

CH 7 - Amber

AMBER POV

Dinner was always a lively affair at the Jones household. As soon as Mom placed the lasagna on the table, **Tweedledee and Tweedledum**—otherwise known as my younger twin brothers, Rett and Robert—stormed down the stairs, they moved like a herd of stampeding bison being chased by a lion. Honestly, they could give any werewolf forms a run for their money with the amount of noise they made in human form.

They were only six months younger than me, but the pack’s rules meant they were being groomed to become deltas for the Savage Triplets, just because they were boys. Never mind that I was smarter, more organized, and ten times more polite. Apparently, those qualities didn’t matter when you had ovaries.

In this case, though, I didn’t mind. Being a delta to the Savage Triplets sounded like a personal nightmare. Who would want to deal with Alan, Alek, and Aaron every single day of their life? Not me, thank you.

I had other plans. Plans that didn’t involve pack politics or territorial disputes. Plans that involved me, standing on my own two feet far away from this remote, snow-covered hellhole. The corner of my lips twitched upward at the thought. I’d applied for a scholarship to Pratt Institute in New York City and even secured the Alpha’s permission to transfer to a smaller city pack if I got in. It wasn’t a done deal yet, but I’d poured my heart into the application.

A free ticket out of this hellhole.

Well, not always a hellhole. My brothers might be absolute goofballs, but they were also part of my safe circle. When Rett and Robert were around, no one dared mess with me—not even the triplets. Maybe because the triplets didn’t want to risk turning their third-in-command against them. Whatever the reason, I felt safe when my brothers were close.

I was jolted out of my thoughts as Rett opped into his seat at the table, tugging on the sleeve of my sweater like a child. Robert followed suit, his grin as wide as a crescent moon.

“Food!” Rett cheered, practically drooling as he sat down at the table.

“Mom, how much longer do we have to wait? I’m *starving!” Robert whined, eyeing the lasagna like it was the Holy Grail.

“Wait for your father, you impatient pups!” Mom scolded, waving a dishtowel at them. “Honestly, you two act like you haven’t eaten in weeks.”

They whined, looking like overgrown puppies, and I couldn’t help but grin. **They were ridiculous, but they were my ridiculous.**

Eventually, Dad joined us, and we dug into the lasagna. It was perfect, as usual. Dinner was a mix of chatter and laughter as we talked about our day. When Mom asked about my shopping trip with Vic, I nodded vaguely, trying not to give too many details. There was no way I was bringing up Rose or Aaron. Not after what had happened at the boutique earlier. Or at the cafe. Just thinking about it made my blood boil.

“Winter prom?” Dad asked, narrowing his eyes at me like he couldn’t quite believe it. “I thought you weren’t going to these things anymore.”

“I wasn’t,” I admitted, glaring at Rett and Robert as they started snickering. “But this year is different.”

“Why?” Rett asked, grinning mischievously. “Because you’ve got a date?”

I kicked him under the table, but it was too late. Robert waggled his eyebrows at Dad and sang, “She’s got a date, Dad!”

“No, I don’t!” I protested, but my cheeks burned. “Well, technically, yes.”

Dad’s fork clattered to his plate, and his expression hardened. “A date? Amber, your birthday is just around the corner. You’ll be nding your mate soon. Why would you waste your time with some random wolf?”

“It’s just a dance, Dad!” I groaned. “It’s not that deep.”

“Not that deep? Some random wolf could—”

“Daddy, no!” I interrupted, horried. “You’re not going there!”

“But sweetie…”

“Dad, please,” I groaned. “It’s just dancing. It’s not a big deal. And he’s not a random wolf.”

His eyes narrowed, damn his gears were running, I needed an escape plan, fast!

Rett snickered, wiggling his eyebrows “ no dad, not random at all, he’s…”

Mom nally stepped in, pointing a nger at Rett’s chest. “Rett Augustus Jones, don’t you dare say another word! You know your dad is going to freak out the poor boy if he ever meets him.”

Mom was my savior. She always knew when to step in and stop the chaos.

“Christian Bennett!” Robert blurted out with a snicker.

The room went silent. Dad’s jaw dropped, and he turned to me. “Wait. Wailor’s son? No. Absolutely not.”

“Why not?!” I demanded, throwing my hands in the air.

“Because,” Dad said rmly, “the apple doesn’t fall far from the tree. Wailor has always been an ass and a manwhore, You’re not going anywhere with his kid.”

“Mom, help!” I pleaded, turning to my last hope.

Mom straightened in her chair, leveling both Dad and the twins with a glare that could have frozen a raging rogue in its tracks. “You’re all being ridiculous,” she said sharply. “Amber is a grown-ass she-wolf, smart and strong. I trust her judgment, and so will you. End of discussion.”

My hero.

Dad muttered something under his breath, but he didn’t argue further. The boys slouched in their seats, tails metaphorically tucked between their legs. I bit back a triumphant grin. I was going to prom.

After dinner, I escaped to my room, the cozy familiarity of the space calming my frayed nerves. I pulled out my phone, checking for a reply from Christian.

Nothing.

My heart sank a little. Maybe he was busy. Or maybe I’d see him tomorrow and work up the courage to talk to him in person.

Yes, that was it. Tomorrow, I’d nd my voice.

Mom’s words echoed in my mind as I brushed my teeth and climbed into bed. Smart and strong. I wanted to believe her.

Moonlight spilled through the window, casting soft shadows across the room. I took a deep breath, focusing on the good parts of the day—the lasagna, Mom’s defense, the quiet moments with Rett and Robert.

I willed myself to fall asleep with a light heart, pushing thoughts of the triplets as far away as possible. No nightmares tonight. No obsessive thoughts about their smirks, their piercing stares, or the way Alan’s eyes had lingered on mine just a little too long earlier today.

Tomorrow would be better. It had to be.