

25 | Buried History

"Riot! Hey, slow down, dammit! RIOT!"

My yelling does nothing to slow his pace. He's on a mission and no force can stop him. He pulls me out of the building and onto the front steps where I finally yank his arm hard enough to get the hint across.

"Are you good?" I ask, raising an eyebrow.

Riot stands at the edge of the stone stairs, both of his hands in his hair. With the suit jacket straining against his taut shoulders, it reminds just how out of place he really is.

It's midnight by now. Down below, the street lamps create golden spheres in the dark. The city seems empty all besides a lit up window here and there.

"No. I'm not." He says, dropping his hands to his sides hopelessly.

I take a tentative step forward.

"Riot, I—"

"How do you do this," He asks, looking out over the city.

"Do what?"

"Have this a ect on me," he turns around, "Everything you do it makes me feel something. It's controlling." He spits the last word with spite, like the very thought of it on his tongue disgusts him.

Through the night I can still make out his features. The high cheekbones and the tiny scar cutting through his eyebrow. The roguish bit of stubble that covers his razor sharp jaw. The copper color of his eyes— meaning that for once his wolf isn't clawing at the surface.

"Maybe I'm just controlling." I say so lay, taking another step. "Or maybe you're just easily controlled." I almost laugh at the irony of that statement.

Everything about him screams defeat. From his disheveled hair to his slumping shoulders and desperate looking face.

"Can I...?" He trails o , his voice strained. He doesn't want to ask, and when he does he acts as though he's ashamed for it.

"Of course." I hold out my hand, lacing it with his. He pulls me closer.

I lay my head on his collarbone and wrap my arms around him. He returns the hug, pressing our bodies flush against each other.

That's how he's been coping for the past week or so. By touch. Every time his wolf starts to flare up he has to come and touch me in the smallest of ways. That's all it takes to satisfy the only part of himself that he can't control.

It almost makes sense. For once in history, Riot Sydney almost makes sense. Being controlled is what he hates the most. It's what he loathes. And because of this, he can't even control himself.

I don't mind it though. Besides the fact, I'm happy to feel the sparks between us, too.

"When someone else so much as looks at you, it bothers me. When I saw him near you... touching you..." he growls. My heart pounds so rapidly in my chest that I think it might break a rib.

Riot is finally accepting what he feels. Finally acknowledging it. But why now? A er fighting it for so long.

"Hey." I pull back, raising my hand to caress his cheek with my thumb. "I had it under control." I can't help but to grin at the line.

"I don't think you did," he says huskily. I notice his eyes fixed on my lips, their color darkening. His head starts to lower down, creeping closer to mine. I find my chin raising on its own.

My skin comes alive like it's been set on fire as soon as his lips touch mine. On instinct I arch my back, trying longingly to get closer to him. My stomach flips as though it's taken up acrobatics. His fingers curl into my sides, holding me tighter. A deep, animalistic growl rumbles in his chest, convincing me that if somebody ever tried, they would never pull me away from him. It makes me feel cherished.

My eyelids close, blossoms of warmth shooting through my body as we melt together. It seems like it lasts forever and I would give anything for that to be true. Standing in this tyrant's presence, a wolf the world claims is so vile because of his crimes, I feel untouchable. It's a high that if I were to ever come down from, would hurt like hell.

When my lungs start to burn for air— and something tells me his does too— we pull apart. We pant in unison, a smile spreading across my face.

I just kissed my mate.

A er all this time, a er so long of fantasizing about what could be... I finally feel close to him. Not physically close, that was never the problem. But emotionally, he's been sealed in ice.

As with every good thing, the doubts start to creep in.

What if this was just him losing control to his wolf again? What if that wasn't his actions, but rather what he couldn't consent to?

My smile drops like a ton of bricks on the pavement, chipping the stone and cracking the concrete. "Do you... Do you regret it?" I hate that I sound so pathetic. So desperate to know what he's thinking. No matter how much I may despise that, I can't deny that it's true. I need his reassurance.

In one swi movement he leans back in. And before I can blink, he's throwing my system into overdrive for a second time. This kiss is shorter. When he pulls back, his lips move towards my ear.

The slight stubble on his jaw— just enough to finish o his sexy, roguish appearance— rubs against my cheek.

"No." His voice is husky and deep in my ear. The single word makes me melt on the spot. I shiver uncontrollably, trying in vain to get myself together. My legs feel like twigs ready to snap under my weight. He's my mate, yet I'm so nervous that I'm getting sick to my stomach.

"I don't believe you. Try again." I can't get through without cracking smiling like an idiot. A feeling is bubbling inside me, like I want to burst into joyous laughter for no reason at all.

I feel so fuzzy and happy on the inside. Everything is warm and mushy and... Maybe this is why Riot freaked out so many times before.

He smirks, showing his teeth. For once, they're not razor sharps canines, but actual teeth.

He pulls me back against his chest, making my heart beat in overdrive. I lay my head against him and gaze out over the city dotted with golden lights.

