

Chapter 18 – The Confidants

“A person is, among all else, a material thing, easily torn and not easily mended.” — Ian McEwan

Halima

The three of us entered the packhouse and I was greeted with a large foyer, glistening under a diamond-studded chandelier. Three sets of stairs lead to the second floor and beyond, lined with red velvet. The plethora of glossy white and tan-trimmed doors lead to distinct places in the packhouse, but only one led to the kitchen. The scent of mouthwatering food made me drool but soon disappointed given my current predicament called the tube.

“The second and third-floor houses pack members who either have roles in the packhouse like the Omegas, warriors, and Deltas. The top floor has the rooms of the Alpha and Luna, Beta and Beta Female, Gamma and Gamma Female, and their families. The Omegas prepared a room for you on the third floor.” Dwayne explained.

I was in awe at the beauty and cleanliness of the foyer and how spacious it is. “So, exactly how big is the packhouse?”

“Big.” The twins say in unison.

They lead me to the third floor towards the middle of the hall where my room was supposed to be. Along the way, I pass by a beautiful, tall blond girl who’s busy texting on her phone. I couldn’t help but admire how beautiful her curly hair was. It was like liquid gold. Her scent of apples and cinnamon reminded me of the pies I wasn’t allowed to eat, making my stomach rumble. She looked behind briefly, but I quickly turned away.

“Here we are!” Jackie opened the door to my room, bowing dramatically as I entered. The room is, might I say, very spacious. The room’s color scheme of browns, whites, and reds complimented each other nicely. It was equipped with all the essentials, a large bed, a drawer that doubled as a vanity table, two glossy white doors that led to what I assumed was the closet, table lamps, a desk with a chair, and there were a couple of plants on the window ledge.

I walk to the double doors of the closet to see it stocked with color assortments of clothes and pajamas. The colors ranged from bright pink to black, styles from nightgowns to two-piece pajama sets. Each had a string for size adjustment if needed. I walk to another white door, leading to an equally spacious bathroom.

The bathtub was enormous enough to seat three people with three loofahs hanging from the detachable showerhead. The shelves were already stocked with shampoo bottles, soap bars, and body mists, and the sink had a cup full of toothbrushes along with a toothpaste dispenser. The toilet was impressive too, white, and pristine. My flip-flops ran into the neutral brown bathroom rugs, my toes briefly touching the softness.

Upon exiting the bathroom, Dwayne sat at the chair near the desk as Jackie hung up the clothes from her bag. I notice a small bag at the corner of the closet with my raggedy dress inside.

“So, what do you think?” The male twin asked me with a confident smile. “If you don’t like it, we could give you another room and—!”

“N-no, you don’t have to do that.” I stuttered, taking a seat on the mattress, soaking in the foreign atmosphere of the spacious room and equally spacious bed. This room was fit for someone important, not a former slave. My hand ran through the silk material of one of my many new pillows. “It’s just a lot to take in. I never had a room like this before.”

“How big was your old room?”

“Less than half the size of this room,” I explained, gazing at the clean corners of the ceilings. “And it was a cell, not a room.”

The twins went quiet behind me, but I could feel the awkward tension growing in the air. I grab one of the smaller white pillows and hug it to my chest. It was soft and plush, like my old teddy bear.

“Halima...” I turned to look at Dwayne. “The Alpha and Luna told us a little about you and what you’ve gone through. I can’t imagine a pack treating one of their own like that.”

I shrugged my shoulders. “You’d be surprised what a pack could do behind closed doors.” I offered a tiny smile to the twins; their green eyes were brewing in anger. “Please, don’t be mad. I’m just...happy that I’m out of there.”

Jackie finished hanging her old clothes in my closet and took a seat next to me. “Whatever happened back at Zircon Moon, you didn’t deserve it, hun. No one should ever go through the pain of their pack betraying them.”

“I’ve been hearing that a lot, you know...” Jackie’s face contorted in confusion. “That I didn’t deserve what happened to me. Is it wrong that I don’t believe that yet? I still think everything I went through is my fault. They have beaten it into me. What else could I do but believe what they say? The people who hurt me are in positions of power, ranked several times above me. What they said was the law and I am just a pathetic slave.”

“No, no, baby no.” Jackie wanted to hug me, and I let her. She wrapped an arm around my shoulders and pulled me closer to her warm body, my head resting on her shoulder. “No one, no matter who they are or their rank, has the right to put their hands on you. And you are not a slave. A pack runs together, fights together, and protects each other. Zircon Moon

failed miserably. They failed you. There is nothing you did that warrants your abuse.”

“Jackie’s right.” Dwayne sat on the other side of me. “No one deserves to get beat on or to have bruises. I pray to the Moon Goddess that they get the punishment they deserve. We’re saying you didn’t deserve your pain because that’s the truth. The fault is on them, not you. It’s not your responsibility to carry their violence.”

“It’s okay to cry, Hali.” Jackie’s thumbs wiped the tears I didn’t know started falling. “What you went through was horrible. What they put in your mind was terrible. But you are away from them like you said and they can no longer hurt you. They hold no power here. They would have to get through us and our army if they even think about touching you again. I bet my honor on that.”

“And besides, us Beta children have to stick together.” Dwayne’s hand reached for my own and squeezed it with care. He meant what he said. I didn’t flinch away from his warm touch. “We’re strangers now, but I have faith that we’ll progress to become friends.”

“And someone as cute as you shouldn’t be without friends.” Jackie chuckled, tickling her finger under my chin. My head jerked up; eyebrows arched.

“You think I’m cute?”

“All girls are cute!” Jackie defended with a haughty smile. “And you’re a girl. So, therefore, you’re cute.”

Dwayne scoffed in exasperation, rolling his eyes at his sister.

“Sometimes, I think your brain sits between your legs.”

“Come on, bro! I know you think she’s cute too.”

I turn my head to Dwayne to see red painting his cheeks. “N-No comment.”

I laughed a little, resting my head on Jackie’s shoulder once again. “Thank you, guys. For your kind words and warmth.”

The three of us remained like this for a while. Giving each other comfort. The sun peeked through the translucent curtains in my room, bathing us in its placid warmth. I still have a tough time believing what they say, but I was happy they challenged those dark thoughts in my messed-up mind. My eyes flicker close to see a small vision of Artemis resting on the ground as two dark-grey wolves huddle on either side of her, resting their heads and snouts on her back.

If they had human faces, all three of them would be smiling.