

## Chapter 30

Despite the bitterness churning in Leila's heart, she puts a placid smile on her face.

"Well, you have always been excellent at everything. Carry on," Leila replies, turning to leave.

Carmela is not half the cook she is, but growing up, Carmela would throw a tantrum and not talk to Leila for days if Leila bested her at anything, whether it was sports, cooking or even academics.

Leila was raised to be humble, not to care much for accolades and to put others first, so she would deliberately falter her efforts, sometimes even secretly helping Carmela out so Carmela would come on top.

As long as her best friend was happy, Leila was happy, nothing else mattered.

"Oh don't leave, I was hoping we could have breakfast together, the three of us," Carmela holds Leila back, glancing at Tatum.

"I have some more errands to run, I'll join you for dinner maybe," Leila replies, gently holding Carmela's hand that is holding her elbow and giving her a small smile.

And just like yesterday, Leila suddenly spaces out, staring at Carmela's bare and smooth arm.

Why does she have no scar?

Leila glances at the identical scar she and Carmela got on their wrists from ten years ago.

They both just woke up to the wound on them and it was the very same night Carmela got the Phoenix mark.

Carmela still has that scar, even after all these years but her arm that was torn open by the rogue's claw has no single trace of a scar?

"Carmi, your arm-" 1

"My chicken! It's going to get burnt," Carmela shrieks, pulling her hand away from Leila and scurrying to the oven.

Leila stares intensely at Carmela as Carmela opens the oven. Something is not right or did she hit her head too hard and imagined Carmela getting hurt?

"Ouch!" Carmela yells, swinging her fingers in pain. She accidentally on purpose grabbed the hot pan without gloves.

"Leila, get some ice," Tatum rushes over to Carmela, taking her hands in his, blowing air over it.

Leila drags her feet to the refrigerator, her heart heavy like lead. Every time Tatum shows affection, care and attention to Carmela in front of her, it feels like he is taking an axe and splitting her heart into two.

In the past, she could bear it, they were just friends, her feelings were hidden, but now, Tatum is her husband and her feelings for him are all over the place.

"Here."

Leila hands the pack of ice to Tatum before wearing the gloves to pull out the grilling pan from the oven but immediately the smell of the grilled chicken wafts into her nose, she feels nauseous and

immediately retches over the chicken.

Carmela screams in horror and Tatum frowns while Leila freezes in shock, her heart thudding slowly. 1

There is no logical explanation for what just happened. Even her cannot explain it, the smell just hit her and she could not hold herself back.

Carmela sneers at her, tears pouring down her angry face. "If you don't want me cooking in your kitchen you could have just said so, why would you do this?" 1

"Leila," Tatum's cold voice makes her heart pound, his emotionless and icy grey eyes sending a chill down her spine. "What is the meaning of this?"

"Tatum I-"

"You ruin everything," Carmela cuts her off in tears. "I woke up so early this morning, despite the fact that I could not get any sleep till late in the night, I wanted everything to be perfect, for us to have breakfast together just like in the p-"

Carmela breaks into a gut wrenching sob and Tatum wraps his arms around her and it feels to Leila like those same arms are squeezing her heart, draining it of its last drop of blood.

She stares blankly at her husband wrapping himself around his true love and pain is such a nice word to describe what her heart is truly feeling. She takes off the gloves and backs away, knowing nothing she does or says can save her from the condemnation to follow. 1

She's almost at the door when Carmela's sharp voice makes her halt.

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"Leila, do you know what I ate for the last two years that I was locked up, after saving you? Tasteless broth....every day I was shackled in silver, every night I was bathed in wolfsbane, I endured torture after torture, torment after torment, many scared and lonely nights but I held on, because I wanted to come home, to my family, to you."

"Yesterday you broke my wrist, today you ruined my food. Are you ever going to accept me? Are you ever going to accept that all I want is to be back home and not to steal Tatum?"

Carmela's strong words hurt Leila and she cannot hide it from her eyes nor the tone of her voice.

"I'm sorry for what you had to go through Carmi, if I could take time back and switch places with you, I gladly would but yesterday and today, none of it was on p-" 1

"That's enough Leila," Tatum cut her off coldly. "A simple apology would have sufficed, just go to your room."

Leila smiles bitterly at him. Once again, he doesn't believe her. Once again, he chooses Carmela over her.

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