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"Tatum I—"

Tatum shakes his head.

"I don't care why you do it, I really do not want to know."

He cares, he cares all too much, he cares and it hurts beyonds words to see the only woman he has ever loved, his wife, his Luna, sneak out behind him and remain in touch with the one man he has repeatedly told her he doesn't want her to have anything with.

She even forced him to go and save that man's life.

A searing pain burns Tatum's heart and he smiles bitterly at Leila but he doesn't say anything and they both just stare at each other.

Eyes holding mixed and powerful emotions.

Ironically, the other man in his marriage happens to be his wife's fated mate and he is out there, right now, brewing the cure for her, so he can have legal grounds to take Leila away from him and there is nothing that he can do but fold his hand and watch.

The pain he feels is nothing an entire library of encyclopaedias can explain, all the words in all the languages of the world can barely scratch the scratch of the surface, if his pain is to be transcribed into words but this is his cross to bear. ¹

He decided a long time ago when he first set out to get the cure for Leila that he will put her happiness and wholeness above his own selfish interests.





As much as it hurts him, he will not keep her from her fated mate.

If that is what will truly make her happy, then he will cheer for her when she leaves even though he will be crying in his heart.

He only wishes that the little time they may still have together is spent in peace and warmth, perhaps a little love, not this bitterness and strife.

"Leila, listen to me," Tatum finally breaks the deafening silence between them. "As long as you want to remain Luna, you will always be. I told you, I am never letting you go but since you can neither trust me nor my words, I hope you can trust this."

Tatum bares his canine, holds his wrist to his mouth and rips it open, thick crimson liquid with a metallic smell slowly drips down the side of his arms and he closes the distance between them. He places his wounded wrist on her forehead and smears his blood all over it before he plants a kiss on it.

Leila stays completely still, a sharp contrast to her frantically racing heart. She stares at Tatum with mixed emotions in her eyes as he grabs her wrist and bites it open, then smears her blood on his own forehead.

Her heart pounds even harder.

Tatum is binding his promise to her with the sacred blood oath?

Alpha's only bind their words in blood to another Alpha or his pack and even generations to come are forced to keep the oath.

Does he really desire her that much?

She stands on her toes and kisses his forehead as Tatum licks her wound,

sending electrifying sparks through her, making Leila drop her gaze to meet his, feeling something she cannot explain and somehow she can hear their hearts beat in sync.

"I hope you can find peace in my blood oath to you. You are and will remain my Luna. I will not break my oath."

Peace....

She cannot really have peace as long as Carmela is out there, scheming and looking for ways to hurt her and take Tatum away from her and she sees beyond a doubt now that Tatum means his promise to never let her go.

Binding himself to her with a blood oath is more than enough to tell her that his love for her runs deep. She wonders if, like his mother's first love, Tatum can reject Carmela for her.

If she is really going to have peace, Tatum must know and see the truth about Carmela. As long as he is in the blind, this will always be a constant problem between them.

"Carmela also accused me of hiring the assassin, I will not mar her name but you must let me clear my name, let me investigate this myself," Leila replies in a calmer tone, pulling slightly away from Tatum.

"Let it go, no one will bring up the matter against you."

"But it will remain in their hearts and will be murmured from their lips. What about the Iron claw pack? I am accused of an attempt to assassinate their Luna, they will not let the matter rest, they will seek justice and preventing it may lead to a civil war."

"I know that," Tatum replies curtly. "Clayton is already on it, someone is



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trying to sabotage our pack, taking advantage of the rift between you and Carmela, we will get to the root of it."

Leila frowns.

Clayton is Carmela's puppet, letting him handle the investigation is the same thing as putting a gun in Carmela's hands and placing her head on the target.

Carmela will not miss that shot.

"I'm joining him in the investigation. As Luna, I have first rights to defend myself from an accusation like this," Leila replies in a finite tone.



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