

Tasting Darkness

Chapter 121

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Read Tasting Darkness [Tempting Darkness] By Jessica Hall Book 2 Chapter 38 – It was the day Lycus met Kalen, the day

Kalen's bully beat him almost to death. Lycus' blood boiled as he watched for a few seconds before intervening, the rage inside

him was like an erupting volcano. Grew hotter and hotter as the memories of his father standing over his mother and beating her

to death returned to the forefront of his mind.

He couldn't save her, but he could protect the boy being pummeled by someone much older. So that was what he did. Lycus's

protective nature I watched grew to obsession.

Kalen became his personal project to keep safe. Not only from the other kids but also from the teachers.

Kalen was the weakest of the Fae. Lycus should have been like him, a dark Fae. And he couldn't bear watching the helplessness

on his face, the same helplessness he felt tied to that tree muzzled and unable to fight back. Kalen distracted him and kept him intrigued as he watched who everyone called the strange boy, the outcast.

Yet as he watched Kalen, he realized he was the strongest of all. There was something odd about Kalen, something dark and hidden, and for years Lycus watched over him waiting for him to come into his own, only for him to remain the same.

It was odd seeing Kalen from Lycus's perception, he saw so much more than we did, saw a different side of Kalen I was yet to witness myself. A darker side that was destructive and dangerous, so much worse than I could have even known without his memories becoming mine.

Something drew him to Kalen as if they were magnets, destined to collide on the same collision course. Lycus believed his growing feelings for Kalen were wrong until he no longer cared, and Kalen became his world, his infatuation.

They were on their own, it wasn't much longer after they escaped the orphanage. They were living on the streets and in a

dangerous neighborhood. Sleeping behind a dumpster one night by a busy nightclub. Some drunken men stumbled up the alleyway.

Lycus tenses because there was something familiar about the scent he could smell. He believed he was being paranoid and shook the feeling away until one of the men stopped to urinate on the dumpster they were sleeping next to.

Lycus eyed the man disgusted as he pi***ed on the ground. He growled and the man jolted clearly not seeing they were there.

Yet his startled expression turned to a sneer as he looked them over. Kalen was fast asleep, unaware of the danger that surrounded them. The man was grubby, his light blue shirt stained and he quickly zips himself up and steps back.

“Look what I found?” he called out to his friends down the alleyway making Kalen jolt and wake up, he rubs his eyes as Lycus moves to get in front of him in a crouched position ready to shift. Kalen falls to the side not expecting Lycus’s abrupt movement.

Lycus growls as footsteps draw closer and Lycus’ body twists, snaps, and breaks as the shift begins to take over.

He would kill the man that dared try to touch Kalen. Yet before the shift took over the other three stepped forward and Lycus, stunned by his fear, froze as he set his eyes upon a man that starred in his nightmares for years. His father. His blood ran cold at the sight of him and his father looked at him as if he was the sc**m of the earth.

“Leave them, Patrick,” his father told the man in the blue shirt, not even acknowledging him. Yet the drunken man was looking for a fight and launched toward Lycus making me realize he too was were -fae. Bl**dy thirsty and lived for a good fight or hunt.

Lycus doesn't hesitate to toss himself in front of Kalen to attack the man. Lycus took him down easily and his father watched with no expression at all, clearly impressed that Lycus was able to take down a wolf twice his size and without so much as looking exerted.

Yet when his father whistles loudly, he realizes he was calling for more of his buddies until the alleyway turned into some makeshift fight club. Yet as time dragged Lycus grew weary and he realized his mistake. By defending Kalen his father knew had

leverage against him. A way to use him and as three more circled men came into the alley and surrounded him he looked at Kalen in panic as his father moved toward him, where Kalen rocked with his hands over his ears having a full-blown panic attack.

Violence was never Kalen's thing, nothing scared him more. He grabs Kalen by his hair making him cry out, yet Lycus was too far and surrounded. Yet that moment of distraction as he met Kalen's petrified eyes earned him a knife to the stomach as the demonic-fae plunged and piping hot glowing dagger into him. He howled, swiping at him as his blood spilled out onto the asphalt.

The scream that left Kalen also distracted him as he turned to check him when the two other Were -fae jumped him, tearing into him.

Lycus knew death was coming he didn't care, the only thing he cared for was Kalen who was screaming as his father started dragging him down the alleyway.

"Kill him," His father told the other men. "I will get a good amount for this one," he tells the men attacking Lycus. Yet hearing that

seemed to flip some sort of switch inside Kalen. And his father shrieked. He had no idea what Kalen had done, too focused on trying to remain alive as they tore into him. Yet when one of the were-fae whimpers and lets his neck go, the next one wails giving Lycus sight of what was going on. His eyes instantly searched the alley for Kalen, yet he wasn't by his father who stared off behind Lycus horrified. Lycus sta****ers to his feet in a panic looking for Kalen yet when he finds him, he is just as horrified as his father when a flash goes off making him twist his head to look at his father to see his phone in hand pointed at Kalen. Lycus' head turns back to Kalen, who seems almost possessed as he meanders toward the three men. The air around him thickened, the energy rippled and Lycus felt like he was suddenly suffocating in every bad emotion. Despair like he never felt before made him whimper, sadness so strong it broke his heart into a million pieces. Kalen's skin ripples as black veins slivered across his bare arms and feet, he steps closer the aura emanating from him grew thicker, harsher,

colder and that was when he realized what Kalen's gifts were, he was an empath and a strong one. Instead of feeling other's emotions, he forces them over the men that attacked him.

Empaths were never considered dangerous, they usually channeled emotion, and they didn't use it as a weapon. Lycus didn't even realize it was possible as he watched Kalen force it over them as if it were an emotional cast, not a physical one.

The men start clawing at themselves, clawing at their faces, their skin shredding it to stop the cold ache of the depression moving through them, Kalen was touching them, yet whatever he was doing was making them suicidal as they tore themselves

apart, one man started slamming his head into the concrete, bashing his own brains in the hard floor.

The demonic-fae set himself alight, becoming an inferno and the last one clawed his own face off and ripped out his own throat.

Kalen killed them without so much as laying a finger on them, using magic that was considered harmless yet in the right hands could be used as a weapon.

When the last man falls, so does Kalen as he exhausts himself and collapses to the ground. Lycus limps over to him before hearing his father take off. Yet when the sound of sirens reached his ears, Lycus knew what would become of Kalen.

Fae authorities would investigate and once they learned what Kalen did he would be shipped off.

One thing the fae authorities and the council didn't like was power that was unknown because they couldn't control it or know how to defend against it. He would become a science experiment and a lab rat. And Lycus wouldn't stand for that.

So he forced the shift, forced his bones to realign, and screamed out when they did. His injuries not wanting to heal, and even with a broken ankle. Lycus leaned down, scooped him up, and tossed him over one shoulder, burning magic he shouldn't have,

he opened a portal and stepped into a dark park. Behind some seedy strip club.

