

Tasting Darkness

Chapter 78

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Chapter 78

It was like watching a timeline of the most significant memories he had, those that shaped him into who he is today. A glimpse into the depths of who Kalen truly was and the things that haunted him, made him happy, everything that made Kalen, Kalen.

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His youngest memory was horrible. At first, I was an outsider watching until the vision warped, and I was suddenly Kalen, seeing the world through his eyes. Feeling what he felt, enduring what he endured. I found myself running into some room with gray walls with peeling wallpaper, exposing the mold-covered walls beneath. Beds lined the room in rows, large bay windows overlooked the city, and the room was ice cold.

He crawled underneath his bed by the window only to be ripped out by his ankles, his nails clawing at the wooden floorboards, making his fingertips bloody as they tore away his fingernails. His screams were horrendous and hurt my soul. The fear he felt made my heart race, and at first, I had no idea what he was running from until he was rolled over. It was other children, Kalen crawling on his hands and knees is, blocked by legs and backed into a corner. The kids huddled around him in the corner of the room. He tried to cover his ears with hands over his head as they screamed and taunted. Throwing things and kicking and hurting him. Most of his childhood was spent being bullied relentlessly for being the weakest amongst the Fae. But Kalen wasn't just the weakest; he was also the smallest amongst his peers. The bullying was horrendous, the things they did to him. Setting him on fire, urinating on him, beating him bloody, and the teachers or those responsible for looking after him turned a blind eye to it or outright condemned him by telling him he deserved it. Kalen's childhood was tragic up until one day, and that day changed everything for him. Kalen was worried as he sat in the

playground by himself, and a new kid walked out the doors.

He thought it was another person to add to the list of bullies he already had. The boy reminded me of someone, and it didn't take

long before I recognized who he was. It was Lycus.

He was younger in this memory. Lycus was just a boy, like Kalen. Only he

was frighteningly bigger, and Kalen watched, horrified as he argued with one of the teachers before stomping off to sit on one of

the bench seats. Lycus watched the other children play, his eyes falling on Kalen, and Kalen dropped his gaze, cursing himself

for making eye contact with the scary-looking boy.

When the bell went to signal class and he had to return back into the orphanage, he ran for the doors, hoping to go unnoticed.

However, Kalen knew his bullies weren't going to give him a day off when the one he hated most stepped into his path. The boy

was a teenager and almost looked too old to be still in the orphanage that Kalen called home. Kalen had to have been at least

half the other boys' age.

As the bully steps out the door into the concrete playground, he takes a step back. Kalen's eyes scan his surroundings, looking

for an escape. He notices Lycus watching curiously from where he still sat, ignoring the sound of the school bell. Kalen goes to make a run for the door across the quadrangle, only for the teenage boy to tackle him.

Kids rush out the doors, circling around and taunting him while the other kid grips the front of his shirt and repeatedly punches

him, making his nose bleed, and his eyes blur as they swell. Pain rippled through me as I experienced what he did, the

helplessness, and the acceptance. Kalen doesn't fight back. He knows it is useless and only brings on more pain.

So instead, he just takes it. He thought the boy would surely kill him that day. He promised Kalen he would before he aged out of

the system. Kalen accepted it. In some ways, he hoped this was it, the day his torment ended. Just as his bully gripped his head

in both hands, Kalen closed his eyes, knowing his head was about to be slammed into the pavement.

Yet the deadly blow never comes.

Instead, the weight holding him down was gone, and a collective gasp was heard from the surrounding crowd of children. Kalen's

eyes flew open to find his tormentor beside him on the ground, and the new kid that had arrived was punching into him, the bully's head bouncing off the ground as Lycus pounded his face with his fists. Blood spurted out of the Bullies nose and mouth covering the new kid.

Kalen was shocked but also petrified that Lycus would turn his attention to him when he was done.

Lycus' eyes were a demonic

black, and he foamed at the mouth in his rage.

Kalen just laid there and stared, too scared to move.

Lycus growled loudly when

Kalen's bully fell unconscious.

The other kids had scattered and ran away in fear as Lycus stood upright, breathing heavily before his gaze turned to Kalen, who

cowered away from him as Lycus stepped over the kid. Yet instead of offering Kalen a fist, he offered him his hand and pulled

him to his feet

"Are you okay?" Lycus asked him and Kalen just stared at him. No one ever asked if he was okay, and he suddenly found himself mute for another reason.

