

# Tasting Darkness

Chapter 156

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Read Taming Darkness By Jessica Hall Book 3

Chapter 31 – Tobias

It wasn't like I was a master of Aleera's Phoenixes, but I could tell?

when they were acting strange. Wild, uncontrollable, and absolutely dismissive of everything that happened around them. They'd never acted this way before.

I didn't want to put my theory to the test, but at this point, I believed that they saw everything and everyone as a possible threat.

Since we didn't have Aleera with us, they weren't even going to pretend to be under any sort of control.

I wasn't the only one that noticed the difference in them, either. Until these creatures found their place, their home, the fire in them would continue to rage. The only way to calm them would be finding her.

When we set off on our journey, the animals seemed to settle, almost. They were still crazy wild birds that acted as if they'd just broken out of a hunter's trap and had to find their escape. They were an unstoppable army that could blaze through any obstacle in their way, and I didn't want to be one of those obstacles.

The Phoenixes were just as beautiful as they were terrifying. A force to reckon with, just like our mate. They complemented each other perfectly.

The bubble of my thoughts and admiration was violently broken when the Phoenixes changed direction in the sky, wheeling off to a whole new area, and I finally understood that I had to pay more attention to them. It hit me like a bag of bricks. These beautiful, magnificent creatures were taking us to Aleera, showing us the way to get back to her side. And I would be d\*mned if I was going to lose track of them.

There was no way to check if they knew where they were going or not, this was a test of faith, and we followed after them blindly.

No matter how long or hard the trek was, we were going to get to her.

We had to find her as fast as possible before it was all too late.

None of us could predict what that crazy old hag had planned for our mate. She had already proven time and time again that she had no values such as family, and she couldn't give a sh\*t about her daughter. The only reason Aleera had been taken was a simple one – the power.

Lidia wouldn't even bat an eye if she decided to kill Aleera. She couldn't. The emotions inside that withered frame had died long ago, and now she was the personification of greed, sick, intense, and deadly.

I never took Lidia as someone that acted as an adult should. Instead, she reminded me of a child in a candy shop, she wanted it all. Every sort of candy she could get her sticky fingers on, it didn't matter who it belonged to. All she knew how to do was take, steal, and demand.

The witch was more than willing to use whatever means she needed in order to force others to their knees and for her to get what she wanted. She had a legion of devoted followers, blinded by her fake shell. She could do so much with

all that she had at her fingertips with their help, but it was never enough.

Even as my thoughts dived deeper into my hatred, I also hated myself. Why was that b\*tch able to overtake my thought process?

It was far too easy how she wormed her way into my brain and how d\*mn hard it was to shove her out.

I hated how that woman managed to overtake my thought process. I hated how easily she could implant herself in my mind and

how darn hard it was to forget about her existence.

For now, I had to focus on Aleera and her safety. On her raging beasts, that led us closer to where Lidia took her. D\*mn it, I

hoped we weren't going there too late. She had to be safe, she had to be alive.

We needed her. I needed her.

Time slipped by, and it was almost impossible to keep track of where we were or what time of day it was.

But once the Phoenixes stopped, nothing else mattered. It was finally time for action. We would get our mate out of the hell her mother had thrust her inside, and we would get our revenge.

That was... odd. The place we'd been brought was none other than Aleera's old house, the location of it anyway. There was no

house, no building, nothing but a large empty field, but the birds seemed excited.

“Where is she?” Darius roared, startling all of us, and even the Phoenixes shot him a glare. They didn’t care his face was beet red, and his breathing had become loud and heavy. Anyone that didn’t know him would be scared to death if they saw him like this.

“F\*\*\*ked if I know!” Lycus joined in, equally as p\*ssed as Darius.

They both looked around, scowling at their surroundings.

I understood their rage, I really did, but someone had to be the voice of reason. I growled deeply at them and pinned them with

my gaze. “Shut up! We’re here to find out where Aleera is, not argue about a f\*\*\*king building we burned down years ago! The

Phoenixes brought us here for a reason.

Besides, focus, can’t you feel her? Because I sure can, and so could you if you didn’t let your anger control your senses!”