Three days Kalen was out for three days Lycus kept watch and never left his side. Yet when Kalen woke he looked around in panic.

“How did we get here?” Kalen asked, clutching his head. “I had the strangest dream,” Kalen mutters and Lycus watches him.

“You don’t remember?” Lycus asks him and he could see the lost expression on his face.

“Did you get a chance to speak to the owner of the laundromat?” Kalen asked. That was last week and Lycus realized Kalen had not only no memory of that night but had lost almost an entire week.

“Yeah she hired someone else,” Lycus tells him. Kalen seemed confused as he took in his surroundings. So Lycus never mentioned that night but it made Lycus wonder if Kalen knew what he was capable of. So he kept it to himself.

Yet Lycus noticed though, that the longer he went without his meds the stronger his aura got, the more unstable he got, and the more depressed. So he walked into the strip club and asked for a job.

The manager told him Kalen could work the kitchens but he wanted Lycus on the floor. Lycus hated the idea, hated the idea of not having Kalen within sight. Yet after the first week, he had enough to put Kalen on his medication again. Worried that if he lost

control like he did that night it would have him noticed by the authorities that Lycus would be powerless to stop.

Yet Kalen's medication was extremely expensive when his father found him, once again. His father waited until his shift was over and Lycus did his best to ignore his presence. He knew Kalen was safe out the back in the kitchens, he just hoped Kalen didn't stumble out looking for him.

As Lycus jumped off the stage, sn****hing up his tips. "Your boyfriend, interesting gifts he has," his father sneered and Lycus stopped.

"What do you want?" Lycus sneered at him.

"I noticed you going to the pharmacy a fair bit, talked to the pharmacist and his medication is expensive," his father tells him and Lycus shakes his head about to walk off.

"I have a video of that night, I wonder what would happen if I handed that to the council," his father said and Lycus growls turning on the man.

"Though I wouldn't have to, we could come to an arrangement," "I have nothing you want, or I can give you," Lycus tells him

looking at the tips in his hand. He tosses it at his father who picks it up and counts it. He clicks his tongue.

“I’ll give you halves, you will triple this,” his father says, handing the cash back to Lycus.

“And then no one has to see the footage of whatever that freak is,” his father sneered and Lycus snarled, his canines slipping free.

“The pits, I owe some people, bad people that would like to get their hands on your boy toy, if they knew about him. Come fight in the pits, it pays well, if you win it does,” Lycus shakes his head knowing that was suicide.

“You took down one of their best fighters the other night without breaking a sweat,” “I am being nice Lycus; I could just hand this footage over, a manhunt is on, haven’t you watched the news, they are looking for a serial killer. The entire city is in panic,” his father mocked.

“If only they knew that the man they fear is a pathetic dark-fae who isn’t even aware of what he is, and a p***fter at that,” His father sneered. Lycus lunged across the table grabbing his throat.

“Speak of my mate like that again and I will f****king kill you,” he spat in his father’s face. His father laughed, shoving him off.

“So you intend to take him as a mate?”

“Kalen doesn’t see me in that way,” he admits, that hurt him more than he cared to admit.

“One night, help me pay off this debt and I will give you half the earnings to pay for his meds,” his father said and Lycus gritted his teeth, but they could use the money.

“When?”

“Midnight, tomorrow in the old drainage system under the city,”

“Think about it, Lycus. You don’t want that footage in the wrong hands,” he laughed before getting up and leaving.

The next night, Lycus organized with his manager to get Kalen to work back so he could sneak off to it.

Yet he knew he made a mistake when his father kept coming back, using the footage over him to get him to comply.

After the first time, he refused and his father’s thugs came to their tent while Lycus was working back one night. When he

finished work that night and he stepped inside the tent he found Kalen beaten bl***dy with his pants around his ankles and a

broken broom handle covered in blood lay next to me.

Before Lycus could react and help him, he was stabbed in the back. Literally, the knife plunged deep between his ribs collapsing his lung before his father's voice sounded behind him as he took in a harsh pained breath.

"Next time I will have them kill him," Porter had whispered in his son's ear before twisting the knife making Lycus stand on his toes.

Porter ripped the knife out, and Lycus went sprawling on the ground before he could turn to fight back his father was gone.

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Read Tasting Darkness [Tempting Darkness] By Jessica Hall Book 2 Chapter 39 – The majority of Lycus's memories were similar to that of Kalen's. Things I had already seen before. Yet his last core memory was of Kalen's suicide, how Lycus Kalen's suicide, how Lycus watched his depression grow out of hand when I didn't reply to the chat group . I realized that all of Lycus's hate for me at the start was purely for that reason; he saw me as the person responsible for taking the one person who meant the most to him, the one person he spent the vast majority of his life protecting. Lycus saw me as the

villain that repeatedly broke him and drove him to the edge. He blamed my absence for Kalen's destruction and blamed me for him killing himself.

That hate only stopped that night in the basement when I took it from Kalen. Only then did Lycus see past his hate for me, only then did his opinion of me change. Only then did he realize I wasn't the enemy but the missing piece, their keeper and their mate but most of all the one that could piece Kalen back together again.

Once the last memory hit me, I came out of it exceedingly fast. The last time I shredded I was exhausted, but my bond was desperate, tugging me to finish completing it, hungry for power, knowledge, and for them. Hours could have passed, yet I knew it was only moments that I was trapped in that state.

Time wasn't in play at this time, and I was stronger. My body devoured his memories as if it devoured his magic fast, hard, and unforgivingly. My bond knew what I wanted and craved, and I knew what I needed to do. There was no other answer.

My eyes opened to find Lycus hovering over me as he went to lay me on the couch.

“Aleera?” he murmured as my eyes flew open. He seemed astonished, yet I felt the nervousness that washed through him at what I now knew, making me wonder if the others knew what Kalen was, yet the feeling I got from him they didn’t.

This one secret Lycus harbored and kept even from them. It made me wonder what secrets Tobias kept and ultimately, what

Darius kept. Yet I didn’t have time to ponder further as power surged in my veins, and tickled my veins as it burned cold, ice cold

as his magic seeped into my bones and I could feel its icy tendrils filling and burning into my soul until that icy feeling started to

boil, sizzle and turned my blood to molten lava.

Lycus gasped when I practically threw him off of me. Only one other could satisfy this need inside me, this deep desire for power, a hunger that could not be satiated. This

overwhelming urge to know, to put the puzzle pieces together. A deep desire to mend the bonds that were broken for so long, to

repair my mates. After seeing Lycus’ memories, I needed Tobias, and I would have him no matter what.

If Darius tried to stop me, I'd fight him down, however he remained where he was, still in the same place.

"Aleera," Darius growled at me. His voice was husky, and I could tell from the sharp outline of his body that watching me f***k,

c****m, and mark our mates had done wonderful things to his insides. His c***k was straining against the fabric of his pants.

