

Chapter Fifteen: Between Love and Pride

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Phera POV:

The silence left behind by their departure was nearly deafening, a suffocating vacuum of unspoken words and looming decisions. My heart was a tumultuous sea, waves of confusion crashing against the shores of reason. As the reality of the situation settled in, it seemed the room began to close around me, the walls inching ever so closer in an almost ominous fashion.

I looked around the office—a representation of everything I had worked hard for. The sleek, ergonomic furniture, the state-of-the-art computer setup, the lingering scent of fresh paint—it was all supposed to be my new beginning. But now, this space felt like a cage, the very air heavy with my mates' presence and ultimatums.

I shook my head and blinked away the moisture forming in my eyes. Now wasn't the time for tears. I paced around, attempting to ground my swirling thoughts. Every step was a battle against the pull of my mate bond, the very essence of my wolf urging me to run back to them, tail between my legs. But the human part of me, the part that carried the scars of their betrayal, vehemently resisted.

It was so easy for them, wasn't it?

To walk in here, suffused with their dominant alpha auras, and just demand that I throw away everything I had struggled for.

But what about me?

Where was my choice in all this?

As much as I wanted to despise them for laying this trap, a deeper part of me, one that had matured through years of separation and bitterness, urged me to understand. Had their eyes not always been windows into their souls? I remember those windows now tainted with complex shades of regret, longing, and a feeling of sorrow that almost made my resolve waver. My phone buzzed on the desk, the vibration shattering my spiralling thoughts. I picked it up and saw a text from an unfamiliar number.

Phera, it's Zane. We need to talk later in the day. Let's meet at our office on the 42nd floor.

A furious thumb-tapping session later, I deleted my initial scathing reply. I took a deep breath, and then I texted back,

Fine.

As I exited the elevator and stepped onto the plush carpet of the 42nd floor, the enormity of the situation sank in. The pristine walls seemed to close in on me, and the air, tinged with the smell of high-quality cologne and freshly brewed coffee, felt heavy. Each step towards the office suite of ADZ

Corp, a titan in the world of finance and real estate, was a step into a world that had both beckoned and repelled me for years.

I walked through the corridor lined with mahogany walls and modern art, their aesthetic beauty contrasting sharply with my emotional turmoil. When I finally reached the imposing double doors bearing the initials A, D and Z, my heart was pounding so loudly it threatened to drown out all reason.

Taking a deep breath, I pushed open the door and stepped inside.

Axel, Damon, and Zane sat around a glass conference table, dressed impeccably in tailored suits that highlighted their authority and exuded an aura of unequivocal power. The city skyline stretched out behind them, a sprawling vista of lights and ambitions that seemed almost within reach. Their faces were stoic, but their eyes—oh, their eyes were tempests, storms of emotion that I couldn't decipher. 1

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Damon rose from his seat.

"Sunflower, please join us."

"Planning to make a boardroom decision about my life?" I

quipped, masking my vulnerability with a veneer of sarcasm as I took a seat.

Axel sighed deeply, the sound echoing through the spacious office.

"This isn't about control, Phera. It's about us, and our shared future."

"I've carved my own future without you," I countered, my voice tinged with bitterness.

Zane leaned forward, placing his palms on the table.

"We've grown, Phera, in ways that were necessary but painful. We've learned to value what was once easily overlooked. You were never 'easily overlooked,' but we were foolish enough not to fight hard enough for you." Said Zane.

Damon chimed in,

"Your ambition, your need to achieve and break glass ceilings—we get it. And we're not asking you to give it up."

The juxtaposition of the three of them against the backdrop of the city couldn't have been more poetic. They were kings of this concrete jungle, but they were also the boys who had once captured my heart and then carelessly shattered it. Now, they were men asking for redemption, promising not just love but also respect.

Zane stood and walked over to me.

"Our empire doesn't have to be your cage. It can be your stage, a place where you realize your dreams, not just as an individual but as our equal, as our Luna."

The air grew thick with tension and unspoken desire. The intimacy of the moment, heightened by the isolation of the skyscraper and the veil of night, was overpowering. My instincts screamed to yield, to let go of the past and embrace the future they offered. But years of emotional armour wouldn't dismantle that easily.

"I need more time," I managed to say, my voice choked with emotion.

Axel nodded, his eyes meeting mine in a silent understanding.

"Time is the one thing we can afford to give you, even if it's the hardest thing for us to endure without you."

