

Chapter Seventeen: The Universe And Beyond

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Phera POV:

The tension in my hands gradually shifted to the car's steering wheel as I accelerated down the highway, the iconic skyscraper of ADZ Corp casting an imposing silhouette against the afternoon-morning sky. It was an architectural titan, a steel and glass colossus that seemed to scrape the heavens as if challenging the divine. Today, it wasn't just a workplace but a confrontation arena, a stage for reunions and reckonings. [1](#)

My phone buzzed yet again on the passenger seat, its screen illuminating with the third text message of the morning. Three messages, each from a different source, each a complicated cocktail of memories and emotions: Axel, Damon, Zane.

'Good morning, beautiful,'

Read Axel's text, adorned with a sun emoji. It was a simple message but drenched in implications, an easy greeting that was anything but easy.

Damon had texted next,

'Can't wait to see your smile,'

Accompanied by a heart emoji. It was almost too ironic, like a cruel joke from the universe. A heart emoji? As if digital symbols could smooth over our tangled histories.

Finally,

'Counting the minutes till you're here,'

Concluded Zane, who added a countdown clock emoji for good measure. It was such a deliberate choice, timing a reunion as if it were a countdown to a rocket launch.

Each text was like a minuscule drama playing out on my phone screen, causing my facial muscles to react involuntarily: a forced sunniness for Axel, a sardonic grin for Damon, and a contemplative furrow of the brow for Zane.

"Counting the minutes till I'm there, huh? Was the scriptwriter off today?" I mumbled to myself, fully aware of how absurdly theatrical the whole situation had become.

My wolf, that instinctual and ancient part of my soul, chastised me for my stubborn reluctance. She was aching, clawing at my consciousness, yearning for the tactile affirmation only our mates could offer. She snarled her disapproval of my emotional hesitancy, her impatience veiling a desperate loneliness that I couldn't entirely deny.

As if on cue, my phone interrupted my musings with another buzz. A call this time. Nate, my older brother and the Beta to these emotionally confusing Alphas. His tone walked a fine

line between genuine concern and caution, as though each word was a stepping stone over a turbulent river.

"How's my baby sister doing?"

Nate's voice radiated warmth, but the undertone was palpable—he was skirting around something larger, something neither of us wanted to trip over.

"Surviving, Nate," I responded, my voice seasoned with both irony and vulnerability. "How is everyone back in Red Moon? Mom, Dad? How are you?"

"We're managing, Phera. But you're more than missed. When are you coming home?"

I gripped the wheel tighter, each groove and texture against my skin like the walls of a well I struggled to climb out of.

"I'll think about it," I hedged, my voice momentarily losing its steadiness.

Nate seemed to read between the lines, taking a thoughtful pause before venturing further.

"Phera, I need to say this. The guys, Axel, Damon, and Zane—they miss you a lot. They talk about you more often than you'd think."

My heart constricted painfully.

"That night, Nate," I hesitated, inhaling deeply before continuing, "do you know what happened eight years ago?"

Silence weighed heavy on the line, an almost palpable entity, before Nate finally replied, his voice tinged with an indescribable emotion.

"Phera, listen. I can't go into details. But what I can say, with absolute certainty, is that they love you. To the universe and beyond. You need to confront them about whatever is it that you want to know. This is between mates." ¹

The phrase "between mates" reverberated through me, settling in the pit of my stomach like a dormant volcano, dormant but not extinct. I ended the call as I pulled into the expansive parking lot of ADZ Corp. The texts were still there on my phone screen, three separate doors leading back into a maze of memories and questions, each begging for resolution.

"Mates,"

I whispered to myself as I stared at the towering edifice ahead of me. Nate's words swirled around in my head. To the universe and beyond? Only time, and perhaps this looming skyscraper, would tell.

As I unbuckled my seatbelt and reached for my purse, a momentary hesitation overtook me. Staring at the closed door of my car felt like peering into a gateway of irrevocable decisions. Each one is interlocked with the possibility of happiness or hurt. Shaking my head, I took a deep breath and opened the door. The air that greeted me was an

artificial mix of smog and mist, the residue of a night that had been just as restless as my own. I got out and locked the car, forcing my high-heeled feet to move one step at a time toward the looming entrance of ADZ Corp.

Walking through the sliding glass doors of the building felt like stepping into another dimension. An oversized chandelier hung from the ceiling like a giant, sparkling galaxy, while the pristine white marble floor gleamed as if it held within it the lustre of countless pearls. Receptionists greeted executives, and couriers shuffled in with their bags, all moving pieces in a carefully orchestrated dance. But for me, the atmosphere was tinged with something less tangible. It was a scent, a feeling, an aura that seemed to permeate the space—an inextricable blend of musk and anticipation.

Pushing the up button for the elevator, I caught my reflection in the mirrored walls of the hallway. There I was, eyes harbouring a tempest of mixed feelings, cheeks flushed from a restless night of dreaming about—them. Axel, Damon, and Zane. In my dreams, they were as vivid as ever: their towering statures casting a comforting shadow over me, their grey eyes containing worlds of secrets and longings, and their scents—oh, their scents—swirling around me in a fog of cedar, pine, and grass, each mixed with the ubiquitous musk that signalled the innate chemistry of mates. 1

The ding of the elevator snapped me back to reality, and I

stepped in, punching the button for the 34th floor, the executive level and the epicentre of all things ADZ Corp. As the elevator ascended, my heart seemed to rise with it, hovering somewhere between my stomach and my throat. It was as if my entire being was hanging in a delicate balance, a pendulum suspended between the past and future. I recalled the conversation with Nate again, replaying his words in my mind.

'To the universe and beyond,' he had said.

But what did that really mean?

Nate had been their Beta, their confidant.

What was really at stake if he was sending veiled messages like this?

My phone buzzed, another message, but I hesitated to look at it. What more could they say? What string of emojis or sweet phrases could pull back the veil of time and allow us to confront the past? I decided to leave it be; the present was demanding enough.

Finally, the elevator reached the 34th floor, the doors sliding open with a soft, metallic sigh. Before me was the domain of Axel, Damon, and Zane, an expansive area adorned with the finest artifacts and modern art, a space that felt both intensely personal and corporate. It was the intersection of their public personas and private selves, and I was about to step right into it, bringing with me the emotional baggage of


a night eight years ago and of a conversation just a few minutes prior.

Feeling a strange sense of vulnerability, I took another deep breath, filling my lungs with the chilled, air-conditioned atmosphere. My wolf nudged me forward, her impatience growing by the second. Even she understood the gravity of the moment—the potential for both reconciliation and rupture.

I took that first step off the elevator, my heels clicking sharply against the marble, echoing the taut drumbeat of my own heart. I felt as if I was walking along the edge of a precipice, teetering between soaring skies and plummeting falls. But there was no turning back. The chapter had already begun, and I was its unwilling yet hopeful author.

And so, with a kaleidoscope of emotions swirling within me—nervousness, anticipation, hope, and an indescribable twinge of fear—I made my way through the labyrinthine corridors toward what I hoped would be a destination of answers. My journey had led me here, but what awaited me was still shrouded in layers of enigma and longing. Yet, somehow, I felt a tinge of optimism battling its way through the fog of my apprehensions. I was here to confront, to question, and perhaps to reclaim pieces of a shared past that still held the keys to my restless present.

So, step by measured step, I advanced, ready for the unfolding of the next scene in a drama that was far from its

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final act.

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