"You got a name?" Lycus asks him. Kalen nods, and Lycus raises an eyebrow at him.

“Well, are you going to tell me, or can’t you speak?”

Lycus asks him,

“Kalen,” he stuttered out.

“I’m Lycus,” Lycus told him, and Kalen looked down at his bloody bully lying unconscious on the ground.

“Come on, let’s find a first aid kit,” Lycus tells him, grabbing Kalen’s arm, but Kalen shakes his head, pulling away. Lycus stops and stares at him.

“I will get in trouble. The teachers don’t help,” he whispers to Lycus. That seemed to anger Lycus, who chucks his arm over Kalen’s shoulder.

“They’ll help, or I’ll make them,”

“They won’t listen. They don’t care, ” Kalen murmurs nervously:

“I’ll make them listen,” Lycus tells him. 1

Kalen looks at Lycus, and he smiles, flashing his canines. “Because if they don’t, I’ll bite,” he says, and Kalen laughs, letting Lycus lead him back inside.

After the day he met Lycus, they were joined at the hip, drawn to each other. Lycus always defended Kalen and taught him how to protect himself as best he could. However, when they were both fourteen, Kalen’s mental health declined, and his depression

worsened until Lycus got sick of watching him hate himself.

His teacher had hit Kalen across the knuckles with a cane when he was trying to explain the work to Lycus beside him. Kalen's

knuckles split open, and Lycus lost it, standing up and ripping the cane from his teacher's fingers. The man was cruel and hated

both Lycus and Kalen and used any excuse to punish them. Lycus pulled the cane from his hand before wailing on him with it.

Lycus was then shot with a dart gun after one of the student's raced into the halls to alert security. Kalen watched on helplessly

as Lycus was then hauled away to the infirmary, and Kalen wasn't allowed in with him, so he waited by the door for him to wake

up.

"Kalen! Now." his teacher called to him. Kalen was waiting in a corridor for Lycus when he heard his name called. Kalen pushed

off the wall he was leaning on as the burly vampiric Fae stalked toward him. Kalen glanced at the door where Lycus was before

turning his attention to the headteacher.

"Follow me," the man said.

"But Lycus,"

“I am not here for the were-Fae. Now hurry up,” the man said, turning on his heel and walking into the gymnasium. Kalen followed. He had never had issues with the headteacher; he was only new to the orphanage, so he didn’t suspect anything wrong. When he entered the gymnasium, his Math teacher sat on a chair. Lash marks covered him where Lycus had beat him.

A few other teachers stood off to the sides as they entered, and Kalen followed behind, thinking he would probably be issued the cane. He got the cane. Not a piece of his skin was left untainted when they finished beating him. This was their punishment for Lycus. They knew Kalen was Lycus’s weak spot and the only person he cared for, so they hurt Kalen to teach Lycus a lesson.

Then they fed on him, nearly killing him before dumping him outside the infirmary door for Lycus to find. A few days later, Lycus had enough.

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and she waits for his pity. ... At Chapter 78 of the novel series
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Chapter 79

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“Psst. wake up. We are leaving,” Lycus says,
shaking Kalen’s shoulder and waking him. Kalen
groans and rolls over to see
Lycus hovering above him.

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“What’s wrong?” Kalen whispers, sitting up and rubbing his eyes while yawning.

Lycus grabs Kalen’s face, that was still covered in lash marks. “We are leaving. We are better off on our own,” Lycus tells him, pulling Kalen’s pajama shirt off and dressing him. Kalen’s sleeping medication made him extra groggy and almost nonfunctioning,

“Where will we go?” Kalen mumbles, trying to lay back down when Lycus grabs him under the arms forcing him to his feet.

“Anywhere they can’t touch you,” Lycus growls before chucking a bag over his shoulder. Kalen doped off his face from the medication woke up later at the bus stop, having no memory of the walk there. It was freezing cold, snow-covered the ground and Lycus was rubbing his arms, trying to warm him, who was leaning on him. The motion having woken Kalen, he peered around, confused.

“Shh, go to sleep,” Lycus murmurs, and Kalen trusts Lycus to keep him safe, so he does just that.

They lived like that for years. Living day to day. Taking any odd jobs they could find, Lycus, at one stage, even became a male

stripper to get them by. His werewolf genes made him appear older than he was, and as much as Lycus hated it, he did more than just strip for the filthy old pub tarts as he called them to get them by until he realized he was hurting Kalen and I was shoved into one of Kalen's happiest memories.