The room fell silent again, each one of us lost in a labyrinth of what-ifs and maybes. I took one last lingering look at the men who had once been my everything and might be so again. Then, with a heavy heart but an empowered spirit, I walked away.

As I exited their sanctuary high above the city, it occurred to me that the skyscraper was a metaphor for our complicated lives—towering and imposing, yet filled with hidden intricacies. Our futures hang in the balance, a precarious dance between love and pride. As the elevator descended, I

realized that the downward movement mirrored my own grounding. For the first time in a long while, my feet felt firmly planted on the earth, even as my emotions fluttered in an unsettled sky. 1

I felt neither defeated nor triumphant in that solitary journey back to the ground. I felt human, with all the complexities and vulnerabilities that entailed. A decision loomed on the horizon, but for now, I was content to dwell in the uncertainty, in that fragile space between the sky and the earth, where endless possibilities and love still had a fighting chance.

And so, the elevator reached the lobby, and its doors opened with a soft chime, as if signalling not an end, but a new beginning. Whatever lay ahead, I knew that the choice would be mine, a precious freedom hard-won through years of pain and self-discovery.

Time. That was what I needed. And time, in its unforgiving march, would eventually lead me to the answers that eluded me now. Whether those answers would bring joy or more heartbreak, only the unfolding days would tell.

As I walked out of the glass building that housed ADZ Corp, the cooling breeze of the evening seemed almost like a loving caress, a contrast to the charged atmosphere I had left behind. My steps led me to a park near the skyscraper, a small sanctuary amidst the concrete giants. A patch of nature that had somehow escaped the clutches of urban

development, its tall trees and manicured gardens stood as a testament to nature's resilience.

Sitting down on a bench, I found my thoughts inundated by a tide of emotions that I had been holding back. It was strange how a momentary decision could affect the rest of your life, like the beating wings of a butterfly causing a tempest miles away. The choices I had to make were monumental, not just for me but for Axel, Damon, and Zane as well.

My phone buzzed, jolting me from my contemplation. A text message lit up the screen, its glow piercing the twilight.

Take all the time you need, Phera. We'll be waiting. A, D, Z. 1

Even through the digital medium, their presence was tangible, like a warm blanket enveloping me. Their words carried the weight of unspoken promises, of years lost and years yet to come.

I sighed, setting the phone down beside me. This was an interlude, a pause in a symphony that had yet to reach its climax. The lives we had led separately had been mere preludes to this moment, to the future that beckoned with arms wide open.

I thought about the empire that ADZ Corp represented, the years of toil and brilliance that had made it a cornerstone of modern business. And then, I thought about the empire of emotions that we had built, fragile yet resilient, vulnerable

yet enduring. The men who sat in that conference room were a part of both worlds, their lives as multifaceted as the city that stretched beyond the horizon.

What did I want?

What did I really want?

It wasn't just about choosing to be with Axel, Damon, and Zane. It was about choosing a life, a future, and an identity. Could I be Phera, the individual, while also being their Luna, their partner in every sense of the word?

The moon began its ascent, its silver glow casting ethereal shadows on the park. It was as if the universe itself was watching, waiting for the decision that would ripple through the tapestry of our lives.

I picked up my phone and began to type a reply, my fingers trembling as they danced over the touchscreen.

I don't have all the answers yet,

I wrote, each word infused with a melancholy that I couldn't escape.

I hesitated, my thumb hovering over the send button. And then, with a resolve that surprised even me, I pressed it.

As I left the park, the city seemed to awaken around me, its nocturnal life a symphony of sounds and colours. The towering skyscraper of ADZ Corp stood as a monolith against the skyline, its windows twinkling like stars in a

celestial field.

And though I walked alone, I felt far from solitary. For in my pocket lay a phone, and in that tiny device rested the hopes, dreams, and love of four intertwined souls. The path ahead was uncertain, but it was one that we would navigate together, led by the guiding lights of our shared history and an uncertain yet promising future.

The echoes of my footsteps seemed to blend with the pulsating rhythm of the city, as if in harmony with the heartbeat of the world around me. The choices that awaited me were daunting, but they were mine to make, and in that realization lay an empowering freedom.

Whether tomorrow would bring pain or joy was a mystery, but for the first time in a long time, I found myself eager to unravel it. And as the city enveloped me in its unending embrace, I realized that life, in all its chaotic beauty, was not about the destination, but about the journey.

And what a journey it would be.