



## Chapter 19: The Singer

Jonathan led the girls back to their VIP seats. He kept his hand firmly on the small of Amelia's back. It felt nice – strong and protective. And she couldn't help notice that when they sat back down at the table, he sat right beside her.

Lily was visibly upset. She reached for a drink.

"I'm so sorry," she sighed, her head low. "Rick is such an ass. He's a beta, for crying out loud. He should behave better. He just thinks he can have whatever he wants. It's embarrassing. For the whole pack." Her friends were sympathetic.

"It's not your fault and it's not your pack's," Amelia said. "Trust me, I speak from experience. If we judged Gabriel's pack based on Sophia and Vivienne's actions – well, let's just say the pack would have the worst reputation around."

Everyone nodded, especially Olivia. She knew all too well what those two were like.

Just then, Laura excused herself. "I have to go check on my band," she explained.

"I still can't believe she's such a hot shot entertainment manager," Olivia said after Laura left.

"I know, right? I've been listening to Pink Hearts for months and now Laura manages them? It's crazy!" Lily added. Amelia reached for another cosmo.

"How many of those have you had?" Jonathan asked, concern in his eyes.

"This is my third," Amelia replied bluntly. Who did he think he was? Her keeper? She was just about to tell him that her alcohol consumption was none of his business when he fixed his green eyes on her. She felt something flicker in her stomach.

"Perhaps that should be your last? You have an important day tomorrow," Jonathan pointed out.

Good point. Amelia nodded without removing her gaze from his. Olivia saw them staring at each other and smiled to herself.

Laura returned then, a panicked look on her face.

"He's drunk! He's completely obliterated!" Laura exclaimed, sinking into the couch with a heavy sigh.

"Who?" the girls asked in unison.

"The lead singer! He's drunk as a skunk. He can't go on. Not like that. What am I going to do? I was supposed to be managing them!"

"This isn't your fault," Amelia comforted. "They're adults. You're not their babysitter."

"I gave him a coffee and told him to sober up. But they're supposed to be on in like, five minutes."

The group was silent for a bit. But then Olivia spoke up.

"I have an idea," she said with a sly smile. She raised her

eyebrows at Amelia. Lily and Laura caught on.

"Are you thinking what I'm thinking?" Laura asked. Amelia saw them staring at her and blushed. She shook her head.

"Come on, Mila! It'll be fun," Lily coaxed.

"Everyone will love you!" Olivia added persuasively.

"Wait. What?" Jonathan asked, confused.

Amelia blushed even deeper. She explained to Jonathan that she'd been a singer once, but that was back in college. She'd performed at the college pub every Friday night to a full house. Singing had always been a passion of hers and she was really good at it, but it had been years since she'd sung. Jonathan listened with an amused look on his face.

"A woman of many talents," he said softly.

"Help us convince her," Olivia said to Jonathan.

"I can't just get up there and sing!" she told the group. "It's been so long. I'm out of practice."

"Sure you can. Come on! It's just like riding a bike. You'll be great!"

Amelia shook her head again, clearly embarrassed. But then Laura took her hand.

"Please? I'm really stuck here, Amelia. Please do it? For me?"

Their excitement was contagious. And who was she to refuse a friend.

"Okay fine. One song," she said, holding up a finger. Her

friends clapped and Laura dashed off to introduce her.

Before she knew it, Amelia was standing in front of the mic on stage.

I can't believe I'm doing this. The band started and as soon as the first chords hit, Amelia forgot everything around her and fell into her zone.

She sang a stunning rendition of Sweet and Salty, one of her all-time favorites. She was captivating with a deep, sultry voice. During her song, she saw Jonathan watching her. Their eyes met briefly and he gave her a little nod. When she was finished, the crowd erupted into vigorous applause. Amelia felt enthralled as she took her bow.

"Okay. That was really fun," she said, her cheeks flushed with excitement.

"That was incredible! You know, if you ever get bored with your company, I have a place for you with my entertainment company," Laura said.

Olivia laughed. "No way. Her father just asked her to literally take over the family business. She doesn't have time to be a singer."

"Well, that's if I pass my first assignment," Amelia smiled. "I only have one month to prove myself. Think you'll still have a place for me in a month?" Amelia joked.

"What assignment?" Jonathan asked.

"I have to make a business deal with Brickroll Holdings or Mandrake Enterprises. I'm leaning towards Mandrake

Enterprises, but we don't know very much about them. Do you?" Amelia asked Jonathan. Jonathan shot a quick glance at Amelia and then shook his head.

"I'm afraid I can't be much help there," Jonathan replied.

"Any idea where I could learn more about Mandrake Enterprise? They must have records somewhere? Public information?" Amelia asked, her question directed at Jonathan. But before he could reply, Lily said:

"We can ask around, though."

"If that will help?" Laura added.

"Thanks. That would be great. But hey. Enough business talk. We're here to celebrate."

Just then, Amelia felt her phone buzzing. She flipped open her phone and saw a new friend notification. It was from Gabriel Stormfang, along with an unread message. That's weird, she thought. This is my old account. How did he find this so fast?

And as though Olivia could read her mind, Olivia confessed to posting a video of Amelia singing.

"I tagged you in it," Olivia said sheepishly. "And it's gone viral. Look! Hundreds of new followers just in the last hour."

Whoa.

Hundreds was right.

"Are you sure you don't want to come sign with me?" Laura teased. "Clearly people like you."



Amelia only laughed and shook her head. She stared at the unread message notification for a moment.

Then she blocked him, deleted the message, and turned off her notifications.

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## Chapter 20: The Challenge

"Can I buy you a drink?" It was yet another man who had come by their table to hit on Amelia. It seemed like all the men in the bar had their eyes on her. Who could blame them? She was beautiful and talented.

