

Her Brother, Her Mate Chapter 21

"That's not what I'm asking you to do," Parker pleads with my real father, who looks like he's about to bust a vein in his neck.

"I don't give a s**t what your asking me for, you and your parents can go f**k yourselves. I don't care what claim you have over my daughter. I'm not going to talk her into s**t. You can leave," my dad pointed in my direction towards the door, and that's when they both noticed me.

Parker's eyes fill with pain and longing, and I have to look away to not be swayed by his emotions.

"Carli, honey. You're here. Why don't you go help Elena in the kitchen? The young alpha was just leaving," my dad's loving voice carries over to me, turning hard as he glares at Parker.

"Okay," I nodded, taking the excuse to leave, then walked the long way around the room, trying my hardest not to meet Parker's eyes.

"Carli, wait," Parker called out to me.

"She's not waiting for s**t. Leave. If you don't leave now, I swear you won't like what I do next," dad threatens him.

I peeked over at Parker, and almost caved and ran to him. His face looks so desperate and a single tear is running down his face. The guy I've always seen as my big, badass, stronger than anything brother is crying because of me, and it tears me up inside. I don't know if it's the faint mate bond pulling me to him, or his despairing stare, but I froze momentarily, lost in his droopy, tear-filled eyes, then started moving towards him.

"Carli," my dad calls out to me, trying to step in my path.

"It's okay. I'll just show him out," I gave him a reassuring smile.

He bares his teeth to Parker before retreating in the direction of the kitchen, "Hurry and show him out. I want to take a stack of boxes to your room before my brother gets here so you can start packing tomorrow."

Parker growls when my dad mentions packing, but he wisely doesn't argue further.

I grabbed Parker by the hand, ignoring the tingling heat from the touch, and pulled him to the door.

"Parker, what are you doing here?" I asked him when we stepped out in the hall.

His face falls and he looks at the ground, "I wanted to ask your dad for a favor?"

"What?" I scoffed, "You couldn't get your dad to force me to stay, so you wanted to see if you could bully my dad into doing it?"

"Carli, no," I let him grab my hands, and pull me towards him. "This isn't about you staying here. I'm as done with my parents as you are. I just want you. I'll follow you to Canada if that's what it takes. I just don't want to lose you."

What does he mean he will follow me to Canada? "Are you really talking about leaving your pack because of me?"

"It's your pack too. I don't want it if I don't have you here with me."

I huff, rolling my eyes at his dramatic statement. I'm trying not to outwardly show that it gave me butterflies. This jerk. He won't stay out of my sight long enough for me to think straight. I know it's just the mate bond making me feel like this....right?

I unconsciously gripped his hands tightly as he gripped mine, and I had to concentrate extra hard to get my hands to listen to me and let him go.

"I need to go back inside," I whispered, "I'll talk to you later, though," I added, and his face lit up slightly.

"When? I can wait-"

"Later, Parker. I'm about to have a pretty emotional dinner. The first dinner with them knowing I'm his daughter. I want to take one thing at a time, and if I know you're waiting for me it's just going to distract me. Please, let me have this time with my real family. I'll talk to you tomorrow."

Parker cups my face in his hands, then tucks my hair behind my ears, "Okay. Tomorrow. Training's at 5AM, right?"

I growl and he sighs, “Fine. I’ll wait to hear from you. I can’t promise I won’t be stalking you in the shadows.”

I almost laugh, totally picturing him as a puppy, whining and pouting while watching me from the marsh while I train.

“You’re such a pain in the a*s,” I huff, but a small smile breaks free from my control. “I’ll text you tomorrow. Good night Parker.”

When I go back in, I find Elena and my dad whispering to each other in the kitchen. It sounds like they’re debating something, but quickly smile when they see me standing there in the entryway.

“Carli!” Elena called out, coming forward and enveloping me in a warm embrace, “I made your favorite.”

I smiled lovingly at her, “It smells amazing.” It really did. She always puts smoked paprika in the batter and seasons the chicken with Cajun spices. My mouth is already watering.

“I heard about your talk with Nate,” my dad smiled down at me, pulling me from Elena’s hold, “You know?”

“I know,” I smiled at him, feeling heat build behind my eyes, “Dad.”

He chokes out a laugh and sob combination, gripping me tighter, “I wanted to tell you. You have no idea how much I wanted to.”

“Mary commanded you, didn’t she?” I ask, feeling my tears break free and my heart pounding in my chest as he holds me tight.

He just nods his head, gripping me tighter.

