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Just as Leila planned, Tatum's back barely touches the bed before he falls asleep, he had already been dozing off in the car on their way back home.

Leila lies, cradled in Tatum's arm for a while but her eyes are wide open , her heart racing with many emotions, her mind clouded with a plethora of thoughts.

She feels comforted being next to Tatum and she would not trade this life for anything else but tonight she drugged him, even if it is for the greater good, she cannot shake off the guilt that is slowly and painfully clawing at her heart.

When she feels Tatum is deeply asleep, she carefully wriggles free from his arms and waves her fingers across his face and Tatum feels it but he doesn't move.

He has never been asleep, although a tad bit drowsy from the effect of the drug.

Right now, he can hear the sound of Leila's heart beating fervently like a drum whose drummer has the intention of beating it till it rips apart.

What is she up to?

He watches with a broken heart as she changes from her gown into a pair of Jean and hoodie, trying his best to keep his eyes as squinted as possible not to let her know he can see her.

Where is she going? Is she sneaking out to meet someone?

Is it Kelvin?



Will he never be enough for her? He gave up finding a cure for his own mate just so he can have an excuse to be with her.

How else does she want him to show her that he is genuine and really wants to keep her by his side forever?

Leila comes closer to the bed and he shuts his eye but he cannot shut out the pain he is going through.

His pregnant wife is sneaking out of his house at night to possibly meet with another man.

This pain is not easy to bear. He is supposed to be the Alpha, the top dog and yet he cannot seem to find a grip on his own wife.

How pathetic.

He feels soft muscle pressing against his cheek, her lips, just as her soft hands run down his hair before she leaves the room.

Pain.....raw, unfiltered, unadulterated and agonising tears through him and it takes all his resolve not to grab her and ask her where she is going to.

They are friends, real friends, even before any of this, if she cannot trust him as her husband, what about as a friend?

He is supposed to feel angry but that feeling is distant, the only thing he can feel is the crippling agony slashing through the heart with reckless abandon.

What is she doing? Why can't she just trust him? He knows he failed her in the past but he wants to do better now.

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Does he follow her to see what she is up to? No, he doesn't want to scare her away.

He only wishes she would let him in, that she will see that he is on her side, he has always been, he will always be.

Tatum stays awake, counting the hours till Leila returns and she opens the doors slowly in the dark, careful not to let it make a sound but when she looks in the direction of the bed, a pair of red eyes are staring directly at her and she yelps, her hand flying to her chest?

How is Tatum awake? How long has he been awake?

She is still wearing her jeans and hoodie? What does she tell him?

Her heart slowly begins to pick up pace when Tatum flicks on the light by the bedpost and his eyes return to normal but they are full of enquiry.

"Did you go for a run, sweet pea?" Tatum asks, massaging his temple and yawning.

"Yes. A run, yes, I went for a run," Leila replies incoherently and Tatum smiles at her.

It breaks his heart to see how easy it is for her to lie to him but he will accept lies all day and night as long as she doesn't leave him.

He never wants to lose her, he can't imagine life without her by his side.

Maybe one day, she will learn to trust him.

"Come," he stretches his hands towards her and she walks up nervously to him, avoiding his gaze.

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He pulls her down into a bear cuddle, kissing her nape and squeezing her tight and he feels greatly relieved that she smells of him and not another man.

Where did she go? She didn't have his smell when she left earlier.

"Don't go for a midnight run without me next time," he whispers softly, "we should do everything as a couple, sweet pea, everything."

'Even the thing you are currently doing without my knowledge,' he says to himself with a broken heart.



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"Yes! That's how you do it!"

Tatum jumps to his feet, fist pumping the air, he jams his hands together with much excitement, chuckling with the look of a proud father in his eyes.

It's another day of the contest and one of his warriors has just taken down another wolf that was almost twice his size in wolf to wolf combat.

"Did you see how he did that?" He asks Leila, touching her shoulders with excitement.

Leila jerks at his touch, like someone jolted out of a trance by his touch. Her body is present there, perhaps her spirit too but her mind is already far gone.

"What? Who did what?" Leila replies, glancing from the bloodied man in the auditorium back to Tatum, looking completely clueless as to what happened.

"Are you okay?" Tatum asks, taking his seat. His peering gaze full of concern.

"I'm fine," Leila replies dismissively.

"Are you su—"

"I said I'm fine Tatum," Leila's voice comes out a bit harsh before it drops an octave lower. "I just want to focus on the match."

"Cool," Tatum smiles sadly at her and he doesn't push her any further.

None of them spoke of that night but something has been different about her since then. He wants to help her, he wants to share in her burden but she doesn't trust him enough to share with him and it really hurts.

'She wants to focus on the match,' she said but she is already completely lost in her own world again, staring into space.

Can he ever get to her?

She doesn't trust him and she doesn't even try to hide it, the fact is like a thorn, slicing deep into his heart causing him immeasurable pain.

Leila looks at the bodies being thrown around in the middle of the arena but she cannot really see anything.

There is nothing wrong with her eyes, it is her mind that has sunk into an abyss of theories of what ifs, some scary to even imagine, some strange to ponder but they all nibble on her mind, urging her to make sense out of it and find the truth.

Curtis found someone who may be able to get in touch with Kelvin for her and she has forwarded the pictures of the files she got from the class A archives to him.

Any moment now, she hopes to hear from him and the anxious waiting is killing her.

Her father was the beta of the blood oak pack, a respected warrior and a high ranking member of the council and yet, the record of his death is almost non-existent.

It's almost like someone did not want him to be remembered or for his death to be investigated.

Her suspicion that Carmela's father might have something to do with her dad's demise feels like a bitter taste on the back of her tongue, a hard pill she doesn't want to swallow.

There is no way her father, the fiercest warrior in the pack would be easily killed by two rogues when he had another strong Beta with him unless Carmela's father did not help or he struck the deadly blow himself.

Right now, she needs to consider everything, he took over as Beta after her father died, his daughter became the phoenix luna almost immediately after and the so called rogues who killed her father were never found, did they even try to find them?

Carmela woke up with a mark on her one day and her father declared it is the mark of the phoenix Luna. The mark is literally a phoenix, how could anyone doubt it?

But the prophecy did not say what the mark would look like, only that the Luna would be born with the mark of a phoenix.

There is so much that doesn't make sense, so much that she needs to figure out.

What if Carmela's mark isn't even the real thing?

Tatum's wolf doesn't even sense her wolf as his mate.

What if she really isn't the phoenix Luna?

That could change everything.

Her phone beeps and she jumps, glancing at Tatum whose eyes are on her but he looks away quickly, an expression she cannot read in his eyes.

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Her heart pounds in her chest both in relief and in worry as she picks up her phone.

Kelvin finally replied to her message but the content of his message defeats everything she had been hoping on.

[Carmela's mark is real. It was confirmed that very day by the pack witch. It is according to the prophecy.]

Leila's brow furrows and she scowls at the text.

She just cannot shake the feeling that something is amiss.

She will officially pay a visit to the pack witch as the Luna and ask her how she confirmed the phoenix mark.

Under oath, the pack witch cannot lie to her Luna.



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