

## Chapter 1

I walked through the middle school hallways of the Winterpaw pack, keeping my head down with my hood pulled up and trying to be as invisible as possible, so I could get to the cafeteria for lunch without any issues arising. I've now been in this school for only two years since the move to this pack with the Beta family, but it has felt like the years have gone on forever with how much I have had to endure at only eleven years old. It didn't help that I already had dealt with so much before I got here either. It has felt like my life has been a never-ending horror movie.

Despite dealing with horrible circumstances as a young girl, I tried to be my normal social butterfly self when I got to Winterpaw. I tried to make friends. That didn't happen though. There were some here who had other plans, and I don't even know what I did to provoke their anger. Maybe they were irritated at me for being a part of the Beta family, even though I'm not biologically theirs? Maybe they were irritated that when I first got here, people wanted to be my friend? Maybe they were jealous for some unknown reason? I don't know.

As if thinking about them magically made them appear, the sounds of four pairs of feet began to follow behind me. I didn't want to look back to confirm what I already knew. Instead, I pulled my hood further over my head and quickened my pace. I tried to use the skills of evasion my adopted father has taught me; however, he would be disappointed at how often I am overtaken by these four. He would be disappointed that his Beta wolf skills haven't helped his daughter stop the bullying I have had to deal with since moving here...that is, he would be disappointed if he even knew the bullying was happening in the first place.

Nobody but myself, our classmates, and my bullies know what has been happening over the years I have attended this pack's school. I don't even think the faculty know what is going on, since the boys are relatively sneaky with their tactics. Even if the adults in school knew something troubling was happening, they would likely overlook it due to two of the bullies in the group being the Alpha's sons. That usually lets the boys and their buddies get away with pretty much anything.

My desire to just get out of this building or find a place to hide had me looking up from the ground for once and searching around my surroundings. The only options that came up were a janitor's closet or the girl's bathroom. I knew if I went into the bathroom, these boys would have no issues following me in there. Unfortunately for me, they don't care about any personal boundaries when it comes to me. Based off that fact, I headed towards the janitor's closet. I went to turn the knob quickly, since I could hear the boy's footsteps getting closer and closer. The doorknob wouldn't budge an inch. I outwardly groaned and looked back for the first time since I heard them coming. The four boys were smirking at me in the most mischievous way possible. I knew at this point that I had to do something...anything to get some space from these boys, so I headed towards the bathroom instead.

I pushed open the door quickly and almost slipped on some water that somebody dripped on the floor. The almost slip caused me to lose some time to hide, but I hadn't heard the door be pushed open yet, which gave me some hope. I should have known better. The bathroom looked completely empty, unfortunately. The doors to some of the stalls were partially closed but not locked, so I just went around to a random stall and ran in. I noticed this door's lock was broken and cursed under my breath with some words I've heard my dad say before. Then, I ran back out into the open area of the bathroom and into another stall. I then locked that stall's door and climbed on top of the toilet to hide some. I just hoped that maybe a few of the doors already looking closed and me locking the door to my stall would deter the boys from getting to me. I thought it might have succeeded for a moment because I heard the bathroom door open, but nobody immediately shoved the stall door open. Spoiler alert: it made the situation worse.

I heard some whispering on the other side of the door for about ten minutes or so. Then, it got deadly quiet. There were a few chuckles from the boys along with another odd sound, but after a few more minutes, the bathroom door opened and closed signaling that they had left. I thought I would win at that moment. My false optimism had me just sitting down on the seat and taking a deep breath. That feeling of hope lasted for only a second before I realized that I recognized the odd sounds outside the stall – it was sounds of running water...a lot of running water. They turned on all the sink faucets before leaving, I thought to myself, wondering how I could get out of this situation. I was one hundred percent sure that they were all waiting outside the bathroom for when I inevitably ran out, so I couldn't do that quite yet.

I saw water coming in from under the stall door before I could even get off the toilet seat. I cursed under my breath some more as my light blue converse shoes started to feel moist. I walked out of the stall and saw exactly what I assumed was happening. The floor had a thin layer of water on it that was steadily rising faster than it could leak out of the bathroom. I quickly walked down the line of sinks and turned off each of the faucets. The one furthest from the door gave me some trouble, as if they jammed it somehow, which I wouldn't put past the boys, but I was eventually able to turn it off. By this time, my shoes were soaked, and I dreaded having to walk around school for the rest of the day in them.