He could pretend to be above it all if he wanted, but we both knew if he could get away with it without consequences, he would

f***k me until I was a broken mess, then f***k the pieces until he shattered me.

I would love every moment of it and so would he, he just didn't want anyone to know the dark desires that filled him, flooded the

bond and I had a feeling our desires weren't so far apart, one in the same.

"What?" I snarled looking over my shoulder at him.

He nodded to the couch again. "On the couch. Kneel on it this time." My bond wanted to rebel against his order yet I forced it

down, knowing Darius could force my shred to end if he really wanted to, so it was best to give him what he wants then risk a

needle in the a***s that would end it all like last time.

Devilsbane would end this and even my bond recognized right now we were at the mercy of the shred and Darius so I complied with his demands.

My body quivered at his command. As much as I wanted to say no, I also knew that Darius's orders brought unbearable pleasures like any other. I would drown in it and still be desperate for more.

Tobias came behind me, kissing my neck and breathing against it." On her knees," he growled into my ear. "You're mine now, Aleera. Darius wants to watch me f****k you. You're showing your true colors now my Naughty Girl. Kneel."

I didn't hesitate. I went back to the soaked couch cushions and knelt on them. The scent of sex surrounded me, but it did nothing to relieve the pounding in my blood, the thrum between my thighs.

Tobias kissed my a***s, the cushion dip behind me as he came to kneel behind me. He ran his tongue from the dip of my lower back all the way to my shoulder which he bit down on. I hiss as he breaks my skin before the euphoria of his bites sends my

bond soaring, as his arm wrapped around my chest, pulling me up on my knees as he squeezed my breast.

The warmth of his chest seeped into my back as he fed on me. Blood trailed down my neck, over my collarbone, before running between my breasts. Lycus growls leaning forward and licking up the blood trail, his tongue following it back to my lips. Lycus kisses me and I kiss him back, the bond wanting them both when Tobias pulled his fangs from my neck, reaching for him with his other hand; he gripped the back of Lycus's neck, ripping his lips away, then crashed his lips against Lycus's.

Kalen groaned at the sight of them and Darius cleared his throat making Tobias pull away from him, shoving him back as the high of his bite started to leave.

Tobias grips my throat, tilting my head back. "I never said you could kiss him. You're mine right now," Tobias growled before he kissed me hungrily before I could protest that Lycus kissed me, not the other way around.

My blood coated my tongue as he forced his tongue past my lips, kissing me deeply before he shoved me forward onto my

hands and knees again. Pulling back, he smacked me with his open palm making one cheek burn with a sweet intense pain.

“Stay still,” he ordered.

Darius continued to watch. He slumped onto the armchair across from us by the fireplace, kicking his pants off and revealing his

own magnificent c***k. “Again,” he ordered. He gathered the wetness that dripped from his eager tip and used it for lubrication as

he watched the show.

Tobias didn’t need to be told twice. He smacked my a***s again, harder this time and on the other cheek.

I moaned into it and he pet me.

“There’s my good girl. Do you want another?”

Whimpering, I nodded, my bond wanted whatever they would give me as long as it ended with power surging through my veins

and my mark on their necks, it reveled in the pain and pleasure.

I was walking a thin line between like teetering on a razor’s edge, deliciously pleasurable, addictive and their arousal only

enhanced mine. I pushed my a***s out against him.

His very touch was like electricity, easing the ache inside me. “More,” I

whispered.

Tobias slapped me again, even harder than before. Dots of blood were left from where his nails had peeped turning to sharp points just like his fangs. The delicious heat of pain spread through my cheek and I writhed against him. "Again," Darius ordered with a grunt. His hand moved faster, still eyes locked on the both of us. "Keep going, I want to watch you paint her a****s red."

"Hear that?" Tobias asked. He smacked me hard and I shivered beneath him. "He wants your entire a****s to be red."

Tobias smacked the other side again making my entire body shudder." Your greedy little bond will get what it wants after we give him what he needs." He smacked me again and the burn spread over both cheeks, it was all over, but instead of hating it, I loved it. My outsides matched my insides at this rate, burning hot with desire.

"Good," Darius panted. His eyes were hooded. His hips twitched as he thrust against himself, seeking his release. "Now, you can take her, Tobias. Sink into that wet pu****y that's just begging for you."

Tobias nodded and pulled his hard c***k out, he pushed it against my burning a****s cheeks, teasing me. I pushed back against

him, wanting him to sink into me.

He chuckled and smacked my a***s one final hard time before ramming himself into the hilt inside of me. I was impressed my body could take this rougher than I was used to sex. Not only take it, but crave it. It was like some sinful creature had woken up inside of me and all I wanted was to feast this delicious mix of bliss and pain.

“Damn,” he grunted. “She’s so tight and so f***king wet.”

I relaxed against the cushions. I was more than willing to let him do all the work and savor the stinging bliss that worked its way through my system. The hunger that was creeping up on me again, I would need my strength. Yet as Darius got to his feet and came to stand by me, I glanced at him.

“Yes.” Darius moaned. He bit his bottom lip hard, eyes trained on us. I couldn’t help but crane my head to the side and keep getting glimpses of him. I loved watching as he stroked his enormous c***k.” Harder,” he ordered Tobias. “She can take it. She wants it.”

I nodded. I did want it. Tobias grabbed me by my hips and used them for leverage as he pushed my head low, and jerked my

hips up higher. He plowed into me so fast and hard that I started seeing stars in my vision. I lost all sense of time; all I could focus on was how Tobias's c***k brushed against my inner walls and gspot in the most delicious way when he was rough like this.

"Faster!" Groaned Darius. But I wasn't sure if he was talking to himself or us anymore. His c***k jerked in his hand, Tobias jerked me up by my shoulder just in time as thick ropes of semen exploded out of Darius and across my face and lips. "Lick it up," he ordered me.

I obeyed, which was difficult since Tobias hadn't stopped pounding me. I licked his c***k, and Darius groaned as I sucked on the tip, the salty liquid dissolved on my tongue almost with a bitter-sweetness I hadn't expected, and my bond whined when he stepped away, his c**k leaving my lips with an audible pop.

Tobias held me in place and pounded into me when with what can only be described as Vampire speed he pulled out of me and flipped me to my back before driving himself into me. I grip his shoulders before my bond goes berserk with its need to claim him

and overrides me.

Tobias growls as my legs lock around his waist and my arms around his neck, but he relents letting me have control, and pulls me onto his lap, gripping my hips and slamming me down on his c***k.

I moan feeling my walls flutter and squeeze him while his teeth grazed and broke my skin as he sucked my skin, licking up the droplets of blood his teeth caused when I felt the walls inside me burst and power exploded in my veins.

I absorbed him like a vacuum, his magic coursing through every atom and cell inside me, strengthening and tainting every part of me. We were both sent hurtling over the edge as my entire being squeezed around him, threatening to break him.

