

CHAPTER FOUR

AMBER POV

Aaron's eyes locked onto mine the second he walked into the café. *One heartbeat. Two heartbeats.* I quickly dropped my gaze, pretending to be deeply engrossed in my cocoa. I could feel my cheeks heating up, and not from the drink.

"So, did you ask him if we're going together with the limo?" Vic asked suddenly, snapping me back to reality.

"Who?" I asked blankly, my mind still stuck on Aaron and the way his piercing forest-green eyes had pinned me in place.

Vic rolled her eyes. "Christian, duh. Did you ask him?"

"Oh," I mumbled, stirring my cocoa. "I haven't seen him today, so I didn't ask...sorry."

Vic leaned forward, her voice dropping to an urgent whisper. "Well, do it now!"

"Now?" I blinked at her, glancing nervously around the café.

"Yes, now!" she whisper-yelled, practically vibrating with impatience. "Call him! Text him! Something! We need to book the limo before the end of the day, or we won't have a ride to the prom!"

I grimaced, lowering my voice to match hers. "Vic, I'm not going to call him right now. Not here."

"Why not?" she demanded.

"Because..." I trailed off, darting my eyes toward Aaron. He was already at the counter, irting effortlessly with the waitress while ordering his coffee. Of course. Because why wouldn't he? Every female in the pack seemed to lose all self-respect the moment one of the Savage triplets entered the room. My stomach twisted as the waitress giggled at something he said, her cheeks turning a shade of pink that matched the cherry on top of the milkshake she was preparing. "Because I don't want to make that call with *him* here, okay?"

Vic followed my gaze and rolled her eyes again. "Oh, come on. He's not even paying attention to us. He's too busy charming his next victim."

I knew she was right. Aaron probably didn't even remember I existed most of the time, except when he was making my life miserable. But that didn't make the idea of calling Christian in front of him any less horrifying.

"Hmm, I'll just text Christian later," I said, trying to smooth things over. "It's not a big deal."

"It *is* a big deal!" Vic hissed, waving her nearly empty coffee cup for emphasis. "We can't just show up at prom in some beat-up car or worse—walk!"

"Vic, I really don't care how we get there," I whispered sharply, gritting my teeth. "I'll text him later, I promise." I darted my eyes toward Aaron, silently begging her to notice the ticking time bomb nearby.

Luckily, Aaron seemed too preoccupied with his conversation at the counter to care about us. I let out a tiny sigh of relief, but my irritation grew as I watched the waitress practically trip over herself to impress him.

Thankfully, Vic nally got the hint. With a dramatic sigh, she leaned back in her chair. "Fine, but don't blame me if all the good limos are taken."

I was about to thank her for dropping the subject when I caught sight of him again. Why am I always super aware of him? That's like a curse from the universe I swear.

The jackass was laughing at something the waitress said, his perfect smile on full display. The girl was practically swooning, twirling her hair like a cliché from a bad rom-com.

*Why does every single female in the pack turn into a simpering i***t around them?* I thought bitterly. It wasn't jealousy—denitely not. It was just frustrating. None of them saw the side of Aaron, Alan, and Alek that I knew all too well. To everyone else, they were the golden boys: gorgeous, talented, and dripping with the pack's money. Future Alphas. Potential Luna mates.

But I knew better. I saw the cruel smirks, the cutting remarks, the pranks that always seemed to nd their way back to me. They weren't princes—they were nightmares wrapped in designer jackets and charming smiles.

It hadn't always been that way. When we were kids, we'd been friends. We'd played together at pack gatherings, exchanged Christmas gifts, and sat at the same table for every holiday meal. But then middle school happened, and everything changed. Suddenly, I wasn't their friend anymore—I was their target.

Vic drained the last of her coffee and stood up abruptly, snapping me out of my thoughts. "Let's go," she said, slinging her bag over her shoulder. "I'll drive you home."

I nodded, grabbing my dress and bag. As I stood, I bumped into something—or rather, someone.

Hot liquid splashed everywhere, and I froze, my heart sinking.

Aaron.

His coffee was now all over his jacket and shirt, the rich, dark liquid soaking into the fabric. His jaw tightened, his face a mask of cold fury. If looks could kill, I'd have been six feet under.

"Sorry! Oh my God, Aaron, I'm so sorry!" I stammered, grabbing napkins from the table and frantically trying to blot his jacket. "I didn't see you—"

He didn't say a word, just stood there like a statue, his jaw ticking dangerously.

"I'll—uh—pay for the dry cleaning," I babbled, still dabbing at the mess. "Or buy you a new one! Whatever you need, just—"

Before I could nish, Aaron turned, his movements slow and deliberate. He reached for a milkshake sitting on a nearby table—a towering concoction of chocolate, whipped cream, and a cherry on top.

My eyes widened in horror. "Aaron, don't—"

He dumped the entire milkshake over my head.

The cold, sticky liquid dripped down my hair and onto my face, soaking into my sweater and pooling on the oor around me.

"The whipped cream suits you," Aaron murmured in my ear, his voice low and mocking.

Then he walked away, leaving me standing there in stunned silence.

The café erupted into laughter. I could hear the snickers, the whispered comments, and the unmistakable sound of someone snapping pictures.

Great. Just great. I could already imagine the i*****: posts and the captions: "Amber the Milkshake Queen."*

Hot tears welled up in my eyes, threatening to spill over. My humiliation burned brighter than the cocoa I'd abandoned on the table.

"Come on," Vic said urgently, grabbing my arm and steering me toward the door. "Let's get out of here."

We stumbled into the alley behind the café, the cold air hitting me like a slap. Vic pulled me to the side, and I sank to the ground, clutching my dress bag like it was the only thing keeping me from falling apart completely.

The tears came then, hot and furious, spilling down my cheeks as I sobbed like a child.

"Why me?" I choked out between gasping breaths. "What did I ever do to him?!"

Vic crouched beside me, frantically dabbing at my hair and face with a stack of napkins she'd grabbed on our way out. "Nothing. He's just a grade-A asshole, Amber. Don't let him get to you."

But he had gotten to me. He always did. No matter how hard I tried to brush it off, to tell myself that his pranks and insults didn't matter, they always found a way under my skin.

"I hate him," I whispered, my voice trembling. "I hate all of them."

Vic sighed, her expression softening as she brushed a sticky strand of hair out of my face. "I know, Amber. I know."

She sat down beside me, pulling me into a hug as I cried into her shoulder. The snow fell softly around us, the alley quiet except for the sound of my sobs.

And for the rst time in a long time, I let myself be vulnerable. I let myself feel the hurt, the humiliation, and the anger.

Because no matter how much I wanted to pretend it didn't bother me, it did.

And I wasn't sure how much more of it I could take.

Vic tossed the last of the soggy napkins into a nearby trash can and sat down beside me. "You know what we're gonna do?" she said, her tone shifting to something brighter, almost conspiratorial.

"What?" I snied, wiping at my face with the sleeve of my jacket.

"We're gonna go to that prom, and you're gonna look so hot in that gold dress that Aaron will choke on his own jealousy."

I let out a weak laugh, shaking my head. "Yeah, right. Like he cares what I wear."

Vic bumped my shoulder with hers. "Trust me, Amber. He cares more than he lets on. all of them do actually"

"Did you hit your head or something?"

"Nope! And you'll see soon enough, i'm Sure of it"

I didn't believe her, but I didn't have the energy to argue. All I wanted to do was go home, shower off the sticky mess, and crawl into bed.