

## 4 His Realization

Parker POV

I'm just as stunned as everyone else watching our mother slap Carli across the face. The force was so severe, it echoed in the morning air. Why would she do that? She wasn't the most loving mother towards Carli, but I never saw her be violent towards her before.

Carli is momentarily stunned, but she doesn't seem that surprised. This must be a regular occurrence by the way Carli looks back at her mother bitterly, but does nothing in response. She just shakes her head then walks off towards Casey and her other friends. Casey holds his icy water to her cheek, then walks her back to his car. She ends up shoving the water away, muttering "I'm ne. I'm used to it," to him. He looks back at mom, eyes ablaze with fury, but quickly turns back toward the direction they're walking before anyone besides me notices.

"Are you okay, sweetie," Mom coos, trying to help pull me to my feet.

I yanked my arm out of her grip, her face falling into a worried expression. "Why did you hit her?"

Mom looks truly confused, her hands still outstretched like she wants to try and help me up off the ground, but at that moment I feel like I'm exactly where I belong. On my ass, hurting and possibly with a broken ankle. I feel so much heartache towards Carli. She hates me. Her resentment of me and our family is evident to me now.

"She spit in your face, then hit you, sweetie. Your nose is bleeding. I told her to stay away from you. I'm sorry. This is all my fault," mom stammers nervously.

"I'm the one that asked Beta Anthony to join her training group. I'm the one who challenged her to a match. She did nothing wrong," I'm seething. I hopped up to my feet, putting all my weight on my right leg. I denitely think Carli broke my ankle. I'm going to have to go to the clinic and have it set so it heals correctly. I repress the urge to channel my wolf to heal me.

"Honey, but you said.."

"Mom!" I yelled at her, getting right in her face. She winces away. I notice Beta Anthony telling everyone else that training is over and to head home, but I can still feel their eyes on me and mom. We probably look like the most messed up family ever. Carli has her mind set on hurting me; on running away from us and starting a new life with her scruffy boyfriend. Mom hit her for following through on a challenge I proposed, and now here I am, looking like a bully yelling in my mom's face. The way she hurt Carli, and based on Carli's reaction, this must be a regular thing between them. No one seemed surprised by mom's behavior.

"I NEVER asked you to hurt her," I couldn't help but growl at mom. She seemed surprised by my reaction. Does she really think when I told her 4 years ago I didn't want my sister to be my mate, that I wanted her to help me by physically abusing Carli? I just wanted help avoiding her. That's not the case anymore. Mom even had Carli transferred to Canada for goddess's sake. Who would ship their own daughter 3000+ miles away, probably never to be seen again for their stepson?

"She's your daughter. How could you hurt her like that? Is that how you've been treating her the last 4 years, because she seems used to it?"

Mom starts shaking her head, eyes lling with tears. I start to feel bad for the way I'm talking down to her, but I can't have her continuing to slap my mate. I was never going to win her over and convince her to stay if mom kept pushing Carli to leave.

"I'm doing this because she's my daughter. If your father found out, what would he do?"

He would banish her. He wouldn't let a daughter he didn't have a bond with ruin his son's future. Dad would not tolerate my sister being my fated mate.

"That's no reason to hit her," I groaned. I can feel my nose is broken, now that the shock of mom's slap has left me. I grab hold of my nose and grunt as I jerk it back in place.

"Mom, I don't want to reject her anymore. I can't," I whispered, wiping the blood from my face on the hem of my shirt.

Mom gasps, surprised at my revelation, "You have to! What will your father say?"

"Everyone knows your fated mate is a gift from the moon goddess. If he can't accept that, that's on him, not me. It sure as hell isn't Carli's fault."

"You can't! Parker, she is moving to Blue Cliff. She.."