"No, thank you," Amelia smiled sweetly at the latest man. He was good-looking; there was no doubt about that. But Amelia was perfectly content to hang out with her friends. They were having a great time together. She wasn't looking for a date.

"Well, mind if I sit down then?" he asked. And he was just about to slide in next to Amelia when he noticed Jonathan. Jonathan was sitting very closely to Amelia. He shot the man a look that said 'back off'.

"Oh," was all the man said and walked away.

"That's, like, the tenth guy who's offered to buy you a drink tonight," Lily laughed.

"Aren't you interested in any of them?" Laura asked. Amelia shook her head. She honestly wasn't. She had everything she needed right here at this table.

Drinks and friends.

Well, drinks and friends and her new work associate.

"Well, you've let one man buy you a drink," Olivia winked. Amelia understood her connotation and blushed. "Too bad

you're human, Jonathan," Olivia said to him. "You and Amelia would make a really cute couple."

"Ol-i-vee-ah!" Amelia stammered, aghast at her friend's bluntness. She shifted away a bit from Jonathan, embarrassed.

They had one more round of drinks and then decided it was time to go. None of them wanted the night to end but it was getting late and they all had to work in the morning. They walked to the door, laughing. But before they could leave, they were suddenly surrounded by a group.

The girls and Jonathan eyed the circle surrounding them. They were werewolves with anger in their eyes. Big wolves. Strong wolves. And at the head of the group was none other than Rick.

"I thought I told you to go!" Lily said. "I warned you. I'll tell my fiancé."

"Go? Sorry love, but I don't take orders from a chick," Rick responded, his voice thick with disgust.

"This is ridiculous. Let us through," Lily ordered. She and Laura tried to shove their way through the men. But the men pushed them back easily. The girls shoved back harder, but the men pushed them back.

Lily's eyes flashed yellow and her claws came out. Laura felt her wolf rising. Amelia and Olivia pulled the girls back, trying to diffuse the situation. These wolves were strong and there were too many of them.

"Let me at him," Lily yelled, but she was restrained by Olivia.



"Really? You gonna let these girls fight your battles for you?" Rick scoffed. "What kind of man are you?"

Jonathan stepped forward then. "Jonathan, no," Amelia said, reaching for his arm to pull him back. Jonathan stood no chance against a pack of wolves.

"It's fine, Amelia. I promise," Jonathan smiled at her. Then he turned to Rick and calmly said, "I'll ask you NOT to shove these ladies again."

"Ladies? That's a bit of a stretch. Or what?" Rick laughed. "I'm a Beta. You think you take me on, tough guy?"

"If I must," Jonathan replied stoically.

Rick eyed him up and down then. Jonathan was no match for him and his men. They could beat him within half an inch of his life by barely lifting a claw. In fact, it wouldn't even be fun. But the human had guts, he'd give him that much. "I'll tell you what," Rick said with a half-smile on his face. "I'm going to give you a choice. You can either drink with me or crawl out of this bar."

"What?" Laura, Amelia, Lily, and Olivia asked in unison.

"I said...DRINK or CRAWL. Like a wittle baby," Rick laughed, mimicking a baby's accent.

"Enough!" Lily said firmly, but Jonathan flashed her a look that said 'stay out of this'. Meanwhile, some of Rick's wolves had brought in a case of liquor. Vodka by the looks of it.

"Jonathan, you can't do this," Amelia said in a hushed voice.

“Werewolves have a fast metabolism. He can drink way more than you. That much vodka? It probably won’t even hurt him. But there’s enough vodka there to seriously hurt you.”

“You know damned well that’s not a fair challenge! You’re an ass! He’s human,” Olivia scolded Rick. But Rick only laughed.

“Like I said. The man has a choice. If he doesn’t want to accept the challenge, he’s free to crawl out of here on his hands and knees. Look. I’ll let him crawl right under me.” Rick spread his legs. “Of course, you can never come here again.”

Jonathan looked to the circle of men and then to the case of vodka. He reached for a bottle. “Bottom’s up,” he said, lifting the bottle to his lips and chugging it down. The werewolves hollered with enthusiasm. Rick grabbed a bottle and did the same.

Everyone watched as the men drank bottle after bottle. Amelia was amazed. How can he possibly drink this much? she wondered. That’s five bottles gone!

They clearly got drunker and drunker with every bottle. Amelia became concerned. Was she watching this man drink himself to death? Right in front of her eyes.

But then, after the seventh bottle, Rick leaned over and vomited all over the floor. Everyone took a step back, disgusted. He wiped his mouth with the back of his hand.

“That means we’re free to go?” Jonathan asked. He was still standing, but he was swaying ever so slightly. And his

forehead and the back of his neck was covered in a thin layer of sweat. Amelia could tell he was holding on by a thread.

Rick said nothing. He only stepped to the side. Amelia and Lily linked arms with Jonathan and led him out of the bar.

"We need to take him to the hospital," Amelia said as they helped him stumble through the parking lot. "He needs to have his stomach pumped."

"No hospital," Jonathan murmured. He was clearly drunk but he was still able to stand and speak. "I'm used to drinking a lot. I have to socialize a lot for my job. Don't worry about me."

"But you could have alcohol poisoning!" Amelia said. She helped him climb into the back seat of the car.

"Honestly. I'm fine. I can handle my liquor." Amelia was about to protest again but she saw that he had fallen asleep.

"What do you think?" she asked Olivia. Jonathan looked peaceful. He was breathing normally.

"I think he's okay?" Olivia shrugged.

"I don't even know where he lives," Amelia sighed.

"Let's take him back to the hotel. We can get him a room and let him sleep it off," Olivia suggested.

Amelia agreed, but she decided to sit in the back seat with him on the way to the hotel, just in case.