As the last spasm pulsed through me, I sank my teeth into his neck; I would take what I needed from him too. He would be mine, and so would his memories and his magic. My power would be unstoppable. My surroundings blurred and I chuckled to myself at the falling sensation.

Three down, one to go and I knew I saved the best for last because Tobias's power was far stronger than Lycus and my bond

couldn't wait to get its h***ks into Darius but first I had to survive what Tobias endured, had to survive his memories and what I saw first sickened me to my core as my sickened me to my core as my scenery changed and I found myself in a new place.

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Book 2 Chapter 40 – At first, I thought I was staring at Tobias as a child, but it didn't take me long to realize it was his twin, Thomas. He would have only been about five-year-old. We were in what looked like some banquet room. A long table ran down the center as his father, who was an imposing man, snarled at Thomas. Tobias watched in horror as he grabbed his brother and then him by the back of the neck, dragging them closer to the table that lay in the center of the huge room. Blood spilled over the edges of the table onto the tiled floors. A woman with a crown atop her head glared at them with pursed lips. She reminded me of Tobias, making me wonder if it was his mother. "Please, daddy, please," Thomas begged, and they are steered toward the table. "You were both told not to come down here. Both told to stay in your rooms; this is what you get for disobeying me," the man snapped at his sons, his grip on both their necks was hard and pinched their skin. As we drew closer to the table, we found a woman lying on it, covered in bite marks. Thomas thrashes, trying to escape. "You wanted to disobey me. You wanted to see. Well, have a good look then," his father tells them, shoving them toward the table. Tobias stumbles, catching himself on the table, his hands sliding across the slick surface, coating them in blood.

Tobias pulls his hands back in horror, staring at his palms covered in the woman's blood before his eyes dart to her pale blue ones. "Help me!" she chokes and gurgles on her blood. Tobias knew she was human and one of his parents' victims.

"Now I'll teach you a lesson Thomas, one you'll never forget," his father says, smacking Thomas up the back of the head.

"Go on, no sippy cups for you anymore. You think you are old enough to disobey me. Then you are old enough to learn where your fruit juice comes from. You both drink straight from the vein as a true vampiric-fae does," his father says. His mother huffs, looking bored and staring at her nails.

"You heard your father." she says.

clicking her fingers at them. Thomas backs away, shaking his head, tears rolling down his cheeks. "Her eyes are open. She is breathing; I can feel her," Thomas murmurs, looking at his father.

"You will feel all over once you sink your teeth into her neck, boy. Now hurry up, drain her," he snaps at his son. Thomas shakes his head, and I notice, like me;

Thomas was power born, a rarity. He was already picking up on his gifts before manifestation. Tobias also knew this and knew his brother would be smacked and

locked in his room away from him if he didn't do as he was told. He also knew Thomas couldn't hurt the woman.

When neither boy moves to do as they're told, this angers his father, who grabs Thomas by the back of his neck and drags him closer, forcing his face in her

neck. The woman whimpers, and Thomas thrashes.

"One of you will finish her, or it is a week in the cellar; now choose," his father bellows while his son wails in his grip. Shakily Tobias steps forward. "I'll do it," he

murmurs before a s***b escapes him. He didn't want to hurt her. He didn't want to bite her. Vampiric Fae were born with fangs, relied on blood, and they were just curious where their parents went every day at tea time, so they followed and peeked through the door. They just didn't expect it to be like this, not truly understanding the meaning of what they were yet because they were so young.

His father looks over at him and shoves off his twin, who falls down beside the table, "Go on then," his father waves him forward, Tobias hesitantly takes a step forward. He swallows, staring down at the petrified woman slowly bleeding out on the table. He hesitates only for a second until his father grips the back of his neck, forcing it into her bleeding neck.

Tiny fangs protrude past his lips as a foreign hunger takes over him, Yet he shakes his head, tears trekking down his face as he realizes where his juice came from each morning and where his parents went every night to feast on the flesh of others and drain their lives. For his child-like mind, it was shocking but not as shocking as his father's twisted anger when he couldn't bring himself to do it.

His father's angry roar makes him jump to see his father grip Thomas by his hair and force him against the table.

"On with it," his father snapped and snarled, thrusting a knife into his brother's hand. Thomas shook like a leaf in a strong gust as he shook his head.

"Please, daddy," he begged and pleaded as the woman sobbed, knowing her death was sure to come. His father gripped his brother's hand and hovered the knife above her heart while Thomas fought not to take her life. Feeling her fear and reliving, Tobias knew if his brother did it, he wouldn't be able to shut her death

out. That he would feel every second of her life slipping away along with his.

Tobias shoves his brother's hand away, earning a snarl from his father, but he ignores the sound to whisper into his brother's ear. "Close your eyes, Thomas," Tobias whispers as tears prick his eyes once more, his vision turning to a blur as Tobias did as he was told, and Tobias sank his teeth into the woman's neck. She thrashed against him as he gave himself over to instinct, taking her life so his brother wouldn't feel it, so that he wouldn't have her blood on his hands.

No, Tobias would carry the burden of her death, not Thomas. Even at this young age, Tobias understood the full weight of what he had done, what he had taken from the woman who was now staring up with wide vacant eyes at the ceiling

The light had gone from her eyes, and the color drained from her skin, her lips turning shades of blue. He took her life as her body turned cold before his innocent eyes that saw too much and couldn't unsee what he had done. His rose-colored glasses of his parent's were removed, and he saw the monsters they were. Human life meant little to them, and he vowed not to be like them.

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Book 2... Aleera ran away from

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and she waits for his pity. ... At Chapter 123 of the novel series

Chapter 123, the details of the story came to a dramatic end. How

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forward. He swallows, staring down at the petrified woman slowly bleeding out on the table. He hesitates only for a second until his father grips the back of his

neck, forcing it into her bleeding neck.

Tiny fangs protrude past his lips as a foreign hunger takes over him, Yet he shakes his head, tears trekking down his face as he realizes where his juice came

from each morning and where his parents went every night to feast on the flesh of others and drain their lives. For his child-like mind, it was shocking but not as shocking as his father's twisted anger when he couldn't bring himself to do it.

His father's angry roar makes him jump to see his father grip Thomas by his hair and force him against the table.

"On with it," his father snapped and snarled, thrusting a knife into his brother's hand. Thomas shook like a leaf in a strong gust as he shook his head.

"Please, daddy," he begged and pleaded as the woman sobbed, knowing her death was sure to come. His father gripped his brother's hand and hovered the knife above her heart while Thomas fought not to take her life. Feeling her fear and reliving, Tobias knew if his brother did it, he wouldn't be able to shut her death out. That he would feel every second of her life slipping away along with his.

Tobias shoves his brother's hand away, earning a snarl from his father, but he ignores the sound to whisper into his brother's ear.