"About that. Why would you force that on her? Why would you take that choice away from her? She loves it here," I glared down at mom. This is more unforgivable to me than the physical abuse she imparted on Carli. She is forcing my mate to leave me before she can even realize she's my mate. She's the epitome of what any alpha or warrior would want in a mate. If she leaves, she could be claimed by anyone. She would never nd her fated mate, meaning she would eventually choose a mate herself. Her ghting ability alone makes her extremely desirable. With her face, body, and erce independence, it scares me to think of the nuisances and bugs that would come crawling to win her favor.

"I didn't want to make things harder for you. You are your father's only son. You will be the next alpha, Parker. What will the pack think if they nd out your sister is your mate?"

I scoff, "We are werewolves, mom. Everyone knows the importance of a fated mate. What will they think if they nd out I rejected her because I was scared of my father?"

She bites her lip nervously, staring up at me with pleading, tear-lled eyes.

"I love you mom, but you are to stop treating Carli with any hostility. I can't lose her."

I didn't wait for my mom's response. I walk off in the direction of my truck, resolving myself to nd a way to convince Carli to stay, and to accept me as her mate.

When I pull into the packhouse parking lot, I'm peeved to see Carli, still in nothing but her underwear, leaning against Casey's Jeep as he applies some kind of ointment to her reddened cheek. I can make out our mom's hand print from here, making my anger bubble up once again.

When I saw them pull into the training ground's grass lot, Carli rubbing his face with her slender ngers and this jerk playing with her lips, I wanted to rip his head off and throw the rest of him into the marsh. She seemed so carefree and open with him, and that brought an unfamiliar jealousy inside me. Watching the way he is tenderly treating her wounds while she smirks up at him, laughing about something he said, brings forth that jealousy once again.

I get out of my Ford Raptor, slamming the door, causing both Casey and Carli to jump in surprise. My left ankle is still killing me, but the pain only fuels my anger as I stomp towards both of them. I know Casey notices my slight limp; he is looking down at it with concern, but I have a feeling the concern is more for Carli and how he thinks I'm going to retaliate than for me and my injury.

"You still have time to stand around and irt with one another? If you have so much free time, maybe you should both get your asses to school instead of groping each other in the parking lot?" I sneered. I regret the words as soon as I say them. Carli's face contorts into irritation and anger as she looks at me. It's so different from the way she was just looking at Casey, and this breaks something inside of me.

"Hey man. I think she's had enough of y'all's s\*\*t for one day. Can't you keep walking and ignore her like you usually do? Go get that ankle looked at or something," Casey stands defensively in front of Carli, trying to block her from my view. It doesn't work, as Carli is peaking around him to glare at me in the most threatening way.

"I don't ignore her," I sneered back at Casey, but saying it now I know it's not true. I spent the whole rst year I was away ignoring her every call and text. I built this wall between us, and now I'm doing a crappy job of trying to tear it down.

"Bull s\*\*t," Carli growls behind Casey. "I'm staying away from you, just like you and mom want. Why can't you do me the courtesy of staying away from me too?"

"Carli," I said her name in desperation. I try to step around Casey to get a better view of her, but she pushes off the Jeep and starts walking towards the packhouse before I can say anything more.

"I'll see you at school, Casey," she calls behind her, not bothering to turn around.

"f\*\*k!" I growled at myself, wishing I could go back and handle that differently.

"What is your problem, man?" Casey asks, observing my temper tantrum as I pull at my hair in aggravation. "No wonder she can't wait to leave," he sneers, getting in his Jeep and driving off, leaving me alone in the parking lot; alone in my deprivation.

Carli POV

My cheek is sore, but not as sore as my pride. What the f\*\*k is wrong with that self-righteous prick? Why can't he just leave me alone?

The most f\*\*\*\*d up part of the whole thing is, I started to actually feel bad for him when he cried out my name like that in the parking lot. I started to feel bad for the freak who encouraged our mother to shun and abuse me for the last 4 years. How the hell is he going to tell mom to keep me away from him, then show up in front of me every chance he gets once he is back home? He chased us back to the packhouse just to taunt me some more, but when he said my name like that, I had the sudden urge to go to him and wrap my arms around his waist; the urge to comfort him even though he was the one being a d\*\*k to me.

