

## Chapter 12

Since that night, my parents have been very attentive to me and how I am feeling. I never said anything about Shaun wanting me to leave with him, but it seemed like my dad caught onto that tidbit somehow without me even saying it. I don't know if he believes I have also been bullied, but he seems to assume so with Shaun being basically my only friend. They would ask me tons of questions about how I'm doing every morning that I would come down for breakfast. Then, I would go to school and try to ignore everyone throughout the day. It was tough, as always, since the boys continued to bully me as much as they could. I just took it all in stride, not wanting to let them or anyone else know how they made me feel.

This went on for years - all the way to the present day, the first day of my senior year of high school. As every year went by, thankfully, the questions of my mental health dwindled. My parents slowly stopped asking me in details about how I was doing during our mornings. I was glad for that. The bullying, however, never stopped. If anything, it seemed to get worse and worse with each year that passed.

The boys graduated last year and were all coming up on the day their wolves would surface. The Alpha twins' wolves had already come forth in their minds when they turned sixteen, but soon they would be able to physically shift into their wolves. The whole pack was planning a large party for the twins on their eighteenth birthday, a party I would unfortunately have to go to.

Once I had nished my punishment at the packhouse, I stopped going back there. The boys thankfully hadn't given the Alpha any more reasons to punish me with anything. I don't know if I was just doing a good job of keeping their bullying on the down low or if they were actually trying not to get me into that much trouble again. I doubt it's the second option. And now, I would have to go with the rest of the pack and pretend to be happy for them. I would have to celebrate that those two would soon become the Alpha's of the pack, Jackson and Samuel likely to be somewhere in the ranked wolves. I just hoped that the twins didn't decide to go against tradition. I just hoped they didn't use their newfound power once they become the Alphas to kick my brother out of his birthright to be Beta of the pack. I just hoped their bullying of me didn't extend to my family.

~ Day of the party ~

I nished my homework from school today just in time for my mom to burst through my bedroom door holding a garment bag in her hand. I just looked at her, waiting for her to speak. When she didn't, I assumed she was waiting for me to do the same.

"Hey, mom. Whatcha doing in my room and what's that?" I asked as I cautiously stood up and walked closer to her.

"This? This is the most amazing dress I have ever seen in Griselda's Fashion Boutique since we have been in Winterpaw! And it would be the PERFECT thing for you to wear tonight to the twin's party!" my mom exclaimed, growing more and more excited with every word she said.

I looked at her, then at the dress in her hand. She went to open the bag while ignoring the eye roll I was giving her for how enthusiastic she was for me to wear a dress of her choosing. As she unzipped the bag though, I could understand why. In the bag, was as my mother said, the most amazing dress. It was a floor-length, black A-line dress with an illusion of a sweetheart neckline. There were sparkles all over the dress, as if I were looking at the night sky. You could also notice a lacy fabric overlay on it if you were looking close enough at the body of the dress. The illusion of the neckline came because there was a see-through mesh fabric over the shoulders and arms. Entertwined with the mesh was the same beautiful, oral lace fabric from the bodice. It would help to keep my arms a bit warmer, since it was becoming fall outside. I was actually starting to get excited about this party just for the opportunity to wear such a gorgeous dress.

My mom could see how happy this dress made me, so she immediately went and hung it on a hook by my mirror, "I'll leave you for a bit so you can get ready. The party is in about three hours, so that should be plenty of time. That dress is going to compliment your own beauty so well, Alyssa. When you get ready to do your hair and makeup, just let me know. I want to come in and help out with it."

I nodded and excitedly walked over to the dress, gently holding it in my hands. Without any friends, I likely won't go to my senior prom. Tonight my be the closest I get to that.

Quickly, I hopped in the shower to wash away the school day. I was so excited that the shower didn't take long though. I was out within twenty minutes. Then, I carefully dried myself off and pulled on the dress. Once it was on my body, I couldn't help but admire how I looked in it. I'm not usually one to dress up or even like how I look, but even I couldn't deny that this dress helped show off every good feature on my body.

With the silhouette being how it was, it hugged my chest down to my hourglass waist. The ribbon around the waist pulled me in some, where it looked even more aesthetically pleasing to the eye. The bottom of the dress fell to the floor in a gloriously ovy look. My red hair owed down my body in wet curls since I barely towel dried it. The brightness of the color seemed even more so against the darkness of the dress. It made me feel...ethereal.

"Mom!" I yelled out of my cracked door once I had gotten the dress on and stopped admiring myself in it.

I could hear her footsteps running up the stairs right after I called. She must've dropped whatever she was doing immediately when I yelled for her. Soon after I heard her running, she appeared in my doorway.

"You ready for hair and makeup?" she asked excitedly, holding a curling iron in her hand as she came in.

I laughed at how eager she was to get me ready. She did as well before stopping in awe at my appearance.

"You look...so beautiful, Alyssa. I knew that dress would look great on you. It was so worth every penny," she said, making me pause in my happiness as I tried asking her just how many pennies it cost. "You nevermind that. It was worth it. Now, let's get you ready for the ball!"

"It's just a birthday party," I corrected my mom, not wanting her to feel like she was my fairy godmother.

She chuckled as she ran her hands through my hair and stared at me for a while, "Yes, but it's the birthday party for the heirs of Winterpaw. It's the day that they will get their wolves and will be one step closer to becoming our leaders. The party even lasts long enough for us to get to witness their shift if we would like to, since it will happen at midnight when the moon is highest. It's going to be amazing! And you will be so ready for it all!"

I felt weird knowing that the pack was allowed to watch one of the most painful moments in a werewolf's life just because it was the Alpha's sons. It seemed like a violation of privacy for everyone who wanted to see them shift to be allowed to. It seemed like they wouldn't get to experience it at all the way I have always been told it is done - with only your nearest and dearest there to help you along through the pain of shift. Then, you are supposed to be allowed to go on a run with those people you chose to be around you to celebrate a successful shift. If everyone in the pack is there watching the twins go through it, do they all run with them after?

As if my mom knew what I was thinking, she continued, "And they after the whole pack, or at least those who wanted to witness the shift and whoever have their own wolves, are allowed to go on the first run with the future Alphas to cement a bond with the pack. It's beautiful."

"If you say so," I simply responded, not wanting to put a damper on my mom's happy mood. "Now, what did you want to do with my hair and makeup? You know I don't usually do too much when it comes to those things."

"Oh, I know dear. We are going to keep it mostly natural, but just enhance it all a bit. You are going to be breathtaking!" my mom exclaimed as she plugged in the curling iron and walked behind me to begin.