“That b***h,” I muttered, burying my face into his shoulder to hide my tears. I can hear Elena softly crying next to us.

My dad must be pulling her to us, because I feel his hand leave my back only for her to press in behind me. I feel 18 years worth of loss and longing, and an undeniable unconditional love from both of them, my parents, and I never thought I’d ever get to feel this feeling. My loose tears soon turn into ugly sobs, and I can feel them doing the same.

“Well, look what we have here?” Uncle Nathan’s voice boomed heartily in the small room, then I felt all our bodies being squeezed together.

“Get off me you fucktard,” my dad grunts, breaking the tension and making us all laugh.

“Aww, but I felt so left out,” Uncle Nathan pouts playfully, musing my hair, then offering Elena a kiss on the cheek. “I want to introduce my niece to her cousin.”

Uncle Nathan pulls me from my dad’s arms, then walks me into the living room. “Carli, this is your cousin Courtney. Courtney, this is your long lost cousin, Carli.”

Courtney stands from the couch, smiling ear to ear. She looks so much like me. Maybe a little more rustic with her weathered jeans and flannel top. She must have come straight here after getting off the plane. She has girl-next-door vibes, with her kind eyes and brilliant smile. Her auburn hair is windblown and loose, and her green eyes shine as she takes me in.

“Oh my gosh I’m so glad to finally meet you,” she squeals softly, jumping back and forth on her feet before running to give me a big bear hug. “I’ve heard so much about you from Uncle Thomas!”

I laughed softly and returned her hug. “Hi Courtney. It’s nice to meet you too.”

I love her and her sincere kindness exuding from her already.

We get to know each other better over dinner. Elena’s chicken was a huge hit, as it always is. Fried okra, buttered corn on the cob, and apple pie for dessert. All my favorites. Elena must have gone all out today. Every bite I take, I moan in appreciation, making her grin widely. I’m so thankful for her. Even without me knowing, she has always tried her best to be a mother to me. I’m sitting between her and my dad, and I can feel their sincerity as they watch me eat. It’s overwhelming, and by my second bite of apple pie I’m tearing up.

“Oh, sweetie. Why are you crying?” Elena asked, wiping the tears from my eyes.

I take a shaking breath, “I’m just so happy and pissed all at the same time.”

"I know, honey," she tells me, rubbing my shoulders while my dad takes over, wiping the tears from my eyes.

"I'm glad we can finally be your parents," my dad tells me, choking up himself.

"Bout time," Uncle Nathan says gruffly, stuffing a huge bite of pie in his mouth, "I was getting restless waiting for my badass niece I heard so much about daily. I was ready to go rogue and just kidnap you so you could be free from those evil people sooner."

"You're going to love Blue Cliff, Carli," Courtney tells me, smiling with tears in her own eyes. "I can't wait to show you everything. We have the lushest forests, magical waterfalls, beautiful valleys with wildflowers; I'll show you all of it. I know you're a warrior. We have strong warriors, and way more men than women. You will be a hot commodity," she giggles.

I smile politely, but for some reason, the thought of leaving Crystal Moon hurts. My heart feels like it's lodged in my throat, and I try desperately to swallow it back down. Parker's heartbroken face flashes in my head, and I feel homesick even thinking about leaving here.

"I thought Alpha Jared said he took back my transfer?"

"Well," my dad looked at Elena, who nodded for him to continue, "We already talked, and decided to renounce the pack with you. Alpha Axel agreed to accept us as rogues, so there is no need to apply for a new transfer."

"I can still go?" I asked, dumbfounded.

"We can still go," Elena corrected me, running her fingers through my hair, "It was always the plan for your dad and I to follow you. That's why he has been working so hard to prepare the pack to deal with these rogue vampires. He doesn't want to inconvenience Beta Anthony anymore than he already will be."

I nod, knowing how busy my dad has been. We haven't heard of another attack in several days, but I know it's been weighing on him.

"But Parker," I muttered softly, looking down at my hands.

Dad grimaces, "Yeah, I wasn't expecting that," he sighs.

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"Did he tell you?" I asked.

My dad nods solemnly, "He did. He also said you didn't react well when you found out."

"Found out what?" Uncle Nathan asked.

I chew on my bottom lip, and Elena and Tommy shift uncomfortably.

"Parker is my mate," I told him softly.

"The young alpha?" he scrunches his eyebrows in confusion, "Is that what all that was about this morning? Is he trying to force you to stay here now because of that?"

"I thought it was strange," my dad ponders, looking pissed, "It was too random how Jared wanted to do this adoption and how fast he pushed for it to go through. He pushed a lot of money at a judge to sign off on it by the end of today."