My rage seemed to get through to them because they all focused on the empty lot. Their eyes widened once they finally understood what I already knew. Aleera was close. We couldn’t see her, but she was just out of reach.

It's why the Phoenixes circled through the air. They felt her too. They were searching for any trace of their mistress.

I exchanged wary glances with my mates. We knew what we had to do. There was no need for long-drawn-out plans. We split off, and each searched a different area, cutting it into pieces and each of us combing through our own for whatever we could find in this vast empty space.

So desperate were we that we counted the d\*mn rocks, just in case moving any of them would open a hidden door. Her b\*tch of a mother had brought Aleera here, and though we still couldn't find a sign of her, there was no doubt that we were in the same area as her.

That b\*tch was smart, as much as I hated to give her any sort of compliment. She always calculated every move she made and acted almost on instinct. She'd hidden Aleera somehow.

My mates were still frantically trying to find a way to bring us closer to her, but no one had been successful. My eyes returned to the Phoenixes, the ones that led us here. If there was a way to get to her, they would know, but there was a set of them that

hadn't moved from their previous positions.

"Guys?" I called out. My eyes were glued on the blazing monsters that presented themselves as if celebrating. They'd found something, that had to be it!

The birds huddled together before they glowed, heat rolled off of them, and it wasn't possible for us to get any closer. They

blasted the place with their magic, and the force of it nearly threw me to my feet. The boom of unleashed magic was deafening.

They were screaming for her, calling her to give them a sign of how they could find their way back to her. Demanding that she let them in, and they refused to wait or waste any more time than we already had.

The Phoenixes got even louder, if such a thing was possible, and visibly more violent. My mates put their hands to their heads to shut off the cries, but beyond all that, something else caught my attention.

I took a step closer and squinted my eyes. With another flick of their massive wings, there it was again. Look, there," I pointed in the direction they were watching.

((It was hazy at first, like we were staring at it through a mirage, as extreme heat was between us and it. It was just a flicker, but I

could make it out. Aleera's old house. We were watching the building through what appeared to be a new portal the birds had seemingly ripped open.

"Motherf\*\*\*ker!" I hissed in anger, kicking the rocks under my feet.

Darius took a place next to me and put his hand on my shoulder, his fingers curling around it to stop me.

"Lidia is good, better than I gave her credit for. Imagine protecting a house by throwing it in a different realm just to keep us away from our mate."

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Chapter 32 – Darius

The phoenixes circled above, jolting the veil between the dimensions, which this place was shielded by. Now Tobias had pointed it out, I could feel the low vibration all around the place, feel the veil like a pulse. We just had to figure out how to drop it. The

b\*tch was going to regret this move of hers, it gave us the element of surprise. Lidia had shielded it from the world, but that also meant she had shielded everyone else from this dimension.

We just needed the power to bring down the shield and send enough energy into it to open the portal.

Wards only went so far,

which made me wonder what exactly she used to keep this never ending charge going.

— I examined the translucent veil. The shimmer of it was easy to spot now that we knew what we were dealing with thanks to the

Phoenixes. We had a lot of power, but it would be foolish to use it all at once and burn through it.

We needed to conserve as much as possible because we had no idea if Aleera could feel us or not. She gave us as much power as the bond would allow her to transmit to us, but it was nowhere near enough to bring this veil dividing the two realms down.

If I was at full power, I would be more than enough to handle this issue by myself. But now, even with all of us, we weren't strong enough in our current state. My eyes lifted back to the still-circling phoenixes.

They had the power, unlimited power through regenerating their lifespans, but there was no way to harness it without her, or

them willingly giving it to us. What exactly was powering the veil, and what would we have to do to breakz it? would we have to

do to break it? Tobias and Lycus scanned the ground, searching for a power source or anything that might be a ward, yet I knew they wouldn't find anything.

Lidia didn't survive this long like a c\*\*\*roach, by leaving a map behind to locate her. We needed something to drain its power, or overwhelm the source.

If we could somehow control something like a solar flare, that might possibly do the trick, but I had no idea how to conjure up something like that. In the distance, Kalen also stared up at the birds. Ryze dropped out of formation not too far from him, and it made him jump.