"Close your eyes, Thomas," Tobias whispers as tears prick his eyes once more, his vision turning to a blur as Tobias did as he was told, and Tobias sank his teeth into the woman's neck. She thrashed against him as he gave himself over to instinct, taking her life so his brother wouldn't feel it, so that he wouldn't have her blood on his hands.

No, Tobias would carry the burden of her death, not Thomas.

Even at this young age, Tobias understood the full weight of what he had done, what he had taken from the woman who was now staring up with wide vacant eyes at the ceiling

The light had gone from her eyes, and the color drained from her skin, her lips turning shades of blue. He took her life as her body turned cold before his

innocent eyes that saw too much and couldn't unsee what he had done. His rose-colored glasses of his parent's were removed, and he saw the monsters they were. Human life meant little to them, and he vowed not to be like them.

As the memory faded and a new one took its place, I found that Tobias was always Thomas's protector. He did the things he knew Thomas couldn't handle. With

each passing day, he was sure that more and more of his humanity left him, leaving a cold hearted monster.

In this memory as it twisted and formed, Tobias was in his early teens. He waited for the Demonic King to arrive. He waited impatiently. The blood of his father's

latest victim stained his lips, and once again, Tobias was forced to take another life. He stared off vacantly, head held high as he was taught from the day he could walk.

Tobias was of royal blood, his parents the Vampiric-Fae king and Queen. A title bestowed to him once he came of age. A title he didn't really want but to spare

Thomas, he would take it.

I watched as Darius walked in with his father, the demonic-Fae king, a respected council elder like his father. Respect Tobias knew in both cases was built on

fear. Darius followed behind his father, eyes ahead and vacant.

Tobias found himself doing the same, something that was unsettling and unnatural to see but also something familiar.

He had grown up around Darius but ruled by their father's iron fists. Neither really spoke. They obeyed as good sons should.

They attended all the same

functions, sat at tables together, and sat side by side but never spoke.

Yet today, he found Darius staring at him as he approached. Tobias met his gaze and saw the same dead look in Darius' eyes he saw every morning in his own reflection in the mirror. It was no secret what Darius was. Everyone knew he had extraordinary gifts for a boy his age. Gifts that elders wished they had, his dark magic was feared even as a child.

"Tobias, take Darius here for a walk around the castle, his father and I have much to discuss, and I want no interruptions," his father ordered. As they both left the ballroom, he tipped his head to his father, and so did Darius. They walked without speaking, walked in silence, when Tobias stopped abruptly, staring off at the river at the back of the castle.

"Darius?" Tobias called, having spoken the boy's name for the first time. Darius's cold, calculating eyes peered at him momentarily before they glanced away back to the river.

"Your brother is upset," Darius says, pointing toward the trees, and Tobias follows his hand, and his shoulders sag wondering what his mother had done to him this time.

"Wait here," Tobias said, about to cross the manicured lawns to fetch him when Darius' hand fell on his shoulder. He fishes in his pocket and retrieves a handkerchief from inside his suit pocket.

"Clean up, you have blood in the corners of your lips, and your brother is an empath. He shouldn't scent her death." Darius tells him. Tobias, shocked, looks at him.

"Her?" Tobias asks, and Darius nods his head. "It gets easier. Eventually, you will feel nothing," Darius tells him.

"What do you mean Thomas is not an empath?" Tobias lies. Darius raises an eyebrow at him.

“Death, that gets easier. As for your brother, I won’t say anything. His secret is safe with me,” Darius reassures him. Tobias and Thomas had gone to extreme lengths to hide what he is from their parents. And now Tobias worried, with a rival kingdom’s son holding . knowledge that would surely get Thomas beaten by their father.

“How?” Tobias asks him, accepting the handkerchief.

“I can feel his magic,” he says, simply crossing the lawns to get Thomas himself.

Yet as they approach, they find Thomas sitting on the ground, hugging his pet rabbit to his chest. Tobias gasped and rushed to his brother’s side.

“She killed him, she killed him,” he sobbed. Thomas had raised the baby rabbit himself after its mother tried to kill it. He had it for three years.

“Who, mother?” Tobias asks. Thomas nods his head. “He got out of his cage,” Thomas cried. When Darius grabbed the rabbit from his hands, Thomas saw that

Tobias was not alone. He quickly clears the tears from his face and straightens up, knowing better than to look weak in front of the demonic prince. His father would whip him good had he seen them.

Darius observes the rabbit finding its neck had been rung when he glances around nervously toward the castle. Moments later, his hands glowed green, then blue, and his eyes turned white as he wielded magic he should not have.

Magic like mine. Seconds pass when the rabbit’s feet suddenly kick. Thomas gasps, and Tobias’ eyes search around frantically, knowing what that means if

anyone sees. Darius was an elemental Harmony-Fae. – “You’ll have to set him free, Thomas. Your mother will question how he came back,” Darius tells him.

Thomas stared at him with wide eyes.

“You’re a harmony-” Darius winks at him.

“But that’s our little secret. I’ll keep yours if you keep mine,”

Darius tells him. Confusion set in. I wondered how it was possible that Darius was a teenager and

somehow survived two plagues set to kill him. He was around the age his sister died, and if he could resurrect the dead, why didn’t he bring her back? Why was

he not kept down in the cellar with his sister and mother, and why was he still blessed with his gifts?

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Chapter 124

Tasting Darkness

Chapter 124

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Read Tasting Darkness [Tempting Darkness] By Jessica Hall Book 2 Chapter 41 – The next memory morphed to their eighteenth birthday. Tobias heard a portal open and sat up, rubbing his eyes, his powers had manifested during the night, but too exhausted to care he never checked his infinity mark. He knew the familiar energy to be that of Darius. He yawns, stretching his arms above his head. Darius smirked as he stepped through the portal into Tobias's room, holding up his wrist. "It appears we are destined, brother," Darius tells him. Tobias' brows furrow as he yawns, looking at his wrist when Darius rubs his fingers over the infinity mark on his own, and Tobias gasps, glancing at his own when warmth spreads up his arm. Tobias chuckles. "Well, looks like you're not getting rid of me now,"

Tobias smiles. He was glad that his best friend was destined to be part of his life. Their brotherly bond is now completely solidified.

Tobias stares down at the names on his wrist.

“F***k, feel sorry for whoever she is. I wonder who the other two are?” Tobias says, brushing his fingers over Kalen and Lycus’ names.

“No idea; I called on them but got no reply,”

“Probably saw our names and went to hide under a rock,” Tobias groaned.

“I’m more interested in why her name is faded,”

Darius says, reaching for Tobias’s to see if he is the same. My name was etched into both their wrists, yet mine was faint. Tobias glances at Darius’.

“What do you think it means?” Tobias asks him, and Darius’ eyes darken.

“One way to find out is to get dressed,” Darius tells him.

“What about the other two?”

“They’ll come to us when ready. Give them a chance to come around to it, and the idea of us, that would be a bit much for

anyone to take in. Their magic is strong, hers I can hardly feel,” Darius tells him, and Tobias gets to his feet and grabs some

clothes, pulling on some black jeans and a gray shirt. Just as Darius stepped toward him and grabbed his wrist, Thomas entered the room.

