

## CH 12

Oriana.

She came to a halt in the packhouse foyer, had been downstairs getting food for her suite, it was late, and the place was relatively quiet. Likely all the pack members were off in their suites. She'd been in her room for a solid week now, had come downstairs just to get food.

She'd stayed away from Alpha unit training and had actually just focused herself on sorting out her degrees to study at uni. Business was a given part of her job as the pack's Beta. This pack ran into the live event promotions for big sporting events, owned a digital billboard company, had a modelling agency and a voice actor agency, was also one of the most predominantly used language translation companies.

Half of the pack could speak two or three different languages and could be hired through the Highland Hills translation company for business, hospital/patient use, law firms, court hearings and law enforcement needs. Whether it be for reading or spoken translations; it was all catered for.

Ori was also going to get her masters in Japanese. She had been studying it since she was ve. Her father spoke it uently, so he had been teaching her all her life. She knew Slade could speak Mandarin and that Palmer was good with French and German. Yuri spoke Russian because it was his grandparent's heritage, but their pack could speak and translate just over a hundred different languages.

She had spent the week sorting out a double degree, wasn't completely settled on a double degree or not, she had just been going to study business full-time and her language part-time. There was no real rush with her language degree, she could speak uent Japanese. Just didn't have the paperwork to go with it. So, part-time was ne on that front.

But now, as she stood there in the darkened foyer and her hearing picked up the conversation she was clearly not meant to hear. Her heart sank, it was her Alpha and his unit in the Alpha's oce; discussing stepping Hayden up to the future pack Beta and stepping her down.

She just stood there and listened to them, debating between themselves, the pros and cons of Slade having her by his side. She'd not caught the start of their conversation, but they were discussing the time off she'd need for her heats. Then, when she had a pup or pups, how her duties would be effected. She would need to have months off from training where she would de-condition, and then she'd have children to look after.

They were planning to remove her from her position regardless of if she stayed here or not. A female in an Alpha unit was seen as a liability to them. She knew it was what they thought, that she would let the future Alpha unit down, once mated off. She could go into heat at any time, even off pack territory, away from her Mate if he was inside this pack.

She stared at that oce door and nearly walked in there to state how she felt, when she heard Slade's voice come from it. "I understand, and I'll think about what you've discussed." She froze on the spot at his words.

"We'll need a decision by the time you come home in two weeks. We need to sort this out quickly. You understand, as the future Alpha, this is about the pack's strength, not your friendship with Ori."

"I understand, I will approach it from the future Alpha's point of view," Slade stated.

Ori turned and walked away at that point, even Slade was talking about replacing her; that hurt, he'd always stated she was his choice for the pack's Beta.

Now she was likely going to have it ripped away from her because she was a she-wolf that could go into heat, would get pregnant and bear children at some point. All of which were vital in growing the pack's next Beta generation. But now it was seen as a weakness to the leadership of the pack.

Slade was going to look at it from an Alpha's point of view; a point of view like his father's. Those two were very much alike and she knew it. Two weeks and he'd have to make a choice; her or Hayden?

She stepped into her room and looked around the suite. How much longer would it be hers? If she was demoted, she'd be moved out of it and Hayden moved into it, the day the announcement was made. Her whole training regime would change, hell, her whole life would change, and in the blink of an eye she would go from being someone, to no one within this pack. With just one announcement from Alpha Roman.

She even knew by the way that the Alpha unit down there; her own father, one of them. We were pushing for her to step down, they were trying to sway Slade into making the decision himself. It was his unit, and ultimately it was his choice who he wanted.

The question was what would he do? She honestly didn't know. As her lifelong friend, he would, she knew, choose her. What as the future Alpha, with all they'd put to him; pushing hard the cons of her being female. Would he, as the Alpha, the future of the pack, be swayed by all of that so-called time off she needed to have?

