

5 Her Annoyance

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?

"Can't he just steer clear of you for 9 more days? This is getting ridiculous," Simone sighs, feeling just as exasperated as me.

"Just ignore him," I said, wanting to do anything but spend more of my time worrying about the overgrown brat. I frown at the way his board shorts are hanging dangerously low on his hips, his tapered abs glistening in the sun. Freakin' show off. I have tapered abs too. Much more dened since he's got all that bulk on him now.

I hung out on the beach far from Parker, dancing and laughing with my friends close to the speakers. Someone snuck beer and wine coolers on the beach, and everyone started to discreetly pass the drinks around among us. Simone and I are dancing together, sipping on a Corona and enjoying the intense sunshine and salty breeze. I'm going to miss Florida beaches after I move.

Casey comes up behind me and reaches around to grab my drink.

"Hey," I turned around to scowl at him.

"They ran out," he smirks, taking a swig of my drink. "We can share."

"Only cause you're cute," I smirked back at him, stealing my drink back.

"Wanna swim? I'm ready to get wet," he asks me above the music.

"Sure. I need to go change though," I told him, handing him back my drink.

"You don't have your swimsuit on under that?" he asks, staring down at my dress.

"I have nothing on under this," I tell him jokingly, even though it's not really a joke. I hate sweaty fabric rubbing against my skin. Boob sweat and butt sweat are the worst. We're werewolves, and I'm a warrior. Nudity isn't a big deal. Shifting back after guard duty, I always walk to the locker rooms naked.

"Really?" Casey grins mischievously, putting his hands to my hip, feeling for where a panty line would be. "Hmm, need some help changing?" He wiggles his eyebrows at me.

I laughed and slapped away his hand, "No way. I'll be right back," I told him, walking towards the bathrooms.

I'm almost there when a hand clamps down on my shoulder, making me turn in their direction.

"I don't think a minor should be drinking so openly, do you?" Parker asks, staring down at me. Moisture is glistening off his tan bare chest, making me feel uncomfortable staring at it. Parker notices my stare and smirks. "See something you like?"

I scoffed and rolled my eyes, jerking my shoulder out of his hand, "I'm just admiring how fat you've gotten."

His smug face falters, making me smile up at him sweetly.

"If you want to bust me for underage drinking, go ahead. I can just get banned from attending graduation and leave that much sooner. Works out for me," I shrug.

Parker's eyes tightened. "If I busted you, I'd have to bust every other student out there too. It would be tragic to prevent all the seniors from graduating this year."

"How noble of you," I rolled my eyes, "Saving the honor of all the seniors. Very alpha, thinking of others over your sister. I thought you were too self-righteous to overlook another bad behavior of mine. If you want to save the rest of the seniors, you could always just tell your parents. They could send me off earlier and just mail me my diploma."

"I'm not telling on you to anyone. And they're your parents too," Parker retorts, crossing his arms rmly across his chest.

"Not in the ways that matter," I mutter. "I need to change. Is there a reason you stopped me? Or is it just torture Carli day?"

"I, uh," Parker looks around nervously, "I'm not trying to torture you," he tells me, taking a step closer and grabbing my shoulders. "I wanted to apologize for this morning. I shouldn't have talked to you like that in the parking lot. I was just aggravated and took it out on you. And.." he bites his lip nervously, "I talked to mom. I, uh, didn't know she was treating you that way. I told her to stop. I didn't ask her to be cruel to you, or to send you to Blue Cliff Pack. I was...I was just going through something after I turned 18. I told her I wanted space, not to shun you. I'm sorry, Carli. I'm really sorry for what you had to go through the last 4 years because of me."

I was surprised to hear that. I truly thought that it was because of him that my mom started treating me like vermin. I couldn't help the small smile from appearing on my face when hearing his apology. "Thanks for apologizing," I grinned, "I thought you followed me to harass me some more."

He laughs, "I could still try and harass you if you want."

"I'm good. I don't want to have to break any more of your bones today," I joked.

"There's always tomorrow," he smirks.

"Goddess, please don't show up to another of my training sessions. I don't need anymore drama before I leave," I say jokingly, but his face falls, making me wish I could take my words back.

His thumbs start rubbing on my shoulders, and Parker visibly shivers, causing me to look at him in confusion. He can't be cold. This is Miami. His hands feel warm against my exposed skin too.

"I don't want you to leave, Carli. I don't want you to move to Blue Cliff," he nally says.

I shrug, "I've accepted it."

"I don't," he states, his droopy brown eyes boring into mine. "You...you love it here. You love your pack."

"I do, but I don't want to be around our parents anymore than they want to be around me. I'd like to go somewhere I'm valued and respected. After talking with Gamma Nathan yesterday, I'm excited about a fresh start," I pat his chest reassuringly, trying to ignore the feel of his hard peck beneath my hand. I should quit calling him fat. There's no padding at all there. Just smooth, hard, tanned muscle. "I need to get changed. I want to get in the water and my friends are probably waiting for me."

Parker nods, squeezing my freckled shoulders momentarily and letting me go. To my surprise, Parker waits for me outside of the restroom, looking like an Abercrombie model, leaning back against the outdoor shower wall.

"Did you need anything else?" I asked, stung my dress into my bag.

He smiles at me, the familiar charming smile I remember from when we were younger. "I thought I'd walk you back. It's been a long time since we've really talked."

I laughed, "Yeah cause you were too busy being an ass."

Parker asks me about my school life, about warrior training and what I did on my days off from both. It felt much like the time before he left as we slowly walked back to where everyone was gathered.