He watched the bird, and Ryze stared right back. I dragged my attention away from them and forced myself to focus. There had to be a solution to this, and I needed to figure it out, fast. "Nothing," Tobias huffed, wandering over to my side.

He glanced over at Kalen as he interacted with Ryze. Lycus joined us, watching Kalen and Ryze before tipping his head back and studying the birds. "We need their help, but without her, there's no way to control the flock." He shuddered at how close Kalen was to one of her lethal pets. "Maybe I can try to absorb it," I suggested. "Are you insane?"

Tobias demanded, turning on me. "We don't even know what is powering this."

Even your incubus side has limits on what it can absorb. What do you plan to do if they can't charge it? What if whatever is powering this thing between realms is more than you can handle?" I scowled.

"Well, do you have a better idea? I can try to siphon it, while they charge. It might be enough to break through it." "We did not

come all this way to save her just to lose you. Aleera would be furious if you went and killed yourself trying to get her out, Tobias

snarled, his eyes turning a dark shade of crimson.

"It's the only plan we've got right now!" I snapped right back. "Maybe not," Lycus mused. He took a step towards Kalen who had abandoned his convening with Ryze and was hunting for a way to drop the veil.

Lycus hummed with whatever plan he'd come up with. I was proud of him, but a little worried what he might say. "What are you

thinking?" "Kalen...he can manipulate our auras, our intentions," he pointed at Kalen and my eyes widened.

I hadn't expected that from our resident pretty face. Yet Lycus knew more about Kalen's magic than Kalen did. "What if he can

manipulate the Phoenixes, show them his intentions and what we need from them?" Lycus continued, still surprising me with his burst of a good idea.

"They won't allow a Dark-Fae to control them," Tobias argued, Phoenixes didn't answer to Dark Fae. They only tolerated us for her, their loyalty was to Aleera.

However, Kalen hadn't always been Dark-Fae and neither had I. Some part of me knew they could sense that through her, so maybe it really could work. "Ryze!" I called, and her head turned to look at me.

She opened her wings, flapping them twice before riding the breeze and dropping in front of us. She squ\*wked in my face, beak snapping. They were all on edge, restless for their Queen.

"Aleera," I simply told her, and she tilted her head, such smart birds that they recognized our language, I just needed her to convince the other's to allow Kalen to manipulate them.

I turned my wrist up to show her, tapping my infinity mark. "We need power," I point up, then at Kalen.

Her head followed my finger and considering she didn't try to bite it, I took it to mean she was paying attention.

Ryze though was far different from the others, she was as much ours as Aleera, though would turn on us without thought for Aleera. However, Ryze wasn't the head of the flock. Spark is, her father.

Kalen glanced over when I pointed him out before wandering over to us through the long grass.

"What's going on?" he asked.

"We need you to manipulate their auras," I explained, as Ryze observed her. "I haven't got the power to do that, and I..."

Kalen pauses, looking at Ryze. Her bird-like eyes watching him. Sh\*t, he was right. We still needed magic. "And I don't think I can use it on an animal," he finally said. I nodded in agreement. "Your father," I grabbed Ryze's beak, turning her attention to me.

Magic."

I explain to her, before pointing to each of us. Ryze watches, trying to understand what I am saying to her. She ruffled her feathers, her tail cutting through the air like a frustrated cat.

(( "Magic," Tobias repeated, tapping his wrist. She c\*\*ked her head to the side, observing him, before her tongue flicked out, licking his cheek. He sighed, shaking his head. In return, she screeched loudly in his face.

“This is pointless, you want to p\*ss them off?” Tobias shrugged. I tried to think. “She doesn’t understand, she’s juvenile, and I am not p\*ssing off Spark.” he clarified. I chewed my lip. We had no choice.

Ryze hopped along on the grass, as I stormed past her, scanning the ground for anything that would help us. “Darius!” Tobias snapped at me. “We need Spark. He’ll understand!” I snap with a growl.