Elena nodded, "It explains a lot. That...horrible woman claimed she was mean to you to protect you. She probably just wanted to save her own skin. Her daughter being mated to the alpha's son proves you both share no blood."

"Wait," Courtney holds her hands up, "You're mated to Parker Snider? Isn't he your brother?"

I shrug, "Step brother, technically. We have completely different parents, but neither one of us knew that until yesterday. Parker spent the last 4 years thinking he was mated to his half sister. I just had no idea."

"Eww," she shudders, "that's so weird."

"Tell me about it," I rolled my eyes, "I didn't like the idea, but when I'm around him I get all these confusing feelings and can faintly feel the pull towards him. We were really close before he turned 18, so it's hard to separate the two versions of Parker in my head; the brother I used to be close to, and the mate that abandoned me when he found out we were mates and only now wants to try and claim me."

Elena started playing with my hair again in a motherly gesture, "Maybe that's why he was such a great brother to you. You are both dominant wolves. He could probably feel the urge to love and protect you your entire life. We would watch the both of you and it would give us some peace to see someone in that home truly loved you. When he found out you were his mate, I'm sure it scared him just as much as it's scaring you now. And he didn't have the added benefit of knowing you weren't really his sister."

"Elena," my dad sighed, obviously not approving of her words.

"What? You know just as well as I do that you shouldn't fight the mate bond. Look what happened with Jared and Mary. Do you want the same thing for Carli?"

He grunts his disapproval, "I don't want her to be forced to stay where she doesn't want to be just because of a mate bond."

"Tom...." Nathan looked at him in brotherly concern, "I'm not any happier about this than you, but you know the moon goddess won't do things to harm her children."

"So she's just supposed to stay here and be those toxic people's daughter-in-law? They treated her so amazingly as their daughter, I can't wait to see how they do as in-laws."

Elena nodded in agreement, "That's the hard part. Carli," she turns my face towards her, "I know all about toxic, abusive parents. I know this is a difficult decision to make, and when you make it, I don't want you to let their influence dictate your decision. Your mother tried to abuse you to protect her secret, so you would leave and reject him, and Jared is abusing his power to try to force you to stay. We had no idea why until Parker came by, but now everything makes sense. Whether you choose to stay or go, we will be behind you 100%."

I smiled shyly, feeling her love for me radiate in her words, "Parker told me if I left, he would renounce the pack and follow me. He said he's done with his parents too."

"Well," she wiped a few stray tears from my eyes, "he just gained a few points in my book."

My dad and uncle help me to bring boxes over to my room while Courtney helps Elena with the dishes after we're all done eating. Nathan tells me they're just in case, but my dad seems insistent that we will still be moving. After bickering over the topic with his brother for a few minutes, he told me to use the boxes to pack up my stuff and move in with them at the very least. He didn't want me to be alone anymore.

The 5 of us sat in their living room, Nathan and Tommy telling us stories about their childhood, and everyone was telling me more about the side of my family I knew nothing about. I can't wait to meet my paternal grandparents. I never had grandparents before. Alpha Jared's parents are still alive, but I was never allowed to meet them. Around major holidays when they would go visit them in Fort Lauderdale, I was left behind with a sitter or nanny when I was younger, and left to my own devices the older I got. I spent every holiday with the Childes for the last 8 years, and now knowing they're my real family, those holidays are so much more meaningful to me.

"Did you know that I named you?" my dad asks.

"Really? How?" I scrunched my nose in question. It doesn't seem like something my mom would allow.

"When I first found out about you, before Jared came to claim Mary, I told her if you were a boy I liked the name Clayton, like my grandfather, and Carli, after my grandmother. My grandmother's whole name was Carli Rose, but for obvious reasons I left Rose out at the time. Your mother detested Luna Rose because of the rejection. When I heard Mary still named you Carli after you were born, that gave me hope that one day I could be your father."

F**k, I hate crying. I feel like that's all I'm doing this evening. My dad wipes the tears away and I wipe the ones rolling down his cheeks too. The man who claimed to be my dad for 18 years didn't even know my name, but I'm okay with that. My real dad, the one who truly matters, is the one who named me anyway.

"You know what would be super sinister?" Courtney smirks at me, "If you do accept your mate, and if you have a daughter, you should totally name her Rose."

"Oh, I like that," Elena chuckles.

I laughed softly. I'm not vindictive, but the name is pretty and I would love to see my mother's face when she hears the name of her granddaughter.

