

Untouchable (The Moonlight Avatar Series Collection)

Chapter 5 – The Ceremony

“Whoever fights monsters should see to it that in the process he does not become a monster. And if you gaze long enough into an abyss, the abyss will gaze back into you.” – Friedrich Nietzsche

Third Person POV

The Passage of the Alpha ceremony marked a new beginning for all werewolf packs in the world.

As the new Alpha claims his or her new title, it paved the way for the new generation of leaders to be greater than their predecessors. It honored the Alphas who served before their time, passing on their wisdom and honor to the new successor, in hopes they'd follow in their footsteps. Following in line was the next generation of the Beta and Gamma, who served as the Alpha's right and left hand, respectively. Once the passage was complete, a new light of hope was born, and celebrations stretched until the moon rests for the night.

From top to bottom, Zircon Moon's assembly hall glittered with magnificence. Gold and white decorated every tile, stair, chair, and table across the room. Near the front of the stage stood three tables, each decorated more intricately with Greek insignias, representative of the Alpha, Beta, and Gamma families. A big chandelier hung above, shining brightly like cut diamonds. From the human eye, the assembly hall was decorated similarly to that of a wedding reception. Every pack member, male, female, young, and old, piled in and sat in their respective seats. Each dressed in

elegance, in a competition of who could outshine the other. Chatter echoing and laughter infectious, everyone was ready for the best night of their lives. The Omegas began serving wine for the adults and juice for the little ones.

The Elders of Zircon set up the ceremonial table and the three Passage Goblets meant for the official ritual. The golden goblet for the Alphas, the silver goblet for the Betas, and the bronze goblet for the Gammas. Each bedecked with rubies and diamonds across the rim, shining with prestige. But at the center laid zircon crystals, the gemstone the pack was named after. Matching ceremonial daggers rested next to its prospective chalice.

“I think I’m going to be sick,” Valerian mumbled, sitting at the table marked for the Beta Families. Dressed in a clean, double-breasted gray suit, he leaned back in his chair. “Is all this attention necessary?”

“Don’t think about it too much,” Raina whispered, holding his hand in hers. The future Beta Female dressed in an off-shoulder silver dress that reached to her knees with her matching jewelry glittering underneath the lights. Her normally coily raven hair was curled to perfection. “You’ll be on stage for, like, five minutes. You do your thing and you’ll come back to me.”

“That’s the only thing I’m looking forward to.” He chuckled, capturing her lips in a kiss. Before they could go any deeper, Beta Steven cleared his throat.

“As much as I love watching young love blossom, have some decency for these old eyes.” He chuckled as an Omega filled his wineglass.

“Oh, don’t be too hard on them, my love. I could name a few instances where we lacked decency during the last ceremony...” Ashley’s voice dropped an octave, her hooded sending shivers of pleasure down Steven’s spine.

“Oh, Mom. That’s gross.” Raina gagged for emphasis. “We don’t want to hear any of that.”

“Who is this ‘we’?” Valerian’s mother Michelle asked, holding hands with her husband, Jesse, under the table. “I, for one, want to hear more. Remember that one time all those years ago where you skinny-dipped in the river and—”

Ashley threw a balled-up napkin at her friend, who burst into cackles. Much to their children’s dismay, their parents still acted as if they were young again. Kwame, with his family, was talking logistics about the ceremony, but his mind was elsewhere. Messing with the cuff of his tanned suit, he gave away that he wasn’t paying much attention.

“Kwame.” His father, Gamma Omar, tapped him on the shoulder. “What’s on your mind, son?”

“This doesn’t feel right.” He muttered, ignoring his little brother’s airplane noises, and his mother’s failed attempts to make him sit still. “All of us should be in here, celebrating this monumental time. She’s just sitting out there, alone and forgotten.”

Gamma Omar sighed in sadness, aware of what his eldest son was speaking about. He spoke about Halima, the slave, presented merely an afterthought to the rest of the pack. Like Kwame, he too feels for the girl. His wife, Gamma Female Amani, prayed often for the Moon Goddess to bathe her in her protection, given that the Alpha’s orders restricted them from interacting with her.

“We are doing the best we could to prove her innocence, but it is difficult.” His voice dropped to a whisper, to where only his table could hear him. “Tracking down those rogues had taken years. They have grown cunning over the decade, but we won’t give up. Halima will be free, even when everyone has given up on her.”

“I worry about her survival,” Amani muttered, brushing her fingers through her youngest son’s, Adama, hair. “I fear she might not live to see her next

birthday. Her only solace is escaping from this pack. She grows skinnier and sicker each day..."

"I, too, worry about her, my love," Omar responded, grasping his wife's hand. "But I have faith for her better days. We will draw closer to bringing enough evidence to Jonathan. I promise."

Kwame grunted in response; his deep brown eyes glued to the doors. He could feel her sadness seeping through the cracks. As much as he respected the Beta Family, he abhorred the way they treated her. Halima was their flesh and blood, and they treated her as if she was nothing. He could only hope that one day, they and the pack would realize the error of their ways.

The mood at the Dubois table did nothing to damper the surrounding mood. At the designated Alpha table, the mood was befitting of kids' play. Odessa and Neron were playing footsie as Alpha Jonathan had a brief conversation with one of the Pack Elders. Noticing the heavy-lidded looks the couple was giving to one another, Jonathan rolled his eyes.

"Alright, enough. You could continue that after the ceremony," He grunted, snapping his fingers between their faces. "Are you ready, son?"