“Are you f\*\*king insane? He could fly down and rip you to pieces!” Lycus objected, tossing his arms up in the air. He was right.

The Phoenixes weren’t in the right frame of mind. They wanted their Queen, their mother. And we were not her.

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Chapter 158

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Chapter 33 – “We need them. Aleera sent them back to us for a reason. She meant for them to help us. If we can get them to open a portal, and get the recruits here.” “We still won’t have enough power,” Lycus grumbles. “We will if we convince her Phoenixes to charge us,” I argue. “I can break this veil, but I need magic!” I growl at them, scooping up a rock. I tossed it in the air, catching it, looking for the giant f\*\*ker.

Ryze hissed at me, Tobias and Lycus both backed up simultaneously as Ryze opened her wings.

Spotting Spark flying into the center, hovering as he commanded his flock, I took aim before throwing the rock, blasting it with what power I did have, to push it high enough to reach him. However, Spark moved, and it missed him. The bird didn't even notice the sk\*pping rock. Seconds later, talons tore into my back.

Ryze squ\*wked in rage, thinking I was attacking her father. I swatted her, holding my hand out as she tumbled off my back, and I am thrown forward as she jolted me. "F\*\*\*k!" Tobias hissed. He waved his arms and rushed at her when she went to pounce on me again. "Bl\*\*dy bird." I snapped. I point to Spark, only to find him peering down at his daughter. Ryze screeched, the sound making me clutch my ears.

Tobias waved his arms, warding her off, trying to calm her down. "Settle girl." Tobias cooed and she huffs while Tobias calms her.

Not that it mattered, her screeching drew the attention of her father.

He stared down at us before tucking his wings to his body and dived straight toward us, using his body like a torpedo. Spark was

going at a speed faster than lightning, it was hard to focus on him.

His body pulled up just feet from the ground as he landed, impressively, on his feet with his wings outstretched. I backed up as

he hissed at me, and Tobias turned. Ryze was one thing, but Spark was no juvenile Phoenix.

Spark stalked me and I held my hands up. "We aren't hurting her, just trying to get your attention!" I yelled at the beast of a bird,

Ryze hopped away to his side while Spark cawed loudly, and I cursed when he dropped his head and charged at me with wide open beak and wings open.

Yet before he reached me, Kalen tossed himself between me and the bird. His hands were outstretched, glowing black with the shadows. Spark reared back, and he snapped at Kalen's trembling hand, his fear writhed through the bond and I gripped his

hips, readying myself to toss him aside if needed.

"Easy, Kalen," I growled. Kalen took a hesitant step toward Spark, his shadows slivering up his arms and dancing between his

fingers. "We don't want to hurt her." Kalen tells Spark. Spark snapped his beak mere inches from Kalen's hand again, and he sucked in a desperate breath."

Aleera!" Kalen yelled furiously at him. Her name seemed to get his attention. Spark c\*\*ked his head to the side and Ryze nipped at her father's tail feathers, his wing batting her back, telling her to move away from us.

"Aleera!" Tobias repeated Kalen's words. Spark turned his head as Tobias stepped forward. He held up his wrist. "We need magic!" Tobias stressed to him, tapping his wrist. Spark shook out his feathers backing up before nudging Ryze, and they took off.

Kalen snarled, and reached down before I could stop him and smashed Spark in between his shoulder blades with a rock. His wings opened instantly, and the bird pivoted, rearing up. I yanked Kalen back, only for him to turn and shove me.

"He'll listen," Kalen insisted, just as Spark charged at him. Instead of turning away, Kalen ran at him too. Tobias screamed, darting after Kalen. Spark tackled Kalen, sending him tumbling to the ground.

Beside me, Lycus shifted, prepared to take on the massive Phoenix. Spark screeched, scratching at Kalen's face with his razor

sharp claws. Kalen rolled away and Spark tried to stab him with his beak. Kalen grabbed the bird by the beak, and the Phoenix jolted as the shadows touched him. He tried to blast Kalen back with his own power, but Kalen gripped the feathers on either side of his head.

Spark stiffened and stopped his attack entirely. "Aleera!" Kalen screamed in the bird's face. Spark rustled his feathers, his eyes glowing, and the animal backed away.