Tobias instantly rushed to him and snatched up his hand, only for Thomas to pull away. "What is it?"

Tobias asked him, grabbing his twin's wrist to see who he was destined for. Only when he does and turns Thomas's wrist over.

Thomas' wrist was blank. No mates, his infinity symbol was there. It just held no names.

"Wait? But-" "It's fine, Tobias. Maybe my mates were white fae," Thomas tells him, but they all knew what that meant, that one day Thomas would run out of magic without his Keeper and mates.

"Who did you get?" Thomas asked him, grabbing for Tobias' wrist. He turns it over to see our names and smiles.

"Well, what are you waiting for?"

Go find them and bring them home," Thomas tells him. Tobias' stomach sinks. Guilt set in that he had four mates and a keeper.

In contrast, Thomas wasn't granted even one.

"It's fine, Tobias; the fates just have me destined for bigger things, you'll see," Tobias' guilt nags him, but once Thomas leaves,

Darius steps closer and grabs Tobias's wrist drawing his attention back to what they were doing.

Darius' thumb brushes over the mark and power sings up his arm, yet it is different from before, different from the rabbit, darker, twisted, cold. It was like everything darkness could be, amplified but so much colder from when he healed the rabbit.

"Let's go find her then," Darius laughs, excited that they had both fully manifested, that their magic was strong; it appeared by

their markings and the surging bonds that their Keeper would be a powerhouse. They both saw freedom, and sadness bled into

me, realizing they thought I was their freedom from their parents and their parents' demands.

With me, they could take them down. No longer would they be bound to their families. They could both take their freedom back,

and I was that freedom to them. Until the portal took them somewhere, they didn't expect. My school..

"Okay, then. She is a teacher?" Tobias asks, scratching the back of his neck and looking around.

He was confused until the bells

sounded and I walked down the front steps. I walked straight past them without feeling anything, not even paying attention.

I remembered that day, I felt sick, and now I wonder if it was because they had manifested and I wasn't of age. I didn't even glance up as I walked out of the school gates.

"F****k!" Darius curses.

"Bro, I know she is our keeper, but I am not dragging some young girl off who has no idea who we are to her," Tobias says as they watch me walk away from them.

"Our parents can't find out about her," Darius murmurs.

"We wait, speak with her parents. If my father finds out about her; he will drag her home himself," Tobias tells Darius.

"Yeah, mine can't know either. He'll force me to mark her," "So what do we do? What if the others come for her?" Tobias asks him. They both knew why my mark was faded, I was underage, and I, as an awkward teenager, made that even more painfully obvious for them.

"Follow her. We will find out who her parents are. Speak with them, and we cloak her," "Cloak her?" Tobias asks, knowing the amount of power that would take to do.

"Yes, I am not about to turn her world upside down and have Kalen and Lycus come for her, we don't know them or what they

are willing to do if they find her,” Darius tells him. All night they camped outside my house up the street where the bus dropped me off, waiting for me to go to school; it was odd because I was terribly sick that night. They had slept in their car at the end of my street. My house was the last one next to three vacant blocks and almost completely obscured by trees that ran either side of the dirt driveway. The three vacant blocks on either side made the place look like a dead end. Until you came to the dirt driveway, you wouldn’t even know a house was there. Watching through Tobias’ eyes, had I noticed them, I would have thought it creepy, yet their intentions were anything but. Their only intention was to make sure my other two mates didn’t try to come for me. They stayed to keep me safe, unsure of who Lycus and Kalen were. Yet that day, for some reason, had stayed with me, etched into my brain no matter how much I tried to forget it. My mother forced me to go to school, I had begged and pleaded to go to a real school, and now I was tossing it in her face by saying I wasn’t

going. Instead, dad drove me and the shock of Tobias and Darius seeing him drive out of the driveway with me was nearly as strong as finding out I was a teenager.

Darius growls and Tobias grips his arm as he went to start the car to go after my father.

“He is her father, Darius. You’re his daughter’s mate. He wouldn’t hurt his own daughter’s future,”

Tobias tells him. But what they were most confused about was why I was kept a secret, why I was never registered with the council. They figured that out when they tried to go down the driveway.

Nausea washed over both of them, and they had to back out of the driveway. Darius and Tobias both got out to find they had

crossed wards, wards my father put in place to hide our house, hide my mother and me from the world. It took them half the day

to break through them to find my mother at home.

She immediately called my father, who rushed home.

It was also the same day my house burned to the ground, the day I lost my parents, only I relived it from Tobias’s point of view,

and I found everything Darius had told me was the truth. They left and only returned when they felt my distress, Tobias suffered

severe burns trying to save me, while Darius exhausted a good chunk of magic breaking the wards and getting us out.

Tobias used his magic to heal me instead of himself. Healed some girl he barely knew because I was theirs and they would do anything to keep me, knowing I was their only future, and they were mine.

Darius then cloaked me and they took me to my grandmother and cloaked her too.

Tobias' memories weren't as dark and twisted as Lycus' or Kalen's, yet his struggles were just as brutal when he returned home with Darius. Both of their fathers demanded answers from them both. Tobias even endured watching his brother be tortured with magic. It was the only time Tobias forced his brother to suffer.

He refused to give me up despite knowing he was causing his brother pain. He chose me over the one person he spent his entire life protecting, and Thomas, I found, took it without complaint, trusting his brother had good reason. Darius, too, refused to give up my location.

Yet as the last of Tobias' memories fizzled and died out, I learned Darius was the only reliable constant person in Tobias's and

Thomas's life; I understood why Darius felt guilty. Seeing Tobias' grief as he tried to heal Thomas, begging the fates to take him instead.

That was when Tobias turned to the bottle. For years he held himself together, and all for Thomas, everything he did, he did for his twin. For his other half and Darius unknowingly took him from him, and so did I. Darius loved him just as much, and I now understood the destruction I had caused by running, no wonder Tobias hated me. I took the only person he truly loved from him.

Tobias and Thomas had turned their backs on their family for me, had his title removed because he took the others as his mates to keep power, and all to keep me safe, to let me grow up, and me running made it look like it was all for nothing. I basically threw it all back in their faces as I felt the agony of Tobias's loss. His brother clutched in his arms, his mutilated body torn to shreds from the hellhounds.

"We need to go," Darius whispers to him, trying to make him let go of Thomas.

"I hate her, I f***king hate her," Tobias sobbed as he stared at the letter drawn on the ground in his own blood. However, peering

through Tobias's eyes, it wasn't all I noticed, and my heart sputtered in my chest in the waking world. How had I never noticed it before? How did I not see it in Darius' memories? So caught up in both of their grief as I watched that scene play out on a loop, first through my fragmented memories, then Darius's, and now Tobias, yet it was Tobias' memories I noticed.

