

CHAPTER 3

Winter POV

I force myself to wake up early the next morning, in order to get ready for school. I'm so tired I can barely see straight and it's all I can do to make myself get in the shower and get dressed. Damien came home late last night and insisted on me doing his schoolwork and when I didn't move fast enough for his liking he punched me in the stomach, not to mention threw his damn school bag at me. It was an extremely long night, spent doing my homework on top of his as well. God I hate him.

I couldn't help myself, stopping to turn and look into the battered mirror atop my shabby dresser. I'm not surprised by the large dark circles under my eyes or the thinness of my figure. I hate the way I look and I know that I'm ugly. My face is pale, so white rather than porcelain, my eyes a dull blue and my hair a frizzy blonde that's long and lanky. No matter how much I washed my hair, it never seemed to make a difference. My clothes are ripped, hand me downs from op shops, jeans with holes in the knees and a sweater twice the size of me that hangs down way past my knees. I didn't really have anything better to wear and I put my threadbare sneakers on with a grimace. The bottom of them are thin from over-use and I know that one day soon I'm going to have to go and look around the thrift shops and find a new pair to use.

I have barely got the bacon in the pan sizzling and pancakes going, when my father staggers in, looking pale and exhausted, his eyes red and puffed up as he sits there, impatiently waiting for his food. He looks a mess and I hope he cleans himself up before going to work, because at this rate he'll lose his job. Not that that seems to bother him though.

“Here’s your coffee” I say very quietly, placing it beside his elbow and vehemently hoping he would just drink it this time instead of flinging it away. Apparently, he was too tired to do that this time and he drank it down without a qualm or complaint. Damien also staggered in and sat down at the table, glaring at me while he waited, drumming his fingers on the table as I hurried as best I could. Just once, I wish they would get off their lazy backsides and give me a damn hand. It wouldn’t exactly kill them to help, would it? Besides, he is old enough to make his own breakfast for heaven’s sake. I don’t dare tell him that though, I’m not exactly in the mood for another bruise.

“Here” I tell them softly, placing their large plates in front of them and going back to the bench where my one measly piece of bacon and a slice of toast waits. It’s not even enough to touch the sides of my hunger, but I don’t dare take any more in case they see me. I stop short when Damien gets up from the table and comes over, eyeing me maliciously. He’s up to something, I just know it and I feel a sense of dread rising inside of me. I try to keep my expression blank so he doesn’t see or sense my fear of him.

“What do you think you’re doing” he says, and I eye him curiously, my heart already beginning to thump wildly in my chest, anticipating what’s about to happen as I hold my breath.

“Eating breakfast”, I say nervously, and before I can stop him, his hand shoots out and sends the plate flying to the floor as I stare at him and the broken plate in dismay. What the hell?

“Oops” he says slyly “guess you’re going without fatty again”, he tosses out as he sits and begins to devour his own delicious breakfast. I said nothing. I’m not fat, in fact, I’m anything but, considering I very rarely get to it. But , after all, what would be the point? Damien can do whatever he likes to me and my father will never once step in and stop him, not when he approves of what my brother does to me. I keep my tears to myself, my stomach growling with hunger.

I take a deep shuddering breath and bend down to pick up the pieces of the broken plate. I salivate at the sight of the bacon and toast on the floor but they are covered in dirt and would be disgusting to eat. I force myself to throw them in the bin. A sharp piece of shard slices my finger and I watch the blood drip down in fascination. It doesn’t even hurt, nothing does anymore, and I clean it on my sweater as I pick the shards up, sadly knowing that this was to be my only food until dinnertime and that I would be starving hungry again today. Dad and Damien don’t care, hurrying out of the dining room when they’re finished and leaving me to clean up before I can grab my own school bag and walk to school. Damien’s already left in his car, for which I’m extremely grateful, as I don’t have to worry about what else he might do to me next, and so has my father, who never even says a word to me, not that I expect him to anymore. This leaves me to take my time, wanting to prolong the experience for as long as possible. School which used to be a sanctuary when I was smaller has now become my own hell, a place for bullies and my brother to torment and make fun of me, and I know exactly what I’m facing, my whole body

trembling in fear as I began to traverse through the corridors and make it to class, with the hopeful thought that maybe today would be different and that I would be left alone for once. It was a futile hope.