Na

Lycus had just come out to the kitchen at the back of the strip club where Kalen washed dishes, covered in sweat with money

stuffed in his briefs. Kalen hung up his apron as his shift ended before stalking off out the back.

"Kalen?" Lycus asked, chasing after him and pulling clothes on as he chased after him, but Kalen hated seeing Lycus with

women and found it made him jealous. He didn't know what to think of the strange feelings he had for him. He thought it wrong to feel that way.

Trudging home in the snow, they were currently sleeping in a tent at a nearby park, both still too young to rent a place, and

neither had ID. "Kalen, did something happen?"

Lycus asks him, catching up to him, but Kalen ignores him and keeps walking

home. When they get to the small park at the back of the pub, Kalen unzips the tent and climbs in, sitting on his makeshift bed.

“What’s got into you?”

“Nothing?”

“Well, something is wrong,” Lycus says, sniffing himself. He shudders, he hated how they pawed at him, hated the things he had to do, but he did them so they could survive. When Kalen doesn’t answer, Lycus growls before stomping out of the tent and toward the toilets. There was a shower in there, but it only had cold water, but it was better than nothing. When he returned, Kalen continued to ignore him.

“Kalen,” Lycus said, and he looked up at Lycus. He passes Kalen a burger he must have got on his way home. Kalen sighs but takes it. Lycus sits across from him, eating his own food.

“You were in the red room,” Kalen muttered, taking a bite of his sandwich. Lycus shrugs like it is no big deal.

“Filthy whore, she was married too,” Lycus says, his eyes flicking to Kalen’s.

“What?” Lycus asks, but Kalen shakes his head, going back to eating his food.

“You have been really strange lately. What’s got into you? Have you run out of medication? I can pull a double tomorrow?” Lycus tells him. Kalen mutters under his breath, and Lycus growls at him. Kalen knew he was annoyed. They told each other everything. Well, except for one thing, he never told Lycus how he felt about him. When they finish eating, Lycus rummages through their bags, looking for Kalen’s sleepina pills, and sighs.

“You are out. Why didn’t you say anything?” Lycus asks.

“I don’t want you selling yourself. I hate the smell of them on you,”

“It’s just sex. It’s no big deal,” Lycus says before he sighs.

“To me, it’s not! They are using you!” Kalen screams, and Lycus seems startled by his outburst. Kalen hardly raised his voice, and he was quick to apologize.

“I’m sorry, forget I said anything,” Kalen mutters, rubbing his temples. He could feel a headache coming o

“I don’t mind. It is fine,” Lycus tells him. “I will speak to Bill about doing more shifts,” Lycus says, and Kalen curses, getting to his

feet to storm out of the tent. Only Lycus grips his arm, tugging him back.” What did I say this time? What is wrong?” Lycus asks.

This time he was becoming angry with Kalen’s lack of answers. Kalen’s face heats with embarrassment. “I’m being stupid. It must be my meds,” Kalen tells him with a shake of his head, turning to leave the tent so he could shower.

Kalen froze in the shower, and by the time he got out and returned to the tent, he was shivering and regretting showering in the first place. His teeth chattered as he rubbed his arms, and tonight it was snowing, making it just a little chillier; Kalen hated the cold.

Lycus was reading with a torch between his teeth when he entered. Kalen falls onto the swag beside him, and Lycus looks over at him before lifting his blanket and chucking it over Kalen. Lycus would sometimes shift, knowing his fur would keep him warm and help warm Kalen.

“I’m fine,” Kalen growls.

“You’re freezing,” Lycus tells him as Kalen wriggles beneath his blanket. Lycus places his torch down before sighing and moving closer to Kalen.

“I can shift?” Lycus says, but Kalen felt guilty about their argument and believed he didn’t deserve a friend like him.

“Man, this tent is fucking boring when you are so quiet,” Lycus says, laying down.

“Why don’t you go sleep with one of your whores? I am sure they will keep you entertained,” Kalen spits bitterly, not meaning for the words to spill from his lips.

“What the fuck is your problem?” Lycus snaps at him before gripping his shoulder and flinging Kalen on his back. He glares down at him.

“Fucking answer, I am sick of your snide comments. Do you think I want to fuck them? It’s a job. It keeps u s fed,” Lycus snaps at him.

