

Untouchable (The Moonlight Avatar Series Collection)

Chapter 21 The Decision

“Attitude is a choice. Happiness is a choice. Optimism is a choice. Kindness is a choice. Giving is a choice. Respect is a choice. Whatever choice you make makes you. Choose wisely.”—Roy T. Bennett

Halima

I’m now laying in my bed, looking up at the ceiling. Nightfall had made its appearance, immersing the territory in darkness. Up above, the half-moon and its twinkling stars serve as our only illumination. The distant chatter of wolves and their late-night rendezvous echoed in my eardrums, but I didn’t pay attention to it. My mind’s stuck on my therapy session today with Mayra.

I spilled everything **from** my fears to my desires. It took me two months to get used to speaking to a stranger due to fear and judgment. But Mayra had been nothing but open and warm, **allowing** me to gradually come out of **my** shell. Just like the others, she, too, recommended that I make my decision on whether to attend the ceremony. That’s the power I have over the situation, and no one would judge me for it. The entire time, she reassured me I was not a walking disaster warning, if anything goes astray, I shouldn’t take the blame for it.

I roll on my side, resting my arm under my pillow. Why was this so hard? It feels like two strings were pulling me, one to the light and the other to darkness. Sometimes, the pull into the darkness was stronger. It was **seductive**, cloaking me in a blanket, leading **me** to believe I was better off **dead**. But in others, the light was stronger. The light was warm, but also

foreign. It was something I've never felt before, **and** it **was** scary—but now I have people around me pushing me forward to heal.

But It's a battle where I feel unequipped to fight.

"Are you going to go to the ceremony?" Artemis spoke through our **mind**—link. It **was** always nice to hear her voice, **she** helped to fight the demons in my mind since we're both in this together.

"I want to," I answer back, shutting my eyes to envision my beautiful wolf. Big and majestic as **ever**, I needed to let her out once I'm okay, "I'm scared. My mind is coming up with all these scenarios that could go wrong *if* I show up."

"I know. I can see them, and they aren't pretty." Artemis trotted closer to me, sitting on her hind end. "I, too, wish things were easier. But, just as Mayra **said, we're** dealing with many traumatic experiences, so our **brain** is **wired** differently. We **expect the** worst in everything and hide, hoping things go right."

"It's much easier to hide than to face the problem," I admit with a self-deprecating **sigh**. "I want to be strong. Artemis. I'm so sick and tired of being weak and scared of my shadow. I look around and see all these powerful wolves, happy and living life. And here I am, deep in a pit that's so hard to get out."

"We **didn't go** into the pit willingly, Hali. They forced us in there, **and** we didn't have a choice. That wasn't our fault. But what is our **responsibility** is when and how we get back up. Fighting is **hard**. You said so yourself. But no one ever said that recovery is easy. It's a long, hard, and treacherous journey. But...I think it's worth it. Don't **you?**"

I ponder in thought for a little, feeling the weight of Artemis's words. "Since when did you become such a good therapist?"

“I picked up on a few things during your sessions.” Artemis shrugged. “It’s a process, Halima. Taking back the power that has been stolen from us is a process. But I much rather live in the light with you than to be **buried** in darkness.”

Artemis was right. Her words lit a deep fire within me I didn’t know was there. I rather–no, want to live in the light. Not just that, I want to live here. I want to stay in this pack, they welcomed me, took care of me, and she been nothing but supportive. I want to be a part of something that brought in a broken girl and nursed her back to full health. How often does one run into a pack like that?

I’ve made my decision, or rather, decisions.

Grabbing my cell phone off from the lamp table, I send a text to Lyria. This was my first cell phone, and it had taken me time to get used to its fancy controls.

“Hey. Can we go shopping tomorrow? I want to find a dress for the ceremony.”

“Holy shit! Yes, totally!” She replied in seconds. “I got a couple of styles in mind that would fit you! Meet me in the common room tomorrow after breakfast!”

“Cool! I’ll see you then. Goodnight.”

I set my phone back down with a smile as I changed into my cherry red nightgown. Shutting off the lights, it bathes my room in comfortable darkness. Crawling underneath the covers, I fall into a deep sleep, dreamless for the first time in months.

“Did I hear you correctly? You want to join the pack?”

It was a normal morning when Halima entered my office. There was a small smile on her face, and she looked healthier than I'd ever seen her before. Her skin was clearer and her face was fuller. The beauty hidden underneath was showing. I noticed she no longer had the feeding tube. I feel relieved, it was all in the progress of her recovering. Lyra and I were developing something special for her, and all we needed was to make a file for her.

I'm aware her original file was back at Zircon Moon, but it was too risky to request for it without jeopardizing her safety. I was betting on the fact that they believe she was dead, so her file was closed.

I couldn't help but smile at the girl sitting on the other side of my desk. The inkling in the back of my **mind** told me she would accept the offer, though I didn't expect it to be so soon. I felt as though Halima would make a great addition to Garnet Moon, not the fact she was a white wolf, but that she also fits in seamlessly with the rest of the pack.

"Very well," I folded my hands on my desk. "You will go through a bonding ritual that ties you to the pack. You will have the Pack **Mark branded** on you as **opposed** to having one at birth."

Her big brown eyes widened in fear. "H-How would I get the Pack Mark?"

I chuckled. "I promise it is not as barbaric as you think it is. I've done hundreds of bindings since I became Alpha. It will appear once the ritual is complete."

"Ah, that makes a lot more sense." She answered with an anxious laugh, running her hand through her tight curls. "Um. When will the ritual happen?"

"I'll discuss with Lyra and Anthony about the arrangements. It would be Anthony performing the ritual since **he** will be Alpha soon. Only the Alpha can bind new members to the pack."

"So...I have nothing to worry then?"

I shake my head. "No, dear."

“Nice.” She pats her thighs once before standing. “Thank you for giving me the opportunity, sir. I appreciate it.”

“Halima, that’s only for those with ranks. Please, just call me Nikolai.”

Voice dropped an octave, my arms folding under my chest. “You **need** not be so formal with me.”

She stared at me for a solid minute, a smile etching up her bronzed face. I don’t think Halima understands how much her beauty comes out when she smiles. It saddens me how she was trained to be so subservient. I hope her staying in my territory would help her blossom into the person she never got a chance to be.

“Okay. Thank you...Nikolai.” And with **that**, she left my office with a slight spring in her step. I mind-link my mate, Anthony, and Lyria in my office to discuss the next step in our surprise for the girl. I pull out a manilla folder from the bottom of my desk, pulling out the papers needed to complete the next step.

I have great hope that Halima would like this surprise. She deserves it.