"Ready as I'll ever be." Neron smiled, his voice brimming with confidence. Odessa gripped his knee to grab his attention. Wearing a baby pink, strapless dress made Neron hot underneath his suit. His love looked so beautiful, so innocent in such a soft color. His fingers trembled with the desire to just run his fingers down her curves and—

"Focus!" Onyx bellowed in his mind. **"We're about to be king of the pack and you're busy wanting to bed her!"**

"I can't help it. She's so beautiful. Don't you think so, Onyx?" Neron teased, fully aware of Onyx's dislike for Odessa.

“Yeah, yeah, she’s pretty. Big whoop. We both know you’ll take her to bed after.”

“Care to watch this time?”

“In your dreams. Anyway, it looks as if the ceremony is about to start. Pay attention!” It was no surprise that Neron and Onyx were opposites. While both were confident, Neron was laxer, whereas Onyx was more straightforward. It was common for wolves to have distinct personalities from their humans. Wolf and human balance each other as yin with yang. Regardless, whether they like it or not, whatever personality the wolves adopt was merely one-half of the complete picture. Onyx kept Neron straight, even when he fell overboard one too many times.

Alpha Jonathan, Beta Steven, and Gamma Omar made their way to the stage. All conversation ceased, and all attention was now to the highlight of the ceremony. The hall had a lot of echo and space, so it was easy for all pack members to listen, no matter how far they were from the stage.

It was not like werewolves needed microphones, anyway.

“Zircon Moon!” Alpha Jonathan’s booming voice pierced through the silence. **“I welcome you all to this monumental occasion, the Passage of the Alpha ceremony! It has been a long time coming for the next generation to assume their roles as your new Alpha, Beta, and Gamma. This pack holds the pride and strength that each of you contributes to as a whole. Our strength lies in our numbers, so whether you know it or not, each of you lending a smidgen of your strength to your community, your family, was how we all escape the toughest of circumstances. We suffered through substantial challenges and hardships as a community that we’re all accustomed to, but we all emerged stronger than before!”**

Cheers and applause thundered through the air, each member feeling rejuvenated and jovial to be part of such an amazing pack.

“Today, you all will bear witness to the passing of the torch to the next generation of leaders. While we old men step down from the roles we have assumed for decades, I was proud to see how enthusiastic and strong this next generation was ready to lead. They would serve as your guides, holding the legacy of the pack within their minds and their hearts. They’re young and sometimes a little hard-headed, but they’re more than fit to lead the next generation of werewolves into a new era that would go down in history. Give these fine gentlemen your well-wishes and gratitude, for they will take the first step into the roles they were born to fill. May the Moon Goddess serve us her blessings and bathe these young men in her protection and her love for decades to come.”

“Now, it is time to pass the torch to our chosen successors. Kwame Dubois, Valerian Mikos, and my pride and joy, Neron Prince, please come to the stage and accept your destiny!”

All three men rose from their tables and walked towards the stage with thundering applause and cheers erupting from behind. The three men worked, trained, fought, and played together from childhood to adulthood. Each holds a special place in each other’s hearts and couldn’t agree more that they were an unstoppable trio. Standing next to their predecessors, it was time for the important part of the ceremony.

The Alpha, Beta, and Gamma each hold a Zircon Ring that marks their rank. They had passed each ring down to future leaders, one generation after another. Gold, Silver, and Bronze respectively. It was to be placed on the ring finger of the successor’s right hand; the hand always placed over their heart. It was a sign of dedication, gratitude, and readiness to lead the pack in the right direction.

The predecessors grab their ceremonial dagger and slice a thin line on their palm, holding that hand over their goblet as their blood drips into it. The successors held up their hands over the same goblet, ready for their oaths.

“I, Jonathan Prince, pass the title and honor of Alpha to you, Neron Prince, with the duties and obligations that come with such responsibility. Honoring the generations of Alphas before us, I bestow upon you their knowledge and strength to lead Zircon Moon. Do you accept?”

“I, Steven Lane, pass the title and honor of Beta to you, Valerian Mikos, with the duties and obligations that come with such responsibility. Honoring the generations of Betas before us, I bestow upon you their knowledge and strength to lead Zircon Moon. Do you accept?”

“I, Omar Dubois, pass the title and honor of Gamma to you, Kwame Dubois, with the duties and obligations that come with such responsibility. Honoring the generations of Gammas before us, I bestow upon you their knowledge and strength to lead Zircon Moon. Do you accept?”

“I accept this honor.” All three men responded with overflowing confidence.

The ceremonial daggers cut through their palms at the same time, bleeding into the goblet below. Then, the men join hands as the passage flows through them by blood. Each man could feel their bond with the pack strengthening, bearing the responsibility that at that moment, they have become the new Alpha, Beta, and Gamma.

The mixing of blood within the goblets flickered with silver energy. For the Moon Goddess had recognized the sacred passages. Blessed and protected, the blood disappeared in wisps of white energy, rising in the air. The Moon Goddess had acknowledged and accepted the men as new leaders of one of her many packs. The older men took a step back, signifying that they completed their task and stepped down. The younger men took a step forward, placing their right hand over their hearts while their cuts heal.

“I, Neron Prince, will serve faithfully as your new Alpha!”

“I, Valerian Mikos, will serve faithfully as your new Beta!”

“I, Kwame Dubois, will serve faithfully as your new Gamma!”

Howls erupted from the crowd, rocking the foundation of the packhouse in acceptance of their new leaders. Full of pride and happiness, the men bumped fists in unison, their rings clinking against one another.

Now, they were ready to honor and serve their pack.

Their community.

Their family.