"So, why did you come out here today? I didn't expect an old man like you to crash a high school hangout," I asked him.

Parker grins, biting his bottom lip with his hands in his short pockets. "I came out here to torture you. I thought you already gured that out."

"Ha ha," I said, smirking, "For real though."

"For real?" he asks back dramatically.

"For real, for real," I laugh, remembering the familiar way he would respond when I was a kid and would say, "for real though".

He chuckles, "I really did want to come harass you. I wanted to apologize for this morning and last night. For real."

"Well, thanks," I smiled at him, "I forgive you for crashing our beach party then."

Simone catches sight of us. She stripped out of her skirt and tank top, sporting a high-waisted bikini set. She eyes us speculatively, then decides to jog over.

"What took you so long?" she asks me, eyeing Parker suspiciously out of the corner of her eye, tucking her straightened hair behind her ear.

I shrugged, "I was being harassed."

"I see that," she mutters, eyeing Parker up and down like he's made from dirt. "Casey was ready to come get you. He kept muttering about you not having any underwear on."

"How did he know that?" Parker growls.

"He felt for them," I shrugged, "He thought I was kidding. I hate wearing underwear with dresses. They get sticky in this heat."

"I'm sure Casey wouldn't mind helping you with that stickiness," Simone says vivaciously, giving me a smoldering look.

Parker snorts, then pushes between us to walk to where a group of our warriors are sipping on beer around a keg. I guess everyone gave up trying to hide the drinking. We're werewolves. Most of us look old enough to drink by 16.

"What's his problem now?" Somine scuffs, scowling in his direction.

"Probably didn't like hearing about his sister not wearing underwear and her friend who happens to be a boy's willingness to deal with her body's moisture," I waved my hand out dismissively. "Let's go swim."

After a long time of splashing in the waves with Simone, someone suggests moving the party to the marina. Many of the kids at our school have boats. There's a cove not far from here where supernaturals gather at night to hang out and be themselves.

My family has a nice tri-toon and a shing boat, but I've never been on them. Simone and Casey's dad owns a private shing company, catering to tourists, so they have a few boats I've been on.

I opt to leave my car and ride with the twins. I've been drinking more, feeling slightly irritated watching all the she-wolves paw and ing themselves at my brother. He's 4 years older than us. Why the heck is he leading on high schoolers?

He's technically not leading them on...but he's not pushing them away. Every time he turns that megawatt smile on some girl, my heart contracts and I end up drinking more to numb the pain. I spent so long missing that smile, but he offers it to everyone else too easily. At least he's apologized, but now the irritation of him being near and the memories of being shunned for so long are making my chest burn, so I keep drinking to numb the pain. Now I'd rather not drive and be safe.

When we pull into the marina, I exit the Jeep, then start walking towards one of the twin's family's sport shing yachts, but Parker appears out of nowhere and stops me.

"Why don't you ride on our boat? It's a lot nicer than that thing," he says, gripping my wrist. Casey and Simone groan quietly beside me, not wanting to tolerate the minor insults and Parker's hot and cold behavior.

"I wouldn't know. I've never been on one of yours," I told him, trying to pull my wrist free.

Parker gives me a scrutinized look, "Ours," he corrects, "You've never been on our family's boats before?"

I shook my head, "Of course not. Do you really think our parents would want to be conned in a small space with me while trapped on open water? They might have to actually acknowledge my existence."

"Well, you should ride on one with me now then," he offers me a hopeful smile, making me chuckle.

"Aren't you done crashing the high school party now? Or are you hoping to hook one of those girls waiting impatiently for you by the tri-toon?" I asked, nodding toward a group of all girls giggling and checking out my brother.

He looks in their direction and grunts, clearly not thrilled about the attention they're inicting on him. "I'd rather just hang out with you," his eyes start pleading with mine, and that same burning sensation starts building up in my chest again.

Casey steps forward, putting his hand on my waist protectively, and I notice Parker's eyes hardening at my friend's movement.

"No offense, alpha, but Carli is a little tipsy, and when she gets drunk she tends to get mean. With your strained relationship, and after what happened this morning, I'm not comfortable letting her go with you alone. There's no telling what your parents would do if you got in a ght again."

Agitation crossed over Parker's face. His jaw clenches and his adam's apple bobs as his neck exes from the strain and tension between him and Casey. This is f****g ridiculous.

"You're both acting like nagging parents right now. I'm not a mean drunk, and I can decide for myself where I want to go," I grab Simone's hand, "Come on. Let's ride with the Meyers boys. They're looking yummy over there in their speed boat."

"Hey!" Casey and Parker call at the same time, to both of their irritation, as us girls walk off giggling and climbing onto the triplet's boat. The eldest fraternal triplet, Matt, has a mate, Lilly, sitting on his lap as he sits in the captain's chair, but the other two, Mark and Mitch, are unmatd and more than happy to have our company.

Lilly squeals happily when she sees us, pushing off Matt and joining us in the tight seating area as the boys prepare to leave the dock. Looking back, I can see Casey on his parent's shing yacht with Daryl, Hillary and a few other warriors, sliding out of my direction. Parker is standing on the same spot on the walkway, staring disapprovingly in his direction. What has his panties in a bunch?

One of his admirers breaks off from the group to approach him, and my chest starts to burn again with irritation. What is wrong with me? I shouldn't care if Parker scores some tonight. Heck, I might be looking to end the night with someone too.

I turned back to Simone and Lilly, taking a mixed drink from Mitch, and continued trying to numb the feeling in my chest when I saw my brother talking with another girl.