His fingers run through my hair, combing it out to its full length then letting it fall gently against my back. He keeps repeating that action, each time as soothing as the last. Something between a sigh and a so moan escapes my lips.

"Why do you hate this place so much?" I ask, watching a group of fireflies dance at the top of the distant stone wall.

"It's a long story, Adrienne."

A special feeling butterflies in my stomach when he says my name. Like I finally matter. I've heard my name said in so many di erent contexts; ranging from rage and irritation all the way to raw disappointment. But never in the way that it just came from his lips. And coming from him especially, the warmth sparking in my veins only doubles.

I quirk an eyebrow and look up him, my chin still resting on his chest. "I have time."

I smile up at him. He truly is the embodiment of all things visually pleasing. It's appalling to me how he's infamous for his acts of bestial tyranny rather than famous for his god-like appearance.

He opens his mouth to make a retort, and gets only halfway through his eye-roll when the slam of a heavy door behind us makes us break apart and turn around.

Senya is standing there, her nearly white hair and light complexion almost glowing in the moonlight. Her black clothes and the shadows of the Citadel's overhang only romanticize the contrast.

There's something about her and Riot that's strangely noticeable, although you only would if you knew what they were. There's something about their appearance which makes it hard to believe that more people don't realize they're a di erent breed of werewolf. Something scarily mythical. Something that makes you want to run the other way.

The anger and intensity of what happened inside seems to already be forgotten by her. She's once again laid-back, indi erent.

"Make your decision wisely, brother," she says as she strides slowly out of the shadow of the overhang. "Because as soon as you walk out those gates he'll start sending the hunters a er you."

If Riot's annoyed by her advice, he keeps it silent. Instead he changes the subject. "Tell her," he says.

Tell me? Tell me what?

Senya nods and her shrewd eyes land on me.

"Do you know who you are?" She tilts her head at me as she asks.

My face contorts with confusion. "What?"

"You're Visarian. A rea Visarian."

"What are you talking about?"

She grows lightly in frustration before continuing. "The pack you came from isn't Visarian. They just took their pack a few decades ago and kept the name."

My mind reels as the information refuses to sink in. So I come to the only conclusion I can manage.

"You knew my parents?"

She shakes her head. "No. But I have connections and I know that a er the switch in bloodlines, dead babies started showing up with names written on their hands in marker."

"The Visarians were driven from their home and dying," she says as she crosses her arms, each hand holding the opposite elbow. "Some le their o spring on the doorsteps of packs in hopes that they would be given a better life, though most were found too late."

A sickening feeling squeezes my stomach. I could've been one of those babies, nothing more than a corpse of lost hope. And I nearly was, if Alpha Andre hadn't come along when he did. As negligent as he's been these past years, it's undeniable that he saved my life.

"Now," Senya says, uncrossing her arms and standing up straight. "Do with that what you will, but I would keep your mouth shut about it. It's buried history."

With that she turns and slips back through the door of the Citadel. It shuts with a so click and the shadows in front of it settle. It's as if she'd never been here at all.

My feet are light as a feather as I bounce back to the house beside Riot. My high still hasn't come down. Not since the kiss, and not since learning my roots. It's enough to convince me to forget about everything else and just live in this simple moment.

We stroll up the hill beneath the oaks, not even a cricket's chirp daring to threaten the peace.

So I take that job into my own hands.

"Hey, Riot."

"Hm?"

I tug him to a stop at the top of the steps. The look I'm met with is smoldering, his scarred eyebrow raised in question. Waiting for me to speak.

"You had Senya tell me that, didn't you?" I grin up at him. It's just so satisfyingly amusing to watch the big bad Exiled Alpha squirm.

He fights with the sheepish smirk that's trying to overtake his lips. When he starts to lose, he looks away in the other direction. But not before I catch a glimpse of the smile reaching his eyes.

He opens the door and we enter.

"I'm gonna take a shower," he mumbles, stepping away to unlock the door. As he goes past, his fingers brush mine in a way that can be nothing but intentional. I squeeze my fist while watching him go, craving more of the sparks. My only wish is that he isn't making a relapse with his wolf.

Once he's up the stairs I growl at myself in disapproval. A er giving him enough time to get situated by prancing around the living room, I head up the stairs to the bedroom. I ignore the hum of the shower as I tiptoe past.

The only bag we'd brought with us lays open on the bed. I rummage through it, wasting no time in stripping out of this godforsaken dress and changing into more comfortable attire. Then, in an inside zipper, I take what I had hid there before we le the cabin.

I make my way back downstairs and out onto the porch. In the same minute, a cigarette is between my fingers, embers glowing at the end. I take a deep pu and release the smoke into the air.

"You're letting her smoke?"

"Yeah. So?"

Their whispered voices still echo in the cavern.

"Isn't that, like... bad?"

"It keeps her quiet."

Bastards.

They were suppose to act like they didn't hear me. But I could sure as hell hear them just fine.

I thought I was past this. Yet here it is, still on my mind. Still between my lips.

"Adrienne?"

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