

Untouchable (The Moonlight Avatar Series Collection)

Chapter 24 The Family

“In family life, love is the oil that eases friction, the cement that binds closer together, and the music that brings harmony.”—Friedrich Nietzsche

Third Person

Halima felt a burning sensation on her chest, right above her heart. The sensations outlined something, but she couldn't tell what it was. It was only then when her eyes maneuvered to **the** slightly **exposed** chests of the women on stage does, she realizes what was **happening**.

She gained her new Pack Mark. The eye of a wolf blending with an upright crescent moon.

The sensation subsided, and the cuts sealed on both palms, leaving behind no more than a small scar. Beaming with pride, Alpha Anthony placed his hands on Halima's bare shoulders and squeezed. “Congratulations, and welcome to our family.”

Squealing with pure excitement, Halima leaped and hugged Anthony as tight as she could. Tears spilled from her eyes like waterfalls, her words of gratitude repeating in his ear like a broken record player. It wasn't long until the others joined in on the hug, recognizing how this was the first step of Halima regaining the happiness she had lost long ago. The **pack** members, unable to withhold their applause, broke out into cheers. Their family **got a** little bigger and the night richer.

Everyone had an enjoyable time during the Great Feast. Everyone **ate** to their fill and mingled **with** one. another. Halima still was eating light foods such **as** salad and pasta but was slowly progressing to heavier foods like meat and rice. The broken bond with Zircon Moon faded forever, never to return.

Her life ended at Zircon Moon, but her new life's beginning **was** with Garnet Moon.

Fire licked the black sky, and laughter decimated the silence of the redwood forest. The bonfire **was** up and running, celebrations preparing to last **deep** into the night. To Garnet Moon, fire was symbolic of purification, rebirth, and hope. Many members **tossed** things into **the** fire that they wanted to release. It could **be** items they held onto but couldn't any longer, breaking ties with toxic loved ones, or wanting to start anew. Music **played** loudly, and many folks danced with their **mates** while children danced around the fire.

"Hey *Hall*, are you coming?" Jackie spoke **through** her newly acquired mind-link.

"I'll be there in a minute!"

Halima was in her room, admiring the pack mark above her left breast. She was officially a Garnet Moon Pack Member, and she couldn't be happier. Weight rolled off her shoulders the moment she was bound to her new family, the old one shriveling up and dying in the abyss of darkness. Artemis howled in delight with her **new** family, feeling like a full wolf already.

"Now, there is just one more thing to do." She spoke to herself. Rummaging through her closet, she pulled her. old dress from the plastic bag. The slave dress. The only item of clothing she wore and brought here from the excrement she called her old pack. Halima wanted to get rid of it meaningfully, to make sure no one casts their eyes upon such a disastrous piece of cloth again.

And tonight, she had the answer on how **she** would do that.

Walking back to the enormous yard where the bonfire was burning bright as the North Star, Halima **took** her seat next to the new Beta Twins. **Her** raggedy dress rested in her lap. Her eyes scanned the little party, watching everyone dancing and singing. "So, where's our Alpha and Luna?"

"They took off for a run in the forest," Jackie smirked, waggling her eyebrows. "Their wolves need some alone time."

"God, I better not hear one howl from them for this entire night!" Dwayne complained, drinking from his beer bottle. "Why did you bring that thing down?" He gestured to her dress.

"I'm going to get rid of it," Halima explained. "This is the only thing I have that ties me to Zircon Moon. To my old life. I want to destroy this thing with no one having the chance to dig it up again." Her brown eyes look to the full moon casting its glow upon her. "I want to heal. I want to move on. And to do that, I have to do this."

Standing, the curly-haired **girl** walked towards the enormous bonfire, burning powerfully. It bathes her brown **face** in its ethereal orange light, reflecting itself in her dark **eyes**. With a single toss, Halima threw her dress into the fire. She watched the fire eat away at the dirty fabric, charring from filthy white to black. **The** scent tickled her nose. This simple act **was** symbolic of her chains, and her **chains** were and would forever be broken. Her eyes went back to the moon, smiling as if Selene was watching her at that very moment.

"This slave has revolted. And she's free." She whispered into the air, closing her eyes while the cool breeze licked at her bare arms.

Never again would she **ever** kneel. Never again would she be forced into servitude.