"So what does this stepbrother look like?" Courtney asks, "I need to see his face to make my final decision. I'm still on the fence about him now."

I laughed, then pulled out my phone, scrolling to a picture Parker took of us at lunch today. His smile is brilliant and he's looking at me like I'm the most precious person in the world. When he took my phone to take the picture, I didn't check it then, but seeing it now; seeing the way he looks at me even when he's supposed to be taking a selfie makes my heart flutter in my chest.

I turn the phone to face Courtney and her mouth drops.

"That's him?! If you don't want him, can I have him? He's....wow."

I chuckle softly, even though the possessive twinge in me almost makes me growl instead.

"He is decent looking, isn't he?" I said, turning the phone back to me. I stare down at the screen, absentmindedly touching the picture like my body is seeking him out on its own.

Elena chuckled softly, "Just wait until your birthday. The pull is going to be a hundred times stronger then."

I smiled up at her shyly, "It's already hard to resist him. I can't imagine the pull being any stronger."

"Your dad almost mated and marked me right in the Wawa gas pumps. I bet Nathan was the same way."

Uncle Nathan nods, "Fiona was here on spring break with her parents. Her dad had to physically pull me off her, then her mom had to physically pull her off me."

"Gross dad," Courtney gags in disgust.

Uncle Nathan laughs, "You just wait, young lady. One day I'm going to be choking out some young man to keep him off you."

Her Brother, Her Mate Chapter 23

I made Parker wait most of Saturday before I finally decided to text him. I didn't go to the warrior center or training all day, choosing just to workout in the pack's gym early this morning instead. Courtney went with me, and then I took her around Miami and even took her shopping so she had more appropriate attire for the twin's party tonight.

Casey called me around lunch, wondering where I was since I'm usually at training all day on Saturdays. I reminded him that my cousin was in town and told him he'd meet her tonight.

"Who was that?" Courtney asked.

"Casey. He's a really good friend. Simone, his twin sister, has been my best friend since elementary school. Casey is a warrior like me, but Simone's...." I bite my lip, thinking of the best way to describe her, "she likes to be pretty. She isn't a fighter at all, so Casey and I hang out more lately. He's a beast. He was a gamma candidate here, but when he heard I was transferring to Blue Cliff he applied to transfer too."

She looks at me oddly, "Are you guys dating?"

I laughed and shook my head, "No, no. I never crossed that line with him. He means too much to me to ruin our friendship after we found our mates. Now that I know he's not my mate, I wouldn't even consider it. He's always been like a brother in my eyes."

"Which is funny considering your brother turned out to be your mate," Courtney giggled.

I laughed with her, "Irony, isn't it?"

When we got back to the packhouse, I parted ways with Courtney so we could both rest up before the party tonight. Once alone in my room, I text Parker a vague 'hey' and I swear he responds before I even finish pressing send.

P: Finally!

I laughed softly at his response.

Me: It's later

P: I couldn't even stalk you. You weren't at the Warrior Building all day today.

Me: I was taking my cousin around Miami. She hasn't been here before.

P: What are you doing now? Can I come see you?

I bite my lip, wondering if it's a good idea. I hate to admit it, but I'm craving his closeness right now. It's hard to keep fighting the pull I feel towards him.

Me: In my room. Yes.

It takes him maybe 2 minutes before I hear knocking at my door. I laugh as I pull the door open. Just like a puppy, I think to myself. Simone described him perfectly.

"Hi," I chuckled, staring up at him.

"Hi," he smiles back nervously at me. "Can I come in?"

I stood back and gestured for him to come inside.

"Later took a long time," he mutters softly.

"Later isn't a definitive amount of time. I could have waited until tomorrow considering I have a birthday party to get to later."

His face drops momentarily, and with his droopy eyes and pouty lips 'puppy' is all I can think, making me laugh softly.

"Want to come to the party with me?" I asked him, making his face instantly light up. "It's for the twins, so you'll have to play nice with Casey."

"As long as he doesn't act like your boyfriend in front of me, I'll be fine," he states.

"He's not my boyfriend, Parker. I let you think that because I thought you were trying to act like some self-righteous prick, but he's never been more than a friend to me."

"Really?" Parker smiled brightly, "I thought he was considering how close you both are."

"Simone is still my best friend and Casey is a close second. Now that I know that he's not my mate, I'm not ruining our friendship by treating him as anything other than my friend."

He grimaces slightly, "Let's hope he feels the same."

