

CH 12 -AMBER

AMBER POV

The library was supposed to be my sanctuary. A place where I could drown out the world with books, escape into words and knowledge, and pretend that people didn't exist. But today? No way.

I stared down at my biology textbook, its words blurring together. I'd read the same sentence at least ten times, but my brain refused to absorb it. My pencil tapped against the edge of my notebook, and I fought the urge to throw the damn thing across the room. "Focus, Amber, focus."

Except I couldn't.

Because my thoughts kept wandering back to him.

Alek.

"What the hell was that?!"

He'd shown up on the eld like some sort of knight in shining...jeans. No insults. No smirking or bullying. Just...him. Dragging me away like he owned me, like I was some fragile thing that needed saving. And then—oh, God—the tear.

I slapped my forehead, earning a sharp glare from the girl at the next table. I mouthed an apology, cheeks heating, and tried to go back to my notes.

But I couldn't stop replaying it.

Why did he do that? Who the hell licks a tear off someone's face? I mean, seriously, what kind of medieval alpha nonsense was that?

And the worst part? My body had reacted.

I hated it. The way my skin prickled when he touched me. The heat that bloomed in my chest whenever his stupid green eyes locked with mine. My palms got sweaty just "thinking" about him, and I hated it. "Hated him."

Didn't I?

I groaned again, this time louder, and the girl from earlier actually shushed me. I shot her a glare but quickly packed my things. No way was I getting anything done here.

By the time I almost reached the parking lot, I was still stewing, muttering under my breath about stupid alphas and their stupid possessive tendencies. Vic was probably wrapping up cheer practice. I could wait by the car and vent to her about—

Thwack.

I walked straight into a wall.

No, not a wall. A muscle wall.

My heart sank when I looked up and saw him. Christian.

His chest was rising and falling, like he'd sprinted across the entire school lot to nd me. His jaw was clenched, and his eyes burned with something I couldn't place. Anger? Desperation?

"Christian," I said atly, stepping back to put some space between us.

"Where were you?" he demanded, his voice low and harsh.

I blinked. "Excuse me?"

"You heard me," he snapped, stepping closer. Too close. "Are you screwing Alek now? Is that what this is about?"

My jaw dropped. Was he "seriously" asking me that?

I crossed my arms, my own anger bubbling to the surface. "Are you joking? I saw you, Christian. I saw you sucking some redhead's face like your life depended on it."

His expression darkened, and he scoffed. "You saw wrong. Maybe you were too busy letting Alek feel you up."

I froze, disbelief slamming into me like a truck. Was he...projecting? Turning the tables and making "me" the bad guy?

"You're unbelievable," I spat. "You think you can screw around and then come at me like this? Who the hell do you think you are?"

"Who do you think "you" are?" he shot back venomously, taking another step forward. "My little nerd, huh? Do you like being bullied, Amber? Do you like it rough, babe?"

His words stung more than I wanted to admit. The venom in his tone, the way he twisted the knife—it hurt. My body went rigid as he grabbed my arm, his grip strong and unyielding.

"Let me go," I said through clenched teeth.

He didn't. Instead, he dragged me toward an empty classroom, ignoring my protests and attempts to pull free.

I squirmed, adrenaline surging through me, but his hold was too strong. "I said let me go!"

Christian slammed the door shut behind us and pushed me against the wall. His hand gripped my jaw, forcing me to look at him. I inched, my back hitting the cold surface as he leaned in close. Too close.

I could feel his breath against my ear, hot and heavy. It made my skin crawl.

"You'll be a good girl for me now, won't you, Amber?" he whispered, pressing his body against mine. His hardness against my stomach made bile rise in my throat.

I froze, my heart pounding. Fear and disgust twisted in my chest, but I wasn't going to let him win.

Not like this.

"Leave me alone," I growled, my voice low and dangerous.

He smirked. "Do you like to play, Amber?"

I didn't think. My instincts took over.

My hand shot down and grabbed him by the balls, squeezing with all the strength I had.

His smirk vanished, replaced by a wide-eyed expression of sheer pain. "Amber—"

"Let. Me. Go."

He didn't release me, so I squeezed harder.

He let out a strangled sound, and for a second, I thought his eyes might pop out of his skull.

"What a pig," I muttered, disgusted.

"Amber, stop," he choked, his voice high-pitched.

I twisted my hand just for good measure.

He let go of my arm, stumbling back and clutching himself. I didn't wait to see if he'd recover. I grabbed my bag and bolted out of the classroom, my heart racing.

Once I was outside, the fresh air hit me like a slap. My hands were shaking, my breath coming in short bursts.

But I'd done it.

And I'd never felt stronger in my life.

I barely made it to the edge of the parking lot before I heard the cracking and snapping of bones behind me. My blood ran cold.

Christian had shifted.

And I'd pissed both him and his wolf off.

"Oh, for f**k's sake," I muttered, dropping my bag and books to the ground. There was no way I was going to outrun a wolf, but standing here like a sitting duck wasn't exactly the smart move either.

So, I ran.

My boots slipped against the snow as I sprinted toward the woods. Not the brightest plan, I realized, but instincts were in charge now. My legs burned, my lungs screamed, and my heart pounded like it wanted out of my chest.

I heard a crash behind me—wood splintering, a beast growling. His steps were closer, so close I could hear his heavy breaths.

The snap of jaws was "too close".

I screamed when his teeth caught the edge of my jacket, yanking me backward. The force sent me sprawling to the ground, the snow softening the impact but knocking the wind out of me.

Christian's massive wolf loomed over me, his paws pressing against my chest and pinning me down. His fur bristled, his lips pulled back to reveal sharp teeth, and his eyes burned with fury.

He growled low, guttural, and terrifying.

But I wasn't about to let him see fear.

My gaze locked with his, and I glared right back. My chest heaved as I caught my breath, but my voice was steady when I spat, "You're a f*****g jerkface, you know that?"

The growl deepened, vibrating through his body. His hot breath puffed out in the cold air, misting between us.

This was just another form of bullying, wasn't it? A scare tactic. He wasn't actually going to hurt me. Right?

Right?

My heart hammered as I tried to convince myself, but the feral look in his eyes made it hard. The guy I thought I knew—"the guy I thought I loved"—was gone. Maybe he'd never existed.

Christian leaned down, his massive muzzle near my throat. I held my breath, refusing to inch, though every instinct screamed for me to cower.

He was waiting for me to bow. Ha!

Good luck with that, asshole.

He barked sharply, a sound that rattled through me, then nuzzled closer to my neck.

And licked it.

"Oh, come on."

"Eww," I groaned, my voice full of disgust. "Just...eww. Why are you like this?"

His growls turned to something darker, more menacing, as if he understood my mockery.

But then I saw them.