately, the fact that Rose didn't go to many parties put a damper on her reputation when it came to boys. She supposed it was because having a girlfriend that didn't go out much was equivalent to boring.

As a consequence of her social life being non-existent, Rose threw herself into her studies and she really loved learning. Her mind had an innate thirst for knowledge. Ever since she was a little girl, she remembered absorbing information around her like a sponge. It was why eventually, the educators in her life had advised that it would be best for Rose to skip a grade so that she could be appropriately academically challenged. Auntie Maria had been thrilled that her little Rose was such a smart girl. It did nothing whatsoever however to help Rose's popularity or luck in the romance department of her life.

Faltering a little as she walked to where Jake stood, Rose had to pause a moment to gather her courage. Even if she was the youngest out of all of them, she was still a junior and had some senior-level classes with Jake.

“Hey Jake!” Rose exclaimed, walking towards the handsome boy she had been crushing on for the past few months.

Jake nodded towards her, scanning her from head to toe.

“Hey Rose, what's up?” He was eyeing her approaching form.

“Not much. How's your paper coming along?” she inquired.

They both had the same history class because Rose was in advanced college-level classes with a lot of the seniors...Jake being one of them.

“It's going all right. Hey maybe later we should get together and run over a few ideas with each other?” he asked.

“Yea...let's do it!” Rose said agreeably.

His eyes squinted as they peered at the dark red strawberry shaped birth mark on her pale upper arm.

“Did you get hurt or something?”

“Oh.” Rose said a little embarrassed. “It's...it's nothing. It's just a birthmark. I usually don't wear tank tops so no one can really see it. But this out...” Twirling, so he could take in the silky white tank top and black ripped jeans she was wearing with black leather combat boots. “...Erica picked it out for me and I couldn't say no to her.” Rose blushed when she realized she was rambling a bit.

“Nice. I think that birth mark looks cool,” Jake said with an approving nod.

“Thanks,” Rose said grinning over is approval.

She mentally checked herself, she didn't want to look too enthusiastic over his opinion.

“So well...see you.” Jake nodded before adjusting is back pack on is shoulder and walking into the school with his friends.

“See you,” Rose said softly to the boy's retreating back.

He didn't even hear her as he pushed through the school's double doors.

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Xavier, Alpha of the Crimson Phoenix Pack, stood back in the shadows of the high school watching his mate talking to Jake. He was tall at 6 ft 1' but was able to blend into the crowd hanging around the high school building. Maybe it was because he was only 18, many people were probably mistaking him for a senior. A couple of girls had walked by, eyeing him appreciatively. He was an alpha and a werewolf, his frame was muscular and leaner than most of the boys in this human high school. But Xavier payed the girls no mind. His eyes were focused solely on Rose disappearing into the building.

Clenching his sts angrily, he couldn't help but wonder what to do next. Obviously, he felt the pull of his mate but it was not so strong that he was unable to ght it off. What would his girlfriend say when she found out? He had been with Alyssa for the past 6 months and breaking off his relationship with her just because the moon goddess had marked some girl as his mate was unfair to his girlfriend and to himself. He couldn't just develop feelings at the push of a button...could he?

Turning to go back to his car, Xavier looked down at his phone where the screensaver was that of him and Alyssa smiling up at the camera as they hugged each other. Alyssa's long blonde hair and shining blue eyes made his heart twinge. How could he leave her? She had been his rock through his father's death. He loved her.

“I wish you were still here Dad.” Xavier muttered softly, staring up at the sky as if expecting an answer. As always, there was no answer so Xavier quietly got into his car and drove away.