"Why's that?" I ask, tauntingly, "I still haven't accepted you yet. What if he finds his mate and she's horrible? I could still take him as a chosen."

Parker growls disapprovingly, making me laugh, "I'm just kidding. I can't see the moon goddess doing that to him. She has our best interests at heart, right?"

He smiles shyly at that, "She does." Parker takes a deep breath, then pulls me to sit beside him on my loveseat. "Carli, about yesterday, I'm sorry I wasn't honest with you from the start. Even four years ago, when I first found out, I should have talked to you about it instead of trying to run from it. I was so scared that there was something wrong with me and I would end up hurting you. I'm sorry that I hurt you more by staying away. It felt like s**t, and I thought I was only punishing myself. I was too stupid to see that I was hurting you as well."

I can see the sincerity in Parker's eyes boring into mine.

"Why did you tell mom to keep me away from you?" I asked nervously.

"I thought she would help. Not just me, but I thought she would at the very least protect you from your older brother who was seeing you as a mate and not a sister. I never wanted her to hurt you or shun you."

"She did, though," I tell him, "She was horrible to me. If I even showed my face to your dad she would flip out."

Parker runs his hand through his hair, sighing deeply, "I'm so sorry. What else did she do?"

I shrug, "She gave me a credit card when I turned 14 and told me to uber to school if I didn't want to take the bus. The bus doesn't even come here. She also told me not to go to the dining hall anymore and to buy my food out. If it wasn't for the Childes, I would have probably dropped out and starved. Elena started driving me to and from school and made sure I ate at every meal. My dad, even though he couldn't tell me he was my dad since mom commanded him not to, was already acting like my parent and so was Elena. They stayed on top of me to continue training, to do well at school, they showed up to all my school events, and Elena took me shopping for clothes, dresses for dances, anything a normal mom would do.

“When I turned 16, mom saw me coming back from the beauty salon with Elena. Elena took me to the spa and went the whole nine yards for me. Facials, massages, manicures and pedicures, hair treatment and body wrap. Mom asked me to speak with her, dragging me to her office away from Elena. I thought she had remembered it was my birthday for once, but instead she slapped me, saying I was embarrassing her by being with Elena all the time. I just had to sit there and listen to her screaming at me for who knows how long, before she finally let me leave. I ran out of the packhouse and shifted, running through the rain all night long.

“I didn’t know, but the Childes had planned a birthday dinner for me at their home with Simone and Casey, Hillary, and a few of my other friends. I missed the whole thing because of mom. I even had my block up so they couldn’t mind link me. When I came back early the next morning, my dad and Elena had half the warriors gathered to start looking for me. That was pretty horrible. I never told anyone that mom did that, but I think Elena knew.”

I sighed heavily, then looked over to Parker, who looked pissed. I smiled at him and patted his hand, “It’s not that big of a deal. Mom gave me my car the following weekend, telling me to quit getting rides from other people like a beggar. I’ve avoided her for the most part after that.”

“It’s not okay, Carli,” Parker tells me in a low voice, “That will never be okay. I had no idea she was being like that. I knew she ignored you, and I knew that they didn’t give you the love you deserved, but I never thought she would abuse you. That’s child abuse, Carli. That’s criminal. I’m having a hard time sitting here and listening to s**t like that without doing anything. She should be in jail.”

“I’m not vengeful or vindictive. I just want to be free of them and start living my own life,” I told him honestly.

He looks down at my hands gripped tightly in his. “I want to be part of that life,” he whispers.

I smiled sadly at him, “I don’t know if I can stay here. Not with them here. Not with her here.”

He nods, still looking down at our hands, “I’m supposed to inherit the pack soon. If you want me to, I’ll renounce my title and move with you, but I want you to think about staying. I can banish them. No, I will banish them. I’ll do

whatever you want me to do. You are an amazing warrior, and you would be the best luna. I really think the moon goddess made us mates for a reason.”

“What reason?” I asked him. Parker finally looks up, meeting my eyes. My insides flutter with the intensity of his gaze.

“My guess, the moon goddess did this to restore this pack. We hold the fate bond sacred for a reason. When the heir to the pack isn’t from the pack’s true Alpha and true Luna, it weakens the pack. Because of our parents,” he stops and shakes his head, correcting himself, “no, my parents’ selfishness and mistakes we were made to suffer; you more than anyone. But we were also given the task of making things right. I have the blood of the alpha, you have the blood of the true Luna. Us being a fated pair brings balance back to our pack. It’s correcting the mistakes of our parents and restoring the heart of the pack.”

