

## CH 32

## Oriana

She'd just known that the pack's Beta had been keeping tabs on her, and for weeks now, why would tonight be any different? It was highly likely that he had in fact been the one to send Slade down here to talk to her or try to.

She'd actually not let loose upon him with all her anger, but not for the reason that her father likely thought, she'd just not wanted to look at the man or hear his voice at that moment in time.

It was likely that he'd sent Slade down here to make sure she wasn't embarrassing his bloodline, being irresponsible for all to see, but what did it even matter anymore? He'd gotten what he wanted finally. Hayden ascended to the pack's future Beta. That had been his goal now for 18 long years, and he'd finally gotten what he wanted.

Hayden was in, and she was out. Ori looked up at the sky sometime later and just sighed, her sobs had stopped, and her tears had dried on her face.

She no longer wanted to be here, and she knew it, didn't want to be mated to anyone inside this pack, wanted in fact, to be mated off and out of it; just like the Alpha and his unit had said she would be. Getting out of here could only be a good thing right now.

Though there was no mating ball being held tomorrow, not with Dariah getting her first shift when the moon set, that was more important than a mating ball. Everyone in the pack would be up at the packhouse; outside the back of it.

Where Dariah would shift for the first time, a privacy screen set up for her to stand behind, her young naked body protected from prying eyes, but so that once her shift was over, her wolf could step out from the screen and the entire pack could get a look at their Alpha's daughter's wolf, and find out



her name even.

Everyone was going to be there to see her shift. It was the pack's tradition. The only ones not actually going would be those on border patrol. Everyone else was expected to attend. The preparations for the night would be underway from sunrise and likely take all day to set up. Most of the pack's omegas would be all there, to set up chairs and tables, cook food and decorate.

No expense would be spared, it was the same for her brother's shift, only he'd not had that privacy screen he hadn't cared about being naked in front of others, though all girls got the option for it. She had stood behind one herself.

Though she already knew that Dariah's would be much more flashy and the area lit up with twinkling lights, she was getting a massive party prior to it, and it would continue on while she and her family ran in wolf form together for the first time. Ori thought Dariah was lucky, to be born in the

correct order, the second heir to the pack, if she'd been born first, likely to be passed over as easily as Ori herself had been.

She was not going to attend that pack event; she knew it was expected of her as part of the Beta family, but she was not going anywhere near that packhouse or the leaders of the pack. Didn't want to be anywhere near them. Didn't think she'd feel any different at 9pm tonight either.

Likely actually want to be as far away from the packhouse and the celebration as was possible. She didn't actually think that anyone would notice her missing either. Ori thought about that for a long moment as she stared up at the sky; they all had what they wanted now, the ascension line to the pack was as they expected it to be.

Ori stood herself up and walked to the other side of the nightclub rooftop. The place was winding down, nearly 4am, she thought. Hopped over the edge of the roof and dropped to the ground, landed on her feet



and headed for Lindal's house. Her suitcase was out there exactly where she had left it, as was the note from her own mother, putting her down once more.

Ori picked it up and took it with her as she collected her suitcase and went inside, found her bedroom, it had an ensuite, she showered and changed, then just stood looking at herself in the mirror, she really did look like s\*\*t, she realised.

She stared at her reflection, long and hard, at her hair, how long it was, how much of a girl it actually made her look like when it was out, and around her face. That was, in fact, why she always wore it up in a ponytail or a plait, kept it pulled back severely tight at all times to try and make her less like a girl, and she knew it.

She had always been quick to yank it up and pull it back after shifting from China, she didn't want people seeing her as the girl she actually was. Hated being a girl most of the time. "No more." She told herself "Do we

put up with this." She looked down at that note from her mother, 'really Oriana, you think this is appropriate for your status.' And turned and walked away from it, headed for the kitchen, and hunted through all the draws until she found a pair of scissors, if they wanted her to be a boy, she'd give them what they wanted. Ori found a box on a shelf in the lounge room and upended the items in it.

Stood in that ensuite in front of the mirror and cut her long brown hair off at the shoulders and then stood and hacked more of it off till it was short, picked it all up and put it in that box along with the card, on the back she wrote "Yes, perfectly fitting for my new status, as f\*\*\*\*\*g nothing." and closed that box.

Wrote on the top of it 'give to Bronnie Vale' and sat it next to the bed to be dealt with later. She crawled into that bed and let sleep claim her. She'd been awake for nearly 24 hours and was emotionally exhausted.



