

## CHAPTER 4

### Winter POV

It's lunchtime and I'm sitting outside, my poor stomach growling as it smells the delicious scent of other students eating their lunch, my head hung low and my blonde hair hiding my face as though people wouldn't recognize me. I stood out like a sore thumb. It would take a miracle to get through lunchtime without being accosted by one of my bullies.

"Hey loser" I hear and my heart drops. I'd know that voice anywhere, who wouldn't, and I looked up tentatively, the other girl eyeing me with a wicked grin. My heart sinks despite telling myself to get a goddamn grip. It's none other than Jessica, the most popular girl in school, her long blonde hair gleaming and shiny in the sunlight, her big blue eyes cold and condemning, her skin a nice golden honey tan and her figure slim and clad in a cheerleader's outfit. She lives to humiliate me and all I can do is look up from my position on the grass and wait for what I know is coming. I swallow, my heart thumping loudly in my chest. All I want is to just be left alone, in peace. Is that too much to ask? Why does everyone hate me so much? I've never done anything to them, not that they care about something so mundane as that. They live to make fun of me.

Sure enough, she's clutching a can of soda which she dumps unceremoniously over my head as I shriek, my hair now dripping of cola

as she laughs maniacally, her cheerleader group behind her, giggling behind their hands. It's cold, sticky and trickles down my clothes as I stand up, letting it drip down my back as I shudder. "It's an improvement" laughed Jessica, gesturing towards me as I stare down at the ground "don't you think her hair looks better girls?"

There are choruses of "sure does," from behind her and I hope she's satisfied and that she'll leave now. Instead, she walks right up and swings, her fist connecting to my jaw as I flinch, pain already shooting upwards as I place a hand there, my cheek still sore from the previous day.

"You should die, it would be much better for you", Jessica sneered, and I felt tears well up in the corner of my eyes, but I was determined to keep them from falling. I haven't done anything to her, but Jessica's in love with my brother Damien and tortures me so that he'll like her back. Little does she know that he can't stand her, she's so oblivious.

Thankfully, they all leave me and the bell goes for the next class. I stand up awkwardly, my hair still dripping and feeling incredibly sticky. It's going to be a nightmare to wash out later, but I also can't afford to miss class. My grades are the only thing I have left and I work hard so that, eventually, when I do graduate, if I make it until then, I'll be able to leave this town and my so-called family and study, far away at a college of my choice. I'm determined to get the hell out of this town, no matter what it takes, and become a lawyer. If I keep my grades up like I have been, I might even be able to organize a scholarship. Lord knows there's no way in hell that my father would even dream of paying for my tuition and, quite frankly, I'll be glad to leave. I won't be telling them where I'm going either.

I'm lost in my thoughts as I walk slowly through the hallway, aware of the strange looks I'm receiving and the whispers going on behind my back as my hair clings to my clothes. Thanks Jessica, I think to myself sourly, it's just what I needed today. To feel disgusting on top of everything else. My hands clench into fists involuntarily every time I picture her smug little face, wanting to punch her lights out and knock the smile right off her face. Not that I would try, I'd be killed within moments by her groupies. Still, part of me wondered if it might actually be worth it.

I make it to my locker, just in time for it to be slammed right onto my hand as I'm trying to pull out the books I need, myself shrieking as it opens again, looking behind me to see none other than the asshole that is my brother doubled over laughing as I try to curl my fingers and can't. Great, he's broken them again. It would heal because of my shifter b\*\*\*d but it would take hours and the entire time I,,, 'll be in agony. My fingers were already throbbing painfully and I swore silently to myself, Damien giving me one last threatening look before dispersing to his own class. Clutching my hand in the other, I reluctantly headed to my next class, wishing violently that this day would be over already and dreading going home once it was. I only have two more classes to get through and then at least most of today will officially be over. Home is worse than school though and I can't help, but wonder to myself whether or not my life is worth living sometimes. Who would miss me if I was gone? No one that's who. But then I remind myself that if I did something like that, it would be letting them win and I refuse to let them break me until I reach that point. No matter what, I will not let them get the best of me. All I have to do is try and be patient until I've graduated. How hard can that possibly be? It's not like things can get any worse than they already are. I will get out of here someday, until then, I just need to be careful and trust no one.