“Well, you seem to enjoy it, or you wouldn’t keep doing it,” Kalen growls.

“Ah, for fuck sake, if you have something to say, Kalen, fucking say it. I am sick of guessing where your head is at,” Lycus says.

“I don’t want you fucking them. You earn enough without fucking them.” Kalen tells him.

“Your medication is expensive. It’s the only way to cover it,” Guilt smashes into Kalen.

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"Your medication is expensive. It's the only way to cover it," Guilt smashes into Kalen.

"I don't need them," Kalen says, but Lycus growls.

“Yes, you do, we tried that, and you went into withdrawal and had a fucking seizure,” Lycus growls.

“Not if that is what you have to do for them, no. I hate that you fuck them!”

“It’s just sex, Kalen. It means nothing to them or me,” Kalen shoves him back and sits up.

“You keep saying that, but I can’t stand knowing the person I love is their fucking some bitch just to keep u

they use you. I hate living like this. I hate seeing you with them!” Kalen yells, blurting everything out, only realizing what he said

when it was too late to take it back. Lycus tilted his head to the side curiously.

“You love me?” Lycus asks, and Kalen’s face heats and his eyes widen in fear.

“No, you know, like a bro-” his words are cut off when Lycus pounces on him, a scream bubbling up his throat. He had pushed

Lycus too far. Lycus would abandon him too, he thought, until Lycus kissed him.

“You love me?” Lycus mumbled against his lips. Kalen says nothing, in shock that Lycus’ lips were pressed to his. He had always

secretly wondered if they were as soft as they looked. But his kiss was rough as he forced his tongue into Kalen’s mouth when he didn’t answer.

“Is this what you want, Kalen? You want me?” Lycus asks, pulling back to look at him. When he does Lycus rocks his hips against Kalen, and he realizes Lycus had an erection. Kalen gasps, and Lycus is watching him breathing heavily, an unsure look on his face. For once, Lycus looked scared.

“Please say something,” Lycus says to him. Kalen looks away from him. “What I want is wrong,” Kalen murmurs.

“Then I guess it is wrong for me to want to want the same thing,” Lycus says, and Kalen looks at him. Kalen thought Lycus was playing with him until he looked at him.

“You’re not grossed out?” Kalen asks.

“For wanting you too? No! I always have. I just didn’t want to act on it. Didn’t want to lose you, in case you didn’t feel the same way,”

“You want to be with me?” Kalen asks, confused by his own words.

“Wouldn’t be here if I didn’t,” Lycus tells him before smiling and dipping his face closer to Kalen’s. He presses his lips against Kalen’s, his tongue moving across the seam of his lips. Kalen’s lips part before Lycus deepened the

kiss. "Just so you know, I love you too," Lycus whispers. That was one of the first times Kalen felt truly happy. He got a glimpse of happiness. It was also the same night Lycus marked him.

But now that Lycus was aware sleeping with women hurt Kalen, he stopped, which sent them back to having nothing. Lycus was okay with that as long as he had Kalen. Kalen, however, felt he was ruining Lycus's life. Stopped him from becoming who he could become, and when their magic manifested, fear rushed through Kalen when he saw Darius and Tobias's names appear on their wrists. The marking made more shocking when they realized they were mates all along.

I watch the memories play out before stopping again, it slows down, and I am sucked into it. It was a week after their 18th birthday. Both of them were sitting at the park under a tree in the sweltering summer heat. Kalen had felt faint all day from having not eaten. Neither of them had found anything much to eat, and the days were so hot now. Lycus was too weak and dehydrated to try to get to the forest outside the city so Lycus could hunt for them and Kalen was withdrawing from having no medication

today.

“Maybe they will help?” Lycus murmurs.

“Are you insane? That is Darius Wraith. He will kill us,” Kalen murmurs. Everyone knew the Wraiths, and

even they fear the demonic- Fae King.

“We don’t know that. We are technically his mates,” Lycus says.

“Yes, if he wanted us near, he would have called on us by now,”

“Well, we haven’t exactly called on him. Besides, I don’t see much bad stuff about Tobias in the news. He might come?” Lycus tells him.

“No, it isn’t worth the risk. And what about that reporter, Tobias killed him in front of the cameras. And I thought fate couldn’t fuck us over more, so to prove me wrong they had to fate us to the two most influential families, fucking a demonic-fae King and a Vampiric Prince? Seriously, Lycus, they find us, either would kill us, or me anyway, I am the weakest link”

“We don’t know that,” Lycus said, sending a flare of magic into his infinity mark before Kalen could stop him.

