

Her Brother, Her Mate Chapter 17

Carli POV

Parker drove us out to the beach, parking the giant truck like a champ between a Tesla and a Porsche. It's comical how huge his truck is compared to the two small cars. Almost as comical as Parker's height and build compared to every other guy on the beach.

I get aggravated the more attention he gets, but I can't figure out why. Of course, he would always get these kinds of wanting looks and stares when we were out together when I was a kid. He's a fuckin' beast. An extremely handsome and desirable beast. Most werewolves get these stares. f**k, I get these lusty stares. It's normal, but it pisses me off every time I see one of these bimbos batting their eyelashes and pushing out their chests for him.

He doesn't seem to notice. He casually tosses his arm around my shoulders, much like the way Casey usually does, but it feels much different with Parker. The heat from his touch, the more I feel it, starts sending soft tingles through my skin. Like soft electrical currents.

"Hey, remember that time we found that abandoned bark collar on the beach when I was, like, 12? You saw it still worked and the shock was turned on?" I asked him, making him laugh.

"Yeah. You dared me to put it on, then we couldn't get it off. You started chasing me around the beach barking. I almost died when I jumped in the water trying to get away from you."

I grinned at him, "That was fun."

"Fun for who?" he chuckles. "What made you think of that?"

I shrug. I don't know what brought back that memory. Probably the tingly feeling I'm getting on my neck right now. It was the first time Parker drove his truck, and he wanted to take me out for a test drive. He parked off one of Miami's many beaches, then we decided to walk and get ice cream before playing in the sand.

I have many happy memories like that with Parker. I've spent the last four years repressing them because I thought he had abandoned me, but before his 18th birthday we were pretty close.

Your 18th birthday is the day your wolf fully matures, meaning you can then find your mate. The more I think about Parker's behavior after his 18th, combined with the way he is treating me now, I keep thinking back to the possibility of me being his mate. There's just no way...right?

I wrap my arm around Parker's waist possessively as some bleached blonde Pamela Anderson wannabe winks and bites her lip seductively while looking Parker up and down. He chuckles softly, then kisses the top of my head, completely ignoring the woman. She just shrugs off the rejection and keeps walking with her toy yorkie.

Why am I like this? I'm not the possessive type. I'm a hit it and quit it kind of girl, and I've NEVER thought of Parker like this before last night.

"You're cute," Parker tells me, looking down at me with amusement.

I growled, making him smile broadly.

Lunch was great. The food was yummy and the conversation flowed naturally. We spent a good hour eating and reminiscing on memories from childhood.

Parker got up to pay, leaving me by myself outside momentarily.

"Hey," a couple of girls called over to me from the table beside us, "Is he your boyfriend?"

I grimaced at them, not wanting to answer. I don't want to tell them he's my stepbrother, giving them the opportunity to approach him, and again, I'm momentarily stunned by my own conflicting feelings towards Parker.

"Yep," Parker comes back out, offering the girls a polite smile, "I'm all hers."

"Aww," they all moan in protest together, then giggle.

I smile shyly up at Parker, wondering why he would lie to them like that, but also confusingly grateful that he did.

Parker took my hand, and we started walking on the busy park sidewalk in a comfortable silence. The soft, electric currents are traveling up and down my arms from his touch, and I'm once again pondering the possibility that the man I always thought to be my brother was my mate.

"If I ask you something, will you answer me honestly?" I asked him.

He looks down at me, thinking before he answers, "I don't want to ever lie to you."

I noticed how he didn't actually answer my question and grimaced slightly at him.

"Okay," he surrenders, "I'll answer you honestly. Why? What's up?"

"Well," I pucker my lips to the side, thinking of the best way to word my question, "What happened 4 years ago for you to start treating me differently?"

His face falls momentarily, like he's scared to answer my question.

"Uhh," he starts, then runs his hand through his hair, "I, uh, realized something on my 18th birthday. I was scared of what it meant."

I bit my lip, nervous about his answer to my next question, "Did you realize something about me?"

"Yes. We ere," Perker seys softly beck.

"Maybe," he says stoically.

"You said you would answer me honestly."

He sighs heavily, "I did, but I'm scared if I tell you before you realize this for yourself you won't accept it."

"Are you trying to take a choice away from me again?" I muttered.

"No. I'm not. I'm trying to show you why you shouldn't make a rash choice before you find out. I'm trying to show you that....I can be....I don't know. The best choice, I guess. I don't want to take anything from you. I want to give you the world."

I have a hard time processing the sincerity in his words. The resolve in his eyes is stifling. I know. At that moment I knew, but I didn't know how to process it. It hasn't even been 2 full days since his return, and it feels like my whole world has been turned upside down.

I turned my gaze to the ocean, my hand loosening on Parker's. The urge to shut down to think is creeping up on me. This is just too much. This is everything, and I suddenly feel more trapped than ever.

I hated Parker yesterday. I was completely content with being rid of Crystal Moon, and everything that had to do with my family the second I graduated. I wanted to leave. Now I feel suffocated by how much everything changed so fast.

Werewolves are taught from the time they are born that the mate bond is a gift that should be cherished and put above all else. That's especially true for alphas. The pack is at its healthiest and strongest when the true alpha with his true luna reign over the pack together. Alphas who deny the mate bond, or mark someone other than their mate are weaker, and in turn their pack becomes weak.

Is what changed for Parker over the last year and a half is that he realized that? Is he only ready to accept me now because he's the alpha, and not accepting me will hurt his pack? He didn't want me before when he first learned of the bond. What makes now any different? The only time he ever answered the phone for me the whole four years he was away, he was f*****g another girl, even knowing what I'm just learning now. How could he do that to someone he claims he just wants to give the world to?

"Carli, say something," Parker stops walking and turns me to face him.

"So we're mates?" I whispered.

He studies my face, searching my eyes for some clue as to what I am thinking.

"Yes. We are," Parker says softly back.