She wasn't even mated off, and they were down there trying to oust her from her rightful title and place within the pack. Her own father, hell, even her own mother, she knew, was in agreement. That's why they'd had Hayden so quickly after having her, because she was a girl and the future Alpha needed a male Beta, not a female one.

It was her own parent's opinion, had always been their opinion, and it hurt more than a little. Couldn't they let her be the pack's future Beta until she was mated off? Something that could be years away, centuries away. They had over a dozen male and female wolves here who'd not found their mates. One was nearly 200 years old and now considered a pack elder.

That she-wolf still held out hope that one day she'd nd her Mate. Ori could be just like her. They didn't know. They were hedging their bets against the odds, odds that were unforeseen. Hell, she could be bloody mate-less for all they knew, never have a mate, might not like the mate she got and reject him, or he, her.

No one knew what was going to happen, there was no magic crystal ball to show the future of this pack. It came down to she was a girl and not a boy, and she knew it. She walked across her room and banged into the kitchen and dumped those snacks she'd been carrying on the table.

Glared at them, she needed to get her anger out, and she knew it, she changed out of her jeans and T-shirt into gym shorts and a loose-ting shirt, and stalked down the stairs, only to see the Alpha and his unit strolling up them. They all blinked at seeing her. Clearly, hadn't known she was still up. Hadn't heard her earlier, she was light on her feet and had been barefooted.

"Ori?" her father questioned.

"China wants to go for a run." she smiled up at him and then at them all, didn't let it show how hurt she was, or how very disappointed in her own father she was. No, she just trotted on down, passed him, passed them all like nothing was wrong.

It wasn't unusual for wolves to want to be out in the night, to just go and run about, and her seemingly happy demeanour, would tell them she had no idea what was really going on here. All the backstabbing she now knew they were up to.

She made her way through the packhouse and down the corridor to the mudroom, pushed through it and stripped off, stepped out into the night and expected China to rip right out of her instantly, but she didn't 'China, come on, let's run off some steam.' she stated.

Still nothing, her wolf was just quiet inside her mind. It seemed pensive or thoughtful, maybe. 'China?'

'Can't shift.' China nally told her.

'What? Why not?' she didn't understand they'd never had a problem before. China ripped out of her all the time, morning, afternoon, night, in training, for rogue attacks, to just run and hunt, to play even 'I know it's hard to hear what we just did but...'

'It's not that.' China huffed 'we're with pup, I can't shift.'

Ori's eyes widened at her wolf's words "What? No." She didn't have a Mate, had never been in heat, didn't even have a boyfriend, it didn't make sense to her at all.

She looked down at her still at stomach and then her hand shot to her mouth. "No" she gasped as she recalled that one drunken night with Slade. It couldn't be anyone else's "Fuck." she murmured and stepped back into the mudroom, redressed and hurried back to her room.

She'd been so preoccupied with all that was going on here, with her brother, trying to take over her position, that she'd actually forgotten for a moment, about that one night. Had wanted to forget it and put it behind her, so she and Slade could go back to their normal happy Alpha Beta relationship. Seemed she had actually managed it.

She stood there in the darkness of her room and wondered what the hell she was going to do? There were packed rules around pregnant wolves; no training, no ghting, all of those things that the Alpha unit had just told Slade about, all those cons we're now in fact here.

Only she was more than just pregnant. She was carrying the future Heir of the pack's own Heir. Things were getting more complicated by the minute. She was supposed to pick up training in the morning once again.

But if she couldn't attend training, they'd all know something was wrong. If she got injured in training and lost the pup, she would be punished for harming the future heir to the pack. Well f\*\*k, how did she hide this, until she could gure out what to do.

She needed to think on that one. It was just a drunken mistake, and Slade didn't even remember it. So, that would go in her favour, for a while; no one knew it was his. Well, Slade's parents would when that pup was born; they would smell their own kin. Pull Slade home from Alpha College, and demand to know what the hell was going on. Not that he would know, didn't bloody remember.