



**From Chapter Three of *Untamed*
by Madeline Dyer**

The coils of rope around my wrists and ankles are too tight. My hands and feet are numb, foreign. Stretched out on my back, each of my limbs is pulled in an opposite direction. My shorts and T-shirt are gone, replaced by a blue gown. Anger flares through me at the thought of them touching my body.

The mattress is hard and lumpy under my spine, but it smells of honey—something I’ve only tasted twice. I pull weakly on my arms. Pain snaps through my shoulders. For several seconds, I clench my eyes shut, trying to control my breathing. I will not cry.

I am in a small pale blue room. I turn my head, and the skin on the back of my neck sticks to the sheet for a second, then makes a wet, squelching sound. The light around me gets brighter, and my eyes sting. My mouth tastes dry and bitter, a strange aftertaste. My eyelids are heavy. Fear pulses through me. I remember the flash of the augmenter burning through my body and...and nothing else. It’s just...just a blank.

Gone....

I gulp. The Untamed will come for me. We always come for each other. Always.

Except, Rahn... My mother....

My head hurts; there’s a buzzing in my ears as I remember the chase on the sand. I see the augmenter dripping toward me in the back of my mind. Bile rises.

I look around again. That’s when I see the woman. She’s standing at the back of the

room, next to the door. Her skin is paler than can be natural, and her hair is a metallic red that hurts my eyes. Her lips part, revealing perfect white teeth that are too white as she moves toward me. Twin metallic pools glimmer for an instant before the light refracts into my face, like laser beams. I wrench my gaze away, but the flashes from her eyes have left two circles of murky redness in my vision, as if I've been looking at the sun for too long.

I fight the restraints harder, until blood is drawn about my wrists. I jerk my head to the left, away from her hand. "Get away from me! Help!"

"We *are* helping you."

She turns away from me, and the door springs open. Bodies. People. Everything's a blur. Too much color. Too much movement. It's everywhere. I don't—can't—

There are too many of them. Too many for me to fight, especially restrained. I count ten of them, plus the woman who was here first.

She smiles at me. A man passes her a small box. A sharp needle's pulled from it. My heart palpitates. A needle?

"My name is Rosemary Webber," the woman says. Her red hair is too perfect, one solid mass that doesn't move as she leans over me. "It will be easier and less painful if you do not resist the conversion."

She smiles down at me, her demeanor soft, sympathetic and welcoming. Or, at least, it would be if they hadn't kidnapped me, and tied me to the bed.

More of them turn toward me. They are all dressed in pale blue. Huge grins plaster each face, their lips stretched to garish angles. Soft music plays from a nearby room. There's the sweet smell of honey floating around, curling toward me, stroking my skin, kissing my eyelids. The room is bright and airy. There's a slight breeze too. Not too hot. Not too cold. It is perfect.

"What is your name?" A small, dark-skinned woman smiles brightly.

My lips freeze.

“Your name?” The tone is harder, spoken with a bite.

I eye each of them carefully, lifting my head high, until my neck protests. Five men. Six women. All of them are tall. No scars here. And the eyes: Enhanced, throwing light and reflections about. It’s disorientating, and I try to look away.

“Your name?”

“Seven Sarr,” I say.

“*Seven?*” Several people question me at once. Their voices are too sharp, too shrill.

I nod. My mother named me. She named all my siblings in the same way. I’m the seventh-born, and she said my name was important.

“*Seven* isn’t a name. Only those Untamed creatures would use that. You don’t want to be one of them anymore, do you? No, I can see it now; your mind will awaken, with our help. Leaving your old wild life behind is the only way to become fully enlightened. I can tell that your memories disgust you.”