She woke up well into the morning, nearly lunchtime in fact, to find Lindal in the kitchen. The girl stared right at her for a long shocked moment, and then sighed a little as she came around the island bench when Ori sat herself on a stool.

"Ruined your hair, I see."

She shrugged, didn't really care for how it looked, all half hacked at, some bits still long and other places really short, "Yep, made it look more like mens hair, maybe I can get approval now, that I look like a boy." She muttered.

"It's utterly hideous, you know." Lindal snorted and then laughed as she touched it, "What'd you use?"

"The scissors from your kitchen draw." She shrugged.

"There for cutting chickens up, you know."

"It worked."

Lindal shook her head and smiled at her. "You're a real mess huh, do you think I can at least try and fix it a bit?"

"Knock yourself out, only get shorter if you cut more off it," she honestly didn't really care at all. "Make me coffee first."

Lindal chuckled "Alright."

She sat there with a coffee in her hand while Lindal wrapped a towel around her, pinned it in place and then ran a brush through it and then a comb, as she really took in the damage, she was now on a mission to fix it. "You really hacked it pretty good in places, you know that right."

"It's just hair Lindal, it'll grow back at some point, or... I'll just shave it all off. What does it really matter in the grand scheme of things?"

"Well." Lindal smiled right at her, making her look at her "I got this, though I might have to take Beckham's clippers to that one side of your head."



"Go nuts, Lindal. Make me a new look, something no one will recognise me with." And she did want that, a new look, so that when she walked about the pack no one would recognise her right away, and she wouldn't have to see the pitying looks on their faces, for her demotion within the pack.

She just sat there and let Lindal do whatever she wanted with her hair. The girl chatted non-stop about the new car she was tricking out for one of the war generals' granddaughters, a surprise for her next birthday in six months. She was getting a tricked out 1977 MG with thermochromic paint. And rainbow mag wheels to match.

Lindal put a mirror in front of her when she'd finished and removed that towel, and Ori found herself with a pixie cut, where one side of her head was shaved, and so was half of the back, the rest of the back was a bit choppy, and there was a long part on the other side, but it actually worked she thought, wasn't actually half bad at all.

"You got some skill, I see."

Lindal hugged her from behind. "

Everything's going to be okay." She smiled at Ori in the mirror, "You still look like a girl, are too pretty to ever look like a boy." She winked at Ori.

She shook her head and shoved the girl away. "Hey you keep that talk up, and I'll have to tell Beckham you're hitting on me."

Lindal burst out laughing, "Do it, the man will just toss my ass into our bed and mate me good and proper to make sure I know he's all man and need no other."

"He still all handsy?"

"Goddess, yes. He's insane some days. You want the kicker, that no one knows."

She looked at Lindal, "How mad will he get if you tell me, I don't need to be running from an Elite. Got enough s\*\*t going on."

"Well, if you don't say anything, no trouble,



so just keep it to yourself." Lindal laughed. "I was his first."

"What? No way."

"Yes, way. That man was waiting for his Goddess Gifted. He'd done other things with girls, just not actual sex."

"Wow, I would never have picked it." She shook her head.

"Me either, now he likes s\*x so much so, I can barely contain the man." She laughed.

"You weren't a virgin."

"No," she shook her head, "He didn't seem to mind, though telling him who it had been, bugged him."

"I bet, and I also bet you're not allowed anywhere near Palmer anymore."

"Not on my own." She giggled. Then just hugged her again. "See Ori, everything's going to be alright in time, you'll get back to normal, just going to take a few days."

"Maybe." Was all she said "Now, how about you dye my hair too. I know you got stuff, for your own hair maintenance."

Lindal spun her around in the chair and looked right at her now, a massive smile on her face. "You know it girl." Hugged her all tight "sweet, we'll be twinsies." She burst out and was hauling Ori down through the house to the main bathroom.

Ori smiled to herself now, just a little at the happy, super-excited reaction of her friend, "Yes, let's get rid of the old Oriana, start a new, completely fresh."

"New hair for a new start," Lindal nodded.

Ori had never had short hair before, let alone silver blonde hair with lilac purple blended through it. No one was going to recognise her after today and that was just what she wanted. To not walk through this pack and see everyone look at her and pity her for what she'd lost and how it had happened.





They would look at her shocked, not with pity, when she walked across this pack later on this afternoon.



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