The Moonstone clutched in Thomas's hand. Tobias even picks it up. He glances at it, feeling the energy in it, but unable to place it before tossing it aside, thinking his brother had found it, believing the power within it was mine. Yet I recognized the stone as he dropped it, recognized the energy writhing through it because I had the same stone sitting in our bathroom, a stone that I could feel contained remnants of my mother's magic. Just as that realization dawned on me, the memories faded, and I felt the sting in my thigh, felt the devil's bane run through me.

Though it was weak and wouldn't stop my shredding, it would, however, give Darius time, and for once, I wasn't mad he did it because now I had to confess something myself.

I unknowingly trusted a woman they warned me about, trusted my own mother, and I had just brought a ward breaker into their castle, our home. The Moonstone was never intended for me to call on her. No, it was intended to break the wards.

Tobias knew the energy felt off and tossed the stone, yet I brought it home with me. I once again endangered my mates. My eyes opened to them arguing over Darius drugging me, yet I wasn't angry at him for it. I was angry at myself as I opened my eyes.

"You promised," Tobias hisses at him.

"I made no such promises. It's weak, she is still in the shred, but she needs a break, I will complete it, she needs rest though,"

Darius snaps back at him, and I sit up.

"Don't argue," I groan, clutching my head as the heat rushing through me eases off but lingers around the edges, my head

pounding with knowledge and power in excess.

"Aleera," Tobias hisses, rushing over to me, but my eyes go to Darius. Guilt floods me through the bond, only amplifying mine.

"I have done something stupid," I murmur and Darius watches me for a second waiting for me to explode at him stopping the

shred even if only temporarily. I just hoped he would forgive me because I truly f***ked up, and that clarity had me shoving past them and running for the bathroom.

I rummage through the basket of soaps and pull out the Moonstone just as Darius comes in behind me.

The furious growl that leaves him as every hair stands on end as he stalks toward me.

“What have you done?” he asks, and I swallow. The moment my magic touched it, it glowed, and my eyes widened as I felt the energy inside it.

“Aleera,” Darius panics, but I step back, knowing if I didn’t get it out of here soon, it would absorb his ward’s just as it was my magic, stealing it from me, every ounce I just absorbed, and I looked at them in panic as Darius reached for it. Jerking my hand back I shake my head.

“None of you can touch me. It will take yours too,” I tell them before groaning as cramps rippled through my stomach as it devoured the devil’s bane and forced the shred, the stone urging me to complete it so it could take my power, our power, I would

kill her. I would f****king kill her, This was never to protect me butto absorb my magic after i completed the shred, to weaken me and take my mate's power from them, But she f***ked up, because ! figured it out before I completed il, and now the only power she would get was the wrath of phoenixes. She had taken so much from them, and I wasn't allowing her to take anymore. "Aleera, No!" Darius screams at me, feeling my intention through the bond. Using the remnants of what I still contained, I toss up a shield blocking Darius as he goes to take it and run for my old room. Blasting the window, I grab a cloak, I spot hanging by the dark fireplace before whistling. The moment I do, I hear Sparks caw, and I do the stupidest thing I have ever done. I jump from the window, praying to the fates that Spark reaches me because, with the loss of my power, I just lost my wings, and we were six stories high.

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Tasting Darkness

Chapter 125

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Read Tasting Darkness [Tempting Darkness] By Jessica Hall Book 2 Chapter 42 – Wind rushes past me as I fall, and I watch the ground grow closer. It was like

time stopped, everything slowing down, and I saw every particle in the air, every vapor and streak of light from the moon when suddenly arms wrapped around my waist. The stone glows and burns hotter in my hand as I try to fight it from taking his magic through me when Darius opens a portal directly beneath us.

My eyes widen when Darius grips my wrist, shaking my hand, but I refuse to let go, knowing what dropping that stone would do to the city he opened a portal to. When I refuse, he blasts me with his magic, stunning me, and I scream as my arm spasms, my fingers twitching, and the stone slips through them, falling toward the portal. I grasp the air, trying to catch it, when Spark caws loudly, swooping off the roof toward us.

My fingers outstretched, reach for the stone, as I try to stop it, knowing the destruction it would cause, the power it would absorb, when talons caged around my body, and I scream as Spark grabbed us, plucking us from the air and he takes flight, his powerful wings taking us higher. In contrast, my scream of horror rang out loudly as I watched the stone disappear into the portal before closing.

He killed them; he killed them all. Spark moves toward the field below before dropping us to the ground and I round on Darius

the moment my feet hit the ground, my hands slamming against his chest, and he staggers backward. Spark landed on the ground not far from us, but my anger was ignited like a match had been struck, and my rage was the fuel it needed as I called on my Phoenixes.

“How could you?” I scream at him, tears streaming down my face as I shoved him; Darius puts his hand up, backing away from me. The phoenixes on the roof caw loudly, feeling my burning anger and take flight. They circle the sky above while Darius’ anger also rippled, his energy amplifying, and the air around us heats as the tension simmers between us, my shred tries to override my anger, calling on his power I could sense while mine was lost with the Moonstone.

“Don’t put this back on me! You brought it back home; you lied! You should have told us!” Darius yells at me. “I did what I had to do!”

“The city, that city. You just killed them all, led the power hunters straight to them!”

“I had no choice. That stone would have absorbed you, absorbed the wards and the power of your phoenixes,” Darius says,

walking away from me toward the castle, and I charge and tackle him, furious that he would sacrifice an entire city when I could have led the Phoenixes straight to them.

“You monster, you just wiped out a city,” I scream angrily, and Darius rolls, pinning me beneath him.

“It’s better than leading them here!” Darius bellows at me before pushing off me and getting to his feet and I shake my head

knowing that that stone would absorb any protection of the city’s wards offered, absorb the power of those that lived there, and

lead the power hunters directly to them while they are defenseless.

“I could have taken them down; I have the phoenixes,” I scream at him, getting to my feet when the sky suddenly ignites, glowing

crimson, as lightning streaks across the sky. We all look up at the trees toward the city as the power of the blast, ripples over the

dome encasing the castle from Darius’s wards, shielding us from the blast, but I knew the city’s wards with an explosion that

strong would have shattered, leaving them open to attacks. My eyes widen; I cup my mouth with my hands in horror before

getting to my feet. I whistle calling on my phoenixes when Darius charges me, clamping his hand over my mouth.

I struggle against him, shoving him off. “I can help them. I can save them!” I spit at him, and he stumbles back.

“You don’t know that! I am not willing to take that risk,” Darius screams back at me “But I am!” I yell at him as Tobias, Lycus, and

Kalen come out of the castle, jogging over to us, their eyes casting nervous glances at the sky where light sparked and

illuminated in the distance. Tobias waves his arms in the air trying to calm us. I wanted to beat Darius senselessly for his

stupidity and for mine of believing her, trusting the one woman they warned me about.