Tobias was at Kalen's side instantly, dragging him up while Lycus' growled, stalking the Phoenix in his wolf form as the creature backed up before he took flight.

"Well, great, that worked, and I lost another set of pants!" Lycus huffed when he shifts back. "F\*\*king d\*mn near sh\*t my f\*\*king pants too," he growled.

I shook my head, trying to think of something else. Tobias was dusting Kalen off with his hand, scolding him for being stup\*d. The sky darkened as a storm appeared out of nowhere, and the Phoenixes flew into the wind.

Spark's mighty roar filled the sky and in unison, the Phoenixes sang to his chorus, power zapped and sparked between them

when they all suddenly dived and swooped toward us.

“Hold your ground,” Kalen snapped at me, and my attention darted to him to find his eyes had turned TTM white.

Whatever he did to Spark, Spark was allowing him to manipulate them, his eyes returned to normal when I was blasted with a

surge of electricity, and magic by Spark then Ryze.

The force making me stumble back only to be blasted with another jolt.

The birds took turns hitting us and powering us up.

Magic surged through my veins by the time they were done. Tobias instantly

opened a portal to Astrid, and Lycus shifted and ran through it to alert our men.

“Turns out I can manipulate a Phoenix,” Kalen chuckled, as my fingers tingle, power flowed in my veins as I feel through the

bond an echo of Aleera sharing hers. I flexed, testing its strength as it twisted and transformed inside me, bleeding into my

essence, before I looked up at the veil with new determination.

Our men filed out taking their stances moving around the shield ready to fight for their Queen.

Rubbing my hands together, the

tendrils of darkness slipped from my fingertips just as Spark roared above me, and once again the Phoenixes blasted the shield at the same time I did.

The moment the veil flickers turning solid briefly veil flickers, turning solid briefly, our men didn't hesitate to touch it, blasting it

with their own power. ) I unleash some more of the magic and start absorbing the shield.

I took on its energy, recycling it by sending it straight back into the veil.

It cr\*cks under the pressure before shattering like a glass when the pressure became too much and it erupts, we are hit with its

shockwave, yet my feet remain planted on the ground as the veil between realms disintegrated.

The sky pixelated as it burst, revealing something I never thought I would lay eyes on again.

Aleera's old lay eyes on again. Aleera's old house, and hundreds of startled power-hunters. We broke the veils between realms

and I smirked at their horrified faces, cracking my neck, Lycus shifted, the Phoenixes dove. Tobias wandered back over to me.

"Now let's f\*\*k sh\*t up!" He laughed.

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Chapter 34 – Aleera

My mind became lost to the dream walk with my mates. It was so real, I almost felt like I could reach out and touch them, to share the joy that vibrated through them. I was consumed by the emotion until I felt the very ground shake, and the walls cracked around me. Cr\*\*ks zipping up the walls and making holes to the cells next door. Not large enough to get into, but enough for me to see my terrified neighbor.

I looked up at the ceiling, dust sprinkling over me, and my eyes darted to the other Fae locked in their cells. The power of my mates flared through the bond, my infinity mark was glowing, lit up bright and burning against me they were coming for me.

The tremors are violent, murmurs and panicked cries ring out as the Harmony Fae worry the roof would cave in. Now or never,

now it is. The time for my mother having the upper hand, or even thinking she still had it, was over.

I would not allow her to use me for her tyrannical plans, or risk my unborn child's life in the process.

This little game of hers was

over, I was ending it was ending it. Porter hadn't bothered chaining me down again, so getting out wasn't difficult, it was as easy

as sending surges of electric current to disable the cell's locks.

My neighbor jerked to attention, and watched me with wide eyes. I would get all the Harmony-Fae out of this hellish prison, we would all unite and fight our way to freedom, stopping my mother in her tracks. The time for waiting was over.

I sent more power into the cell door, and the surge traveled not just to my cell, but up and down the entire line. The moment each lock undid, the digital panels controlling their collars exploded.