Parker drops one of my hands and cups my face, “I just want what you want, but I think you should consider staying. If not for me, for the pack. Whatever you decide, I’m following you. If you decide you still can’t stay here, we will leave.”

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I left Parker on my loveseat, using taking a shower as an excuse to separate from him and think for a few minutes alone. I’m glad I listened to Simone and Elena and gave him a chance to talk. My aversion is relenting some, but it’s still hard to shake all the lingering hurt from years of neglect. I can understand why he avoided me, but it doesn’t change how much it hurt at the time.

My mother is such a b***h. All she had to do was tell Parker the truth about my real dad and both of us could have avoided all this pain. She sacrificed her kids’s happiness to protect her own reputation. I say I’m not vindictive, but I’m standing under the shower stream wishing for her to get paper cuts every time she opens mail and flies to always land in her drinks.

I tie on a bikini then hear knocking on my door. I rush out of the room right when Parker gets up to answer the door. I noticed his smirk when looking at my bathing suit. He’s probably relieved I didn’t rush out naked.

Courtney is standing on the other side, wearing the bikini and coverup she bought with me earlier today. It’s almost comical how white she is compared to me and Parker.

"You look cute," I smiled at her.

"Don't lie. I look like a ghost," she laughs.

Parker comes up behind me and Courtney's eyes go wide in shock.

"Is this the kinky brother?" she whispers loudly to me, making Parker and me laugh.

"This is Parker," I told her.

"Hi Parker," she smiled brightly, "I've heard so much about you. Dang," she looked him up and down, "That picture didn't do you justice. You're like a giant."

He smiles shyly down at me, "Picture?" He raises his eyebrow.

"The one you took of us yesterday," I smirked, "Courtney wanted to know what you looked like."

"Usually people look better in selfies," she giggles, "I'm officially team Parker. This Casey guy I heard our dads talking about for the last hour can't be any hotter than him."

Parker growls softly at the mention of Casey, making both me and Courtney laugh.

"Relax. Carli has already said she's not interested in him like that at all. Dad was just talking about the gamma position and work stuff. Uncle Thomas only mentioned, like, 3 times that he liked the guy more than you. I got your back though. I'll make 'Team Parker' shirts later."

Parker laughs at Courtney's bubbly attitude, and I can tell he likes her too.

I grab jean shorts, my phone and my keys and the 3 of us head out.

The sun was setting as we drove out to North Miami Beach to Oleta River State Park. It's closed to the public once sunset hits, but supernaturals can use it after that time for events and bbqs. It's great because we don't have to worry about humans. There's lots of tree cover, so sometimes when we party down here we will shift and go for runs along the river.

Courtney rains questions down on Parker on our way. Questions about me, him, me and him; it's almost embarrassing, but he answers everything honestly.

"Do you think the pack will react badly to you both being mates?"

I turned to look at him, wondering the same thing.

"No," he shrugs, "Most people think she's not really related to me. Your aunt and uncle are the ones who basically raised her. Our warriors know, but they also thought I was always weird for treating her the way I did. I think it will be fine with everyone when they hear the whole story."

"How did you treat her?" Courtney asks, bouncing in her seat, waiting for a good story.

Parker laughs at her enthusiasm. "She always came first. I used to hover over all her training sessions, all her warrior meetings, scheduling myself to be where she was. When she turned 12, I started chasing all the little shits hanging around her off, telling them all they would never be good enough for her. The guys I worked with told me I had a sister complex. I thought I was acting like a normal brother. It scared me when I woke up on my 18th birthday and was struck with the mate bond. I thought something really was wrong with me."

Courtney gives him a sympathetic pat on the back, "Something was wrong with you. Besides being freakishly tall, you had horrible parents who lied to you your entire life."

"Don't remind me," he grumbles, "I don't think I can forgive them for the s**t they pulled."

"So you didn't avoid me because you didn't want to be with me?" I asked him.

He looks over at me, briefly taking his eyes off the road, "You were 14, Carli. And I thought you were my sister. I was scared because I wanted you."

"Oh," I whisper.

"That's sweet in an eww-that's-gross kind of way. Only a little cringy," Courtney says, lightening the mood.

Parker huffs out a laugh, "Thanks?"

"No problem. Now, how old were you when you lost your virginity?"

"Okay, that's enough," I stopped her before he could tell her. I don't need to know that.

Fairies are working the gate, waving us through when we get there.

"Wow, this is so pretty," Courtney looks around in awe. Melody, my and Simone's fairy friend, and her other fairy friends enchanted the trees to sparkle, and the moisture in the air to cast rainbows everywhere.