I shook off the feeling and went inside, not wanting to think about Parker or our mom anymore.

I quickly shower and get dressed. The water stings as it runs over my throbbing cheek, but I hardly notice. It sure as hell isn't the rst time mom has hit me. I don't even know why she did it. Parker's the one who challenged me. I don't know why she went to the training eld in the rst place. She has never attended any warrior training in the past. That was what was so appealing about being a warrior to me at rst. I knew I would never have to run into my mom while training, so that's what I always did to stay away from the packhouse.

I pull a short racerback dress over my naked form, not bothering with underwear. It's a half day at school today, and the seniors are going to the beach after lunch to hang out, since tomorrow is a teacher's work day, meaning there is no school for us. I toss a bikini in a drawstring bag and put some sunnies on my head to hold back my hair from my face. I don't bother with my usual ponytail. I like the feeling of the salty waves running through my hair.

Simone very much approves of the dress when I get to school. She nags me until I let her take the cooling patch off my cheek and let her apply light make-up to cover the mark. She talks me into mascara and lip gloss, but I draw the line when she goes to put blush on my cheeks. I don't usually wear make-up. It sweats off too easily here and I can't fathom why so many girls choose to look like their face is melting off.

I noticed several guys checking out my appearance. I'm not in my usual workout attire so it's probably throwing everyone off. Casey keeps telling me it's because my n\*\*\*\*\*s are showing, thanks to the cooler climate inside schools. He forced me into his track jacket, zipping it up to cover my chest between our rst 2 classes.

Everyone has n\*\*\*\*\*s, even guys. I don't see what the big deal is.

Hillary and Daryl join Simone, Casey and me for lunch once school ends. We ventured out to Miami beach, eating at one of our favorite seafood bistros overlooking the ocean. My hair whips around as I struggle to eat my lobster ravioli. I should have worn the hand hair tie. Casey ends up acting as a human hair clip, holding my hair back with one hand while he eats his shrimp po'boy with the other, allowing me to eat without getting my mouth full of hair.

Other seniors are littering the strip, a few even eating at the same restaurant as us. People keep coming up to our table in the corner of the fenced-off patio to say hi. I riddled myself of Casey's jacket, leaving it in my car before the valet took my Range Rover away. It's hot and balmy, as usual outside. No more nips in this heat. I brought my drawstring Nike bag to change, but the restaurant had a sign up saying no changing in their bathrooms. I'll have to use the public stalls on the beach.

When we're done eating, I go ahead and pay for everyone. It's the least mother dear can do after being such a b\*\*\*h this morning for no good reason. I even decide to leave a generous tip, smirking as I sign my signature. I wonder if I'm going to have to give the card back to my parents before I move? Knowing them, they won't bother to ask for it. They will just turn it off, and I'll nd out halfway to Canada when I need to pump more gas.

I have my own private bank account I never told my parents about. Uncle Tommy helped me get it, co-signing the account with me. I collect paychecks twice a month for teaching warrior classes and for working part-time on guard duty. I've never touched the money I earned, so I'll have that to depend on once I lose the convenience of my parent's credit card. I should be able to work as a full-time warrior up at Blue Cliff, so I won't be hurting for money. Mom already told me I can keep the car. I should probably go and get on my own cell phone plan too, after I move. I don't have any plans on sharing the new number with my family.

The 5 of us walked towards the beach, meeting up with others along the way. Casey has his arm thrown around my shoulders again, guiding me along casually as we joke and laugh with our friends.

When we nally reach the meeting spot, music is coming from a couple of large portable speakers. Folding tables are set to one side covered in snack food and there are coolers full of drinks beside the tables. Our student council was denitely enthusiastic about this chill senior beach day. There are even several bins full of different sports balls and sand toys.

"What is he doing here?" Simone sneered, bringing my attention to the direction she was glaring at.

There, throwing a football around with a couple of his friends and members of our school's football team, is Parker. What the heck is he doing here?