The collars they wore to disable their magic fell to the ground. Alarms blared as every single door slid open. One by one, the Harmony-Fae eased themselves out of their cells, almost not believing that their nightmare was about to come to an end finally.

They looked towards me, or so I thought, until a stampede of feet rushed our way. Based on the odor that drifted to us, I could tell what we were dealing with long before they showed their ugly hideous faces. Those Theor ugly, hideous faces. Those zombie like power hunters my mother used before were preparing to mob us.

If only she knew that little trick of hers wasn't going to work on me, nor would it on the rest of the Harmony Fae who were preparing themselves for what was coming next. – The first set of power-hunters stumbled near me, and I smirked as fire danced on my fingertips as I tossed it at their chests. The flames were so hot they were blinding, the scorching flames traveled from one monster to the other, setting an entire squad of them ablaze. 20 Somewhere behind these brutes, I was positive my mother waited. Knowing her and how she thought, I'm sure she probably figured they could handle me, and she could just swoop in to pick up the pieces before they killed me. My wings rippled along my back, yet there wasn't enough room to spread and open them, however as I flexed the muscles of my back, feathers appeared with a mere thought, and reaching my hand back, I plucked them off, and I tossed them like daggers at my enemies, determined to cut down their numbers and pull that psychotic b\*tch out from wherever she was hiding. I would turn this entire place into ruins, along with her network of power hunters.

The battle I was waging must have given those Harmony-Fae around me motivation. Wisps of power flooded the hall as fireballs slammed into more of the zombie power hunters, setting them aflame.

Lightning cracked through the air and bolts slammed through some of the heads of the brainless minions.

The wind whistled

around me as a group of the hunters were gathered together, and another fireball consumed them.

The Harmony-Fae were fighting back with a new-found hope. No longer restrained inside the confines of their cells, their power

no longer disabled by the shackles around their necks.

They rallied together, throwing their attacks with more and more enthusiasm as they saw the zombies fall one after another. I

needed to get to my so-called mother before the slimy b\*tch slipped away in the midst of the chaos.

All of these lies, death and destruction started with her, and I would make d\*mned sure it ended with her too. Under no

circumstances would she get away this time, I would use all my power to ensure she didn't slink off into the shadows to keep

plotting for a way to bring about mine and my mates' downfall.

All for the sake of her insatiable greed and hunt for power. This ended today. The hunters fell to me and my razor sharp wings, the feathers shot through their bodies, like a hot knife through butter, doing devastating damage. I cleared out a path in the – direction I'd seen my mother retreat I made it to the stairs and hurried up them to the next level, finally having enough room to move effortlessly. Turning a corner, I froze when I come to an area full of science labs. Porter was on the ground in a lab coat with all kinds of vials surrounding his hands, trying to stem his bleeding. He wasn't moving very quickly, and at first glance, I assumed him dead. I stepped around him, and he let out a breath, startling me and stopping me in my tracks. Looking down, his hand reached for my foot. Blood spilled from his eyes, ears, nose and mouth. "Wait," he gasped out, his voice shaking as he did so. "I know I don't deserve your kindness or your pity, what I've done..." he trailed off and shuddered, he coughed up a dark red, almost black blood clot that reeked of chemicals. "You were right.

It was all Lidia. She set the first plague with your father. Here, take these. It is all the proof you will need for the council.” I dropped my gaze to see what he was clutching so hard – two vials in his shaking hand. Crouching down next to him, I gently took them and turned them around to study them. My brows furrowed. This... couldn’t be real. But there, in bold writing, one was labeled the first plague, and the second one had my name on it, and it was obvious this was not from the spinal fluid sample.

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Chapter 35 – Putting a hand to my lips, I gasped. I was the cure. The way to stop the plagues all along. Darius may have created the first plague, but I created the cure. Porter snatched my wrist, “Please, take care of Lycus. Tell him I’m sorry,” he whispered through blackened lips. “I was never the husband his mother deserved, or the father I should have been to him.” He took a pained breath, wincing. More blood spewed from his mouth and down his chin, and he groaned in pain. It was obvious, whatever my mother had done,

he was causing immense suffering. There was so much blood, I couldn't figure out how he was possibly alive.

