

Dear Reader,

It brings me great joy that you're holding *The Rose Bargain* in your hands, because for a long time I doubted this book would ever exist. *The Rose Bargain* was born from a time of darkness in my life. In my worst moments, I thought perhaps I'd never be able to write again.

It was only when I was visiting my parents, in my childhood bedroom, surrounded by all my favorite books from my teenage years, that I resolved to write something for myself, something that gave me the same feeling those books gave me. The kind of book that made me march to my sister's room and insist she read it so I'd have someone to talk to, that got passed around my high-school lunch table, or that made me cry under the covers long after I'd told my mom I was asleep. Something *fun*, I promised myself, at a time when nothing felt very fun at all.

Books were my refuge growing up, and this book became a similar kind of life raft. I threw everything I love into the pages of *The Rose Bargain*: handsome princes, sparkling balls, remote inns with conveniently just one bed left (on a cold night, always!).

This is fundamentally a book about love, in all its forms: the fierce and complicated love between sisters, the devotion of friends, the bittersweet bloom of a doomed first love, the butterflies of being kissed in the garden by a charming faerie prince (I know this last feeling a little less well than the others).

I hope the joy I found while writing this book is tangible to readers, that Ivy and Emmett and Bram's story provide a similar light in the dark for those seeking it. This is a book for my fifteen-year-old self who escaped into books, for my thirty-one-year-old self who rediscovered that feeling, and now it's for you, too.

There will always be a light on (and one singular bed) in my metaphorical inn for those who need it.

Love (because it's always about love, isn't it?),

*[insert signature]*

Sasha Peyton Smith