She was happy. She was **loved**.

She was liberated.

Halima One Week Later

Life was good.

I've finally reached the normal weight for a werewolf. After consulting with Dr. Nava and Dr. Johnson, they've decided that it was safe for me to shift. I couldn't wait until I could finally let Artemis out on the run she **craved** for years. A smile crept up on my face as I thought about it.

I head to Alpha Anthony's office after he requested my presence via mind-link. I wondered what he wanted. From the tone of his **voice**, it sounded urgent. Jogging up the stairs, I made my way to the office door and firmly knocked.

"Come in." I hear. Upon opening the door, I see the entire Guerrero family sitting around the desk. Huh. What could be so important that it concerns the entire family? "Halima. Have **a** seat, please."

Quirking **an** eyebrow, I took a seat in the chair that directly situates me in the middle of the Guerrero semi-circle. "Would anyone mind telling me what's going on? Did I do something wrong?"

"No, dear. You did nothing wrong." Lyra shook her head quickly, her lips straining to hide **a smile**. "There was something we all want to show **you**."

I cocked my head to the side. "Oh? Okay. **What** is it?"

Nikolai handed me a manilla folder. "Please, look inside and let us know what you think."

I'm confused, but I take the folder. Opening it, the first sheet I notice was my file for Garnet Moon. It had my picture, birthdate, height, weight, **and** so on. There were several more papers clipped to my file, **and** I flipped through them. But when I got to one particular sheet, my entire world froze.

Three letters in bold black stare back at me with the power to shake me to tears.

“Report of Adoption”

I couldn't speak. I couldn't move. My **eyes** darted around the Guerrero Family, who all were staring at me with anticipation. They wanted me to say something, but I lost my words. Do they want to adopt me? They really want me to be a part of their family?

“We know it's quite a shock.” Anthony began. “But we've been planning this for a while. We know about your story and **are** saddened to hear that you never got the family you deserved. And we wanted to change that.”

“So...” Lyra spoke. “We want you to be a part of ours. You'll be our daughter and Anthony and Lyria's baby sister. You are already a part of Garnet Moon, and we thought we'd help make that extra step to bring you closer to us.”

“And I always wanted a younger sister,” Lyria spoke up, excited. “There is so much I can teach you!”

“And we can help you **get** back into school.” Nikolai mentioned. “We can enroll you in **online** classes so you can catch up on work, and you can choose if you want to go to college.”

“Let us be the family you always wanted,” **Anthony** spoke with confidence. But above all, love. Love for me. “**All** we need is your consent, so we can **make** it official.”

One tear. Two. Four. Rivers. My tears dripped from my chin to the sheets in my lap. I was **so** overwhelmed with emotion that choked sobs erupted from my throat. I couldn't concoct a coherent sentence, so I nodded. Vigorously. I dropped the folder and leaped into Lyra's arms with a hug, crying my entire heart out.

I got it. I finally got it! I got my family—a new family! A family that would love me, protect me, and support me. I didn't know how much love I held for them until I opened that folder. All I could do was cry and finally reply once my sobs allowed me to.

"Yes. I would love to be a part of your family!"

After that, everything felt like a dream. My happiness cloaked **me** like a thick blanket, bathing me in its warmth. Feeling that all familiar itch, I left the packhouse and ran into the forest as fast as I could. The wind blew through my curls, stroking my face as nature welcomed me into her home.

I stripped out of all my clothes and began the long-awaited shift. It was painful, considering I haven't shifted in years, but I welcomed it with grace. My bones cracked, my **face** lengthened, and my teeth sharpened. In under a minute, I had shifted into a white wolf.

Artemis. My Artemis.

We took off into the woodlands, paws pounding the pavement with every step. Artemis's joy oozed into my own as I took the backseat while she explored the world that was withheld from her. Her white coat danced with the wind, cooling her as her heat built up with **her exercise**.

We're in the place we always wanted to be. All the pieces fell into place, molding perfectly into a picture of beauty and hope. **Selene** was right, **we** had a better life waiting for us. All we needed was the chance and the courage to take it.

Artemis let out a mighty howl. A howl that rocked the roots of the trees and echoed through the woodsy air. It was a howl filled with hope for life. Hope for both of us.

Hope for our future.