“Picking up a rock, I chuck at him as he walks away, it hits him in the back, and he whirls on me, stalking toward me and Tobias

backs up. Our mates watch from the sidelines as he reaches me, and I pummel Darius, hitting him wherever I can. My

Phoenixes above caw and swirl in the night sky above like glowing beacons of infinite power, their magic zapping and recharging

me with each cawing blast. “I could have taken them; I would have ended them,” I scream at him when he grips my arms.

“And at what sacrifice, your life? That sort of power, the power needed to kill the power hunters would have killed you. You can’t harness that kind of power blindly, you aren’t ready!”

“Better me, than them!” I cry as our mates draw nearer.

“How could you?” He was a monster. Thousands, and thousands of lives he has just put at risk because of me.

“Better them than you, because if it is between choosing between you and them, I choose you. I have lost you once. I won’t lose you again. I can live with their deaths on my hands. I can’t live with yours!” he says, shaking me.

“We don’t know that! I could have taken it, I could have absorbed the Phoenixes – “. Darius grabs my face in his hands.

“Look up, Aleera, there aren’t enough of them. You think you could, but you can’t. That stone was a power absorber. The moment you touched it, you activated it. It wouldn’t stop absorbing you or your birds until it contained everything you had left. Then what?

You were giving the power hunters the ultimate weapon, the ultimate power.” I shake my head, tears streaming down my face at my stupidity. I was angry at him but mostly angry at myself, knowing this was my fault, I should have killed her when I saw her, should have told them.

“We don’t know that.” I croak.

“I do! Because the magic that was used to create that stone. Is mine. For years I was their weapon,” Darius says, letting me go and I stagger back and look at him.

“What?”

“As soon as I saw that stone in your hand and the rune on it, I knew it was mine.” I shake my head. He was wrong. It was my mother’s magic. I felt it inside that stone.

“No, it was my mother’s power. I could feel it.” Darius clutches his hair and screams in frustration. The torment coming through the bond from him caused him physical pain, and my chest was restricted.

“I couldn’t save them, you, I can save,’ Darius yells at me.

“What are you talking about? It was my mother’s magic!” I scream at him.

“It was mine, think Aleera. Think about it, think about everything I have told you, what you have seen!

What you know!”| shake

my head when he grasps my face in his hands.

“Think, Aleera, the second plague. How did your mother survive it?” Darius asks me.

“My father, he did something to her.” Darius nods before he whispers. “He fed her my blood.”

“But that makes no sense,” I tell him, gripping his shirt and pushing back against him as the shred coursed through me, sensing

his magic, and I try to ignore it, try to focus on my anger instead of the burning lust writhing and coursing through me, knowing

he was the last one, with him I would awaken to my full potential, and my body sensed that with every fiber of my being, and it

wanted his power, wanted him.

“It does if I am the plague. I created it; I unleashed it.

You want to know how I can sacrifice an entire city for you? Because I

already sacrificed the entire world thinking I was saving you all. I told you I have blood on my hands, and I told you that you didn’t

want to know the sort of monster you lay beside at night. I am the plague Aleera, the reason it exists, the reason it got out, and

the only cure, or I was before,” he stares up at the sky, at my phoenixes. “Before I destroyed that too,” “You were just a boy. You have this stupid idea in your head that you did this, but you didn’t!” Darius laughs. “Didn’t I? My father wanted to destroy it, told me to destroy it when we learned what it was capable of -” he shakes his head and clenches his teeth.

“You think you know, but you don’t,” Darius tells me, and I reach for him, but he pulls away, placing his hands in the air, not wanting my touch. That stung, but I refused to let him escape it this time. “Then tell me?” I growl at him, recharging off slivers of power off my Phoenixes to hold him here, but he breaks it easily, feeding off my energy. “It all leads back to me, all of you, Kalen, Lycus.” Darius looks over his shoulder at Tobias. “Thomas, it’s all my fault.” He tells me, looking back at me. “You can hate me all you want, but I stand by what I did, their lives or yours?” He tells me, pointing off to our mates. “Their lives!”

“I’ll choose you all every d*mn time. No matter the sacrifice, I did not kill the world to lose what’s left of mine. You are mine. Every

single one of you, mine, my life. I won't lose you again. I just got you back," he growls at me, with a sheen of madness in his eyes.

"You are making no sense, you—" "It doesn't have to make sense, Aleera! I did this. Not you, so what I did doesn't taint you. It's all my fault," he tells me, and I shake my head while he growls, . turning on his heel.

"Show me!" I plead with him.

Darius opens up a portal. "Darius?" Tobias asks, and Darius stops looking at him. "What have you done?" Darius looks back at me.

"I chose her."

He steps through the portal. "Wait, that's it? You choose me and f**k the rest of the world?" I scream, charging in after him as he steps back into our room.

"I told you who I was. You didn't want to believe me." his anger was palpable, and his voice cold and devoid of emotion.

"Then show me, let me in," I snap at him, and he shrugs me off as our mates follow us into the room, and sweat beaded on my neck as the heat of the shred tries to overwhelm me when Darius moves toward the dresser.

“They’re going to come for you, but I won’t let them take you,” he says while digging through the dresser, and I could feel his intention through the bond loud and clear. He was going after them. He knew where they would chase the beacon once set off, which is why he tossed the Moonstone into the city because that was his Demonic-far Kingdom’s city, one he was familiar with. He knew they would stop coming for me if I didn’t possess the power of fully merging with my mates if the bond was broken. He turns around, and I see the devil’s bane in his hand. “Darius!” Tobias hisses as he pulls the syringe from the pouch. “I won’t lose you all. They’ll stop. You can keep her safe,” Darius informs them, and my brows scrunch. “What?” Lycus says, stepping past me toward him. “Her power will die out, she’ll be safe, you all will be safe,” Darius tells him, and I realize fully what that intention I could feel through the bond is. He was going to go after them, knowing that if they killed him, I would never come into full power, and our bonds would eventually break. “No!” I snarl at him.

“It’s the only way. It started with me. It ends with me,” Darius comes toward me, and my skin buzzes with my anger.

“You’re right; it does end with you,” I tell him, feeling the bond sizzle as I flick my wrist at him, giving myself over to instinct; the syringe goes flying. He won’t escape me this time, I thought as I lunged at him; I was taking his power, and I was ending this, ending my mother and the power hunters for good. Darius growls, catching me, and before he can toss me off, I kiss him, absorbing his power. Darius gasps, feeling his power bleed into me as I take it, and he struggles, trying to toss me off instead stumbling backward and hitting the bed. I crash on top of him, my legs straddling his waist, and I pin with his own magic, my hands pressing against his chest. We were going to complete the shred. He will give me his power even if I have to take it myself. Darius growls, glaring up at me, and our mates back off. Their energy ripples behind me as I stare down at him.

“Three down, one to go,” I tell him before giving myself over to my bond and watching as it forces his bond out, latching onto it.

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