Parker parks his truck in the parking lot, then we all walk together, Parker with his arm around my shoulders, as we cross the walking bridge. Simone is at the other end, welcoming guests. Her face lights up when she sees me, then turns to a sly smirk when she notices Parker trailing close behind.

"Well, look at you. Take my advice?" she wiggles her eyebrows at me.

"Maybe," I smiled and hugged her tightly, "Happy birthday! Where's the birthday boy?"

She waves her hand in the direction of the beach, "Someone got in a fight over a paddle board or something stupid. He went to break it up."

"Well," I hand her the bag with the Jimmy Choos I bought her, "Here's your real present."

She squeals excitedly, "You love me!"

"I got you something too," Courtney says cheerfully from behind me, shoving around Parker to hand Simone the little bag containing pretty gold rings we picked out earlier today.

"Oooh, you love me too. Who are you, by the way?" Simone smiled brightly at her.

"This is my cousin Courtney. She's visiting from Blue Cliff Pack," I told her.

"Yay! New friends!" Simone throws her hands up, then pulls Courtney into a big hug. "Did the puppy bring me anything?" Simone asks, looking expectantly up at Parker.

Before he can let her down by revealing he came empty handed, Casey appears out of nowhere and rips Courtney into his arms.

“Mate,” he growls before slamming his mouth against hers.

Her Brother, Her Mate Chapter 25

Casey is gripping Courtney against him, his knuckles turning white from straining on her back like he’s trying to physically mold her to him. Their instant, no-bars-held passion is amazing. Courtney seemed just as fervent as him.

Their mouths move against one another and they quite literally look like they’re sucking face.

Simone huffs then looks at me expectantly, “Now, where’s mine?”

“Your what?” I held back my laughter, knowing what she was going to say.

“My mate. It’s not fair you brought him one and not me.”

I laughed, “I brought you something better. Shoes!”

“Okay, well, that’s close enough I guess,” she giggles, then looks over at her brother and gags. Casey is groping Courtney’s a*s and she’s grinding against him.

Her dad told her yesterday she would be like this. I should take a picture and send it to him.

“Courtney,” Parker calls over to her. She looks over briefly and Parker tosses her his keys, which I’m surprised she actually catches. “My windows are tinted. Just don’t break an axle from rocking it too hard.”

“Thanks,” she smiles shyly at us while Casey is busy kissing down her neck.

“That’s Casey, by the way. Make sure you know each other’s names BEFORE you stick it in,” I called out to them as Courtney pulled him towards Parker’s truck.

“You’re going to have to decontaminate your truck later,” I laughed at Parker.

He just shrugs, then smiles widely, "I'm too happy to care."

"Why are you happy?" Simone asks, smiling like she already knows.

"Because I don't have to worry about him anymore," his platinum smile is almost blinding, making me and Simone laugh.

I'm happy for my friend, but also a little scared. Is that what I'm going to be like next weekend? The mate bond really doesn't give you much of a choice.

I look back, and Casey has Courtney pinned against Parker's truck, her legs wrapped around him as he pushes into her. They had better hurry up and get in the truck before they get any further gone.

Courtney POV

This super sexy, super handsome, super my-panties-have-never-been-so-wet hunk of deliciousness is my mate. My mate! I'm definitely team Casey. Not for my cousin, but for me. He's all mine.

"F**k, you're so beautiful," he groans, taking a break from kissing me to stare at my face. "Who are you? Why have I never seen you before?"

"I'm Courtney," I smiled slyly at him, "You're Casey, one of Carli's friends."

"Hmm, Carli's cousin?" he asks, hands gripping my butt as he pushes himself against me.

My eyes rolled in the back of my head, my need for him escaping in a soft moan. "Yes," I answered breathlessly.

"I'm definitely not taking back my transfer request," he murmurs, then smashes his mouth against mine again. His warm mouth tastes so sweet, like agave. He smells bitter sweet like tequila, or a margarita and it's driving me crazy.

His tongue tangles and presses against mine, making me moan into his mouth. I can feel his girth pressing into my p***y, and I'm so wet it's driving me wild. We should probably get in the truck, but my mouth is too busy to say anything.

Thankfully, Casey pulls the keys from my hand, then unlocks the truck and breaks away from me to help me into the backseat.

“Um, Casey,” I whispered as he pulled me into his lap to straddle him, “I, uh, haven’t done....that yet.”

“You’re a virgin?” he asks in amazement, making my cheeks redden and I look down nervously, slightly embarrassed.

