

## Chapter 28

He drops the pack of donuts and the beverages on the counter beside the bed before he hoists Leila on his laps, her soft behind pressing against him and he smirks at the slight jolt of pleasure that shoots through him.

Leila struggles to free herself, she doesn't want to be intimate or affectionate with him, it will only worsen the wound he has left on her heart when he leaves her for his chosen.

She is better off being treated like she doesn't exist.

Why treat her so coldly in the public only to show his care every time after? Doesn't he know it's the slight hope that's the most tormenting?

Tatum wraps his arms around her tight even as she writhes and he softly peppers her neck with kisses, every touch of his lips calming the raging effect in Leila's heart.

"I know you are mad at me and I deserve it. I'm sorry about the recent turmoil, it's...uneasy times," Tatum whispers into her ear, his voice soft and soothing and when Leila looks into his eyes, they are full of nothing but remorse.

Leila's eyes coat with tears and she sniffs. If only his words could ease the ache in her heart. She doesn't want to give in to this illusion, this illusion that he cares.

"So when will it end?" She replies in a placid tone.

How will it end? She couldn't say those word to him, is it because she still has hope in her?

She doesn't even know.

She has been practising not being jealous for years. She's good at it. But she knows deep in her heart, there is also this dark corner where she imagines that one day Tatum will tell Carmela, her best friend, that it's Leila that he wants.

But only as dark fantasies.

"You know my hands are tied when it comes to Carmela. She is supposed to be my Luna, and even if she doesn't bear the mark, her father is still a powerful beta...."

Leila looks away, needing to say no more. Unlike her, daughter of a dead beta, Carmela has everything to be a better choice for the title.

She doesn't even want the title. All she wants is for him to say that there is a spot in his heart, for her.

"I know I have been busy recently, but that's no reason for you to be so close with Kelvin" 1

Is that what this is about? His image?

"I already told you Tatum, Kelvin and I are just friends." 1

Tatum gently pats her thigh, giving it a soft rub and slowly shakes his head at her.

"Just—" Tatum pauses and takes a deep breath, his eyes becoming more sullen. "Just give me time, okay? I'm looking for ways to help my wolf recognize my mate. I found her that night, I know. So long as I can—" 1

"What about your heart, Tatum?" Leila suddenly cuts him off, "If your

wolf finds Carmela as your mate, then is it where your heart lies?"

Tatum hesitates, shocked by her words.

He is supposed to claim his fated mate as his Luna. As the Alpha, he is the only one who doesn't have a say in this, and he has long accepted it.

What does his heart want? He was taught to not listen to it.

Was that his heart speaking to him today, when he saw Kelvin having her in his arms? He told Leila to keep a distance from Kelvin because as a man, he understands Kelvin's eyes much better than his slow Luna:

That man loves her....deeply.

He thought he hated Kelvin because Kelvin's pursuit after Leila is staining his Alpha image.

But is that all?

Is he jealous of Kelvin?

Kelvin, like any other man in the pack, can choose a mate with their heart but his fate is decided by the pack's prophet.

His long hesitation gives Leila hope, a hope she doesn't want to have, but can't resist.

Is he not so sure about loving Carmela? Does that mean that...she still has a chance?

"Leila, I know it is selfish of me but-"

"There you are Alpha, I was wondering where you left me to,"

Chapter 28

Carmela's shrill voice fills their ears as she skips into the room.

Leila scoffs, standing up from Tatum's leg. He has been with Carmela since he left, so why did he return to show her affection, to ask her for a complete family?

Why is he toying with her heart like this?

She doesn't even have the strength to fake a smile for Carmela, so she just brushes past her.

"I'm going home, please..." she turns and says to Tatum, the words seem to drain her as they leave her lips, "Please, stay with Carmi tonight."

And don't torture me with any more hope ever again.



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