Knowing that the boys were most likely outside of the bathroom waiting, I weighed my options. I could either go out there and face them anyways, hopefully having a little bit of time to get lunch if I make it past them...or I can wait the rest of the cafeteria period out here in the bathroom and hope they get bored enough to leave. I stood in the water for a few moments trying to figure out which would be the best way to go about this. I decided to make the first choice since I accidentally skipped breakfast this morning and was starving.

I slowly waded through the layer of water toward the door, keeping my fingers crossed that they would have left. I would have crossed my toes too if they didn't feel frozen from the water. As I opened the door slowly, I didn't hear anyone outside talking. I felt hope and optimism once more while opening the door wider. That was until I heard someone clearing their throat off to the side of the door. When I looked up, it wasn't the boys thankfully, but it was the principle standing there with his arms crossed over his chest. The look on his face told me everything I needed to know – no matter what I said about what happened this afternoon, he wouldn't believe me. I knew already that I was about to be in serious trouble with not only the school, but also my parents.

"F\*\*k my life," is all I could say before Principal Jones grabbed my forearm and pulled me along behind him, asking me to follow as if I had a choice in the matter.

During the walk to his office, I heard the bell ring signaling the end of lunch period. I looked behind me in the direction of the cafeteria longingly and noticed that the boys were standing in a cluster in the hallway about fifteen feet away from the bathroom doors. They were surrounded by some other classmates. Even though they looked like they were all deep in a conversation, I could see that there were four pairs of eyes staring directly at me. All four boys had smirks on their faces as well. I just knew that they all felt proud of themselves for getting to me in a new way today than usual.

I didn't end up with any physical or mental injuries, but I had now caused myself to get in trouble with the adults. I would likely have to deal with detention, which I'm sure made the boys happy. Hopefully, that is all I will have to deal with because of those four's antics. I felt their eyes burning into my back until I turned the corner to go into the school's head office. Then, I was led into Principal Jones's office and the door was slammed shut behind me.

"Sit down over there, Alyssa," the principal said to me while pointing to a chair against the wall in his office. "I need to call your parents in so we can discuss how you decided today would be a good day to deface and trash school property by flooding one of the three two girl's bathrooms our school has. Now we will have to deal with the entire female student body using only one bathroom until we can soak up all the water. Otherwise, we are going to have a lot of people slipping and getting hurt...such a nuisance."

I knew with the way he described all of my so-called "crimes" that he would try as hard as he could to enhance my punishment beyond what I thought it would be for this. I sat down, knowing I didn't have any choice but to, and listened while the principal got on the phone. He could have just mindlinked my parents, but Principal Jones likes to make these types of phone calls on the office phone. I know this from the many times he has had to call due to something I have been blamed for over these past two years.

As usual when I am sitting and waiting for him to call, my eyes begin to wander around the room. I have come around to make it a game to see what things the principal adds or takes out of his office each week. It's an easy game to play since I'm usually in the office at least two or three times a week. At this point, I should have my own desk area here in his office for me to do school work while I wait for him to speak with my parents. At least then, I would be able to be a little productive, since I'm now missing my class to sit here silently. I could hear the man speaking on the phone, getting awfully irate as well, but I tuned him out since I have heard it so much before. It's always the same thing: your daughter is a menace, she needs to be homeschooled for the good of our student body, your no-good daughter has once again messed up blah blah blah...it's always the same.

At first when I started to get in trouble for the things the boys would do to me, I tried to explain that I wasn't at fault. That obviously didn't work when I stated that two of the ones who were at fault were Elliot and Ezra. Naming the twins of the Alpha family didn't go in my favor at all. Either the principal didn't want to get on their bad side, or he honestly didn't believe that those two boys could do anything wrong. The adults do seem to think that they are angels. Whatever the reason for the adults not believing me, I became the scapegoat when their bullying me caused damage to anything around the school.

I was so into my game of finding the differences on the bookshelf in the office that I didn't realize the door had opened. Then, two very tense looking bodies walked into my field of vision...my parents.