“Yeah,” I murmured.

He groans softly, “My goddess, you’re perfect.” He surprises me by his confirming statement. Carli seemed so experienced. I thought that’s what he would want. Not an inexperienced wilderness girl. He readjusts me so I’m not right on top of his hardened length, and then brings both hands to my face, “I’m not letting your first time be in the back of that prick’s truck. I just need to be close to you for right now,” he whispers to me, his eyes roaming over my face like he’s trying to commit every feature to memory.

I nodded, tilting my face into his touch and offering him a small smile.

“You’re Gamma Nathan’s daughter?” he asks, tracing my bottom lip with his thumb.

I nodded again, looking up at him through my lashes, “I heard a lot about you from him and my uncle.”

“All good things, I hope?” he asks jokingly.

“Yeah,” I giggled, making his face light up, “but they both seemed to be under the impression you were Carli’s boyfriend.”

“Well,” he looks down nervously, “I’m not going to lie to you. I liked her. She never saw me that way, though. That small crush doesn’t compare to what I felt when I saw you. I was all yours the moment my eyes laid on you.”

“That’s good,” I laughed softly, “because I was all yours the moment you pulled me into your arms. Happy birthday, by the way.”

“Best birthday ever,” he grins, pulling my face in for another deep kiss.

Carli POV

I’m happy for my cousin and friend, but I’m also worried now about my birthday. I was there when Daryl turned 18 and he came out of nowhere when me and Simone were eating with Hillary, grabbed her and started

possessively rubbing himself all over her. Hillary and Daryl weren't close in the least. She hung out with me and the twins, and Daryl was in the football crowd. Daryl turned 18 at the start of the school year, and Hillary's birthday wasn't until 2 months later. She was so taken back by his behavior, Casey and he almost got in a serious fight over the incident. Casey threw Daryl off her and stood in front of her protectively, which pissed Daryl off, so the 2 were seconds from shifting in the middle of the cafeteria when I got up and commanded them both to back down. Having the blood of the luna was pretty handy at that moment.

After Daryl told us Hillary was his mate and he wasn't going anywhere, he started to follow us around more. His infatuation won her over before she felt the mate bond, and the day of her 18th they went to school together bearing each other's marks on their necks. It was sweet to me at the time, but seeing the same thing happen again, knowing I have a week before it happens to me has me freaked out.

Courtney and Casey had no clue who each other were and just started sucking each other's faces. Is that what Parker was fighting against when he found out I was his mate? Is that why he treated me so coldly, because I was still so young and he didn't want to hurt me?

"What's going on in that head of yours? You've been staring at my truck for the last 5 minutes. You're not mad that you lost your chances with that shaggy looking guy, are you?" Parker asks me gruffly.

"Was it like that for you?" I asked softly.

"What?" he scrunches his eyebrows in confusion.

"The mate bond. When you turned 18 and saw me that day, was that what it was like for you?"

He grimaces slightly, "Kind of. It wasn't s****I desire. I did crave being near you, though. I had a hard time holding back. Whenever you came close, I thought I was going to lose my control and start rubbing my scent all over you, or I'd make you feel scared of me. I didn't want to hurt you, so I tried to stay away from you."

"Jerk," I whispered, but smiled at him.

"I know. You were old enough to understand. I should have talked with you instead of running away. I'm sorry, Carli. You have no idea how sorry I am for that," he grabs my hand and squeezes it.

I squeezed his hand back and offered him an understanding smile. "I'm not okay with it, but I can see why you reacted like that. If I accept you, you're going to have to spend the next 40 years making it up to me."

"How about 100 years?" he asks, pulling me into his arms.

"Seems fair," I shrugged, then laughed with him.

We walk to the beach, where most of the guests are at. A DJ is set up and professional chefs are BBQing off to the side. The serving tables are covered in sweets and snacks, and the 2 chefs are grilling burgers, chicken and sausages.

Mitch Meyers sees me, and tries to wave me over, but Parker growls in his direction and puts a possessive arm around my shoulders.

"You're cute," I laughed at him, mirroring his words he told me yesterday on the way to lunch.

"I know, so quit looking at guys like that. Just look at me."

"Wow, look how humble you are," I said sarcastically.

"That's right. I'm humble and cute. All the other guys can't compare to your humble and cute mate, so only look at me."

I start laughing, but before I can respond, screaming comes from the thick foliage at the far end of the parking lot. Melody and a few other fairies come running out. The last one of them to break through the trees, almost making it to the paved road, suddenly gets attacked from behind.