Had he held onto life to give me these vials? I stared down at the man that had caused so much pain and suffering and instead

of the hatred that usually licked away at my insides, I found pity. I held my hand near his head.

"I'll take care of him," I promised. Porter let out a breath and nodded his head weakly, closing his eyes. "I know I don't deserve it, but I'm sorry." Porter mumbled, his hands twitched as his muscles spasmed.

(( He would never forgive me," Porter choked out.

"Maybe in another lifetime you can make it up to him," I whisper, it was clear

he was terrified of dying. "I don't want Lycus to do it... I don't want it on his soul. I have caused him enough pain.

He will feel obligated, I know my son.." I understood what he meant, if I walked away and left him and Lycus learned he was

down here suffering, he would come down to put him out of his misery.

"I understand if you won't, you owe me nothing,"

Porter rasped, spraying me in blood. I wasn't sure how much longer he could

hold on, but it was obvious his magic hadn't burned out, and he was trying to heal himself.

I cupped his cheek with my hand. "I don't think I can heal you without bonding you to me," "I'm not asking that, I am asking you to kill me," he said, opening his eyes and looking at me. "

Don't make him do it, he hates me, but I know deep inside, he still loves Why else would he come running every time I

summoned him?" He coughed and I nodded. I knew mostly for Kalen, but part of him longed for his father, he had no reason to do as his father asked once he was with Darius and Tobias.

I let out a shaky breath and nod. "I don't like you, but I forgive you, >> I told him, holding up the vials to show him that I had them safely. "Do you think Lycus may one day forgive me?" He said it with a deep sigh, the way a condemned man whispers right before their sentence is carried out.

I tilt my head to the side, watching him. "Maybe, maybe when he forgives himself for not saving her," I whispered and his tears send blood streaking his cheek. "Thank you," he choked out before closing his eyes. I summoned my magic. I couldn't let him

suffer.

He deserved to, but he was Lycus' father and his remorse was enough for me to end him quickly. Fire spiraled from my hand and consumed him, turning him into ash on the spot. I sighed, glancing down at the black spot his body left. Tucking the vials away into my pocket, I straightened and looked away from what used to be Lycus' father. Nothing would sway me from my mission to find my mother and put an end to this chaos all around me.

On the floor below, the power hunters' screams were being cut off one-by-one. I almost wished I was downstairs to watch the Harmony Fae taking their revenge on those who had tormented them. From the sounds of it, none of the hunters would be making it up the stairs.

Yet as I took in my surroundings, eyes searching, I spotted her. There was their Queen, darting out of another room far down the hall. She was running, a case clutched for dear life in her hand. Something, I wouldn't let her leave with. I tore off after her, my footsteps echoing down the hall. "Lidia!" I screamed, almost roared at her with all the anger and hatred that was compressed inside. She froze in place and her head jerked as she saw me.

“Aleera! Come with me,” she offered with a wide grin. “We can rule together!” She was definitely more insane than I’d ever imagined if she thought I was going to fall for this. Me, join her? Never, even if she somehow brainwashed me, I would off myself before I would fall prey to her. “I will never join you, Lidia. You had me not because you wanted me, a child to love, but because you wanted a weapon to exact your revenge and lust for power. I was just a means to an end for you.” A shadow flitted across her face, making her appear dark and sinister. “You would pick them over me?” she spat the words out at me. “His kind are the reason the Seraphim are no more! He is the reason the plague killed all the light Fae! You would still choose him knowing all that?” “No,” the word boomed out of me and for a second her c\*\*\*y confidence wavered, I got to see her fear. “Darius never started the plague. You and my father used him, just like you used me. All of this the plague and what came of it was to settle an age-old score and so you could sit on the ultimate seat of power. All of this time you knew I was the cure, and

you wanted to use that and dangle me about like some toy.

I will always choose my mates above you, especially Darius.” My words struck home. Pure hatred flashed in her eyes and she

screamed like a possessed banshee before charging straight at me. I stopped her mid-lunge, holding her in place with my magic.

Her eyes were wide, clearly she wasn't expecting this.

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