“What have you done?” Kalen gasps, horrified as his mark tingles. He looked at it. Mine name was faint, not like the rest on his wrist.

“Anything has to be better than living like this,” Lycus says, only the tingling stops, and Lycus huffed.

“See, told you,” Kalen mutters when they feel the mark stop.” I wonder who rejected it,” Kalen said, a little sad. He rubbed his wrist before laying back down and resting his head on Lycus’s shoulder.

“We’ll figure it out. Maybe once she comes of age, they will accept us,” Lycus murmured to him. They both fell asleep, and Kalen was later woken when someone kicked his foot. He yawns, shaking his head and sitting up. He peers down at Lycus when someone clears their throat.

Turning his head, he comes face to face with Darius crouching next to him in a suit. He eyes Kalen’s mark on his neck before looking at Lycus. Darius’ brows furrow while Kalen tries to shake Lycus awake petrified, his heart pounding in his chest when he notices Tobias standing behind him also staring at them.

Lycus groans and sits up before noticing them and ripping Kalen behind him with strength that clearly indicates what Lycus was.

Darius tilts his head at Lycus, looking him over.

“You are the one that called on us,” Darius asks.

“Yes,” Lycus says while Kalen was worried Darius would kill him for it.

“Why are you at the park? Do you live nearby?”

Tobias asks, and Lycus looks up at him. Tobias tries to look around Lycus at

Kalen, who is peering over Lycus’ shoulder.

“We live here, but you can go. He didn’t mean to call on you,” Kalen blurts. Darius looks up at Tobias, who nods to him before

Darius stands.

“Come on then, I can’t leave you here knowing that,” Darius tells them.

Lycus looks at Kalen over his shoulder. “Where would you take us?” Kalen asked, wondering if they were being led to their deaths.

“Home, now come on. I wanted to come earlier, but I was in a meeting. Now hurry up. I have another in an hour and need to get

you set up back home before I go,” Darius tells him.

“You will let us stay with you?” Lycus asks, a little shocked.

“Well, I won’t have my mates living in a park, now hurry up,” Darius says, checking his watch on his wrist.

“Don’t leave him waiting. You piss him off. He is insufferable. He can hold a grudge like he bloody invented the word,” Tobias says, clicking his fingers.

Darius took them in and provided them everything they ever needed or wanted, looked after them despite

his father clashing with Lycus constantly, yet Darius was always quick to get on Lycus’s side, which often turned into a battle of

power. Darius barely winning against his father, no matter how much he copped a beating, in the arena which I recognized now

as the outdoor obstacle course, though back then it was a

simple training arena.

Darius’ father saw Kalen as a weakness, that being proven when Kalen nearly got them all killed in an ambush, he ran after

Lycus thinking he was hurt, but he was being the bait. It almost cost them all their lives when Kalen alerted everyone to their

location. It was declared after that night that Kalen wouldn’t go on the scout teams. He would remain home in the castle. Which

just added to his depression until Darius handed him a tablet one day.

“What’s this?” Kalen asked, looking up at him.

“The school opened up a buddy system. Lycus said you were bored,”

“You’re lying?” Kalen accused, observing Darius’s aura. Darius laughs and nods.

“Yes, I am. Tobias opened up a buddy system at the school, made it mandatory, and you have been assigned a friend to talk to,

give you someone outside this room to speak with when we aren’t here,” Darius said, kneeling between Kalen’s legs. He hands

the tablet to Kalen, and Kalen takes it from him curiously

“Lycus won’t like me talking to random people,” Kalen tells him.

“This one he approves of,” Darius tells him.

“What would I say, though? I don’t do anything. I am useless,” Kalen says, and Darius growls at his words.

“Don’t speak like that. Don’t listen to the shit my father spouts about, but talk to her. She is waiting for a response. The school logged her in this morning. She will be waiting to speak with you,”

“It’s a girl?” Kalen says, shaking his head. “I can’t speak with a girl,” Kalen says, trying to hand the tablet.

“You can because she is our keeper, our mate. You can’t hide from her now, can you?” Darius laughs, and Kalen bites his lips nervously.

“You think she will want to speak with me?”

“She has no choice but, yes, Kalen. You are worthy of your mates, of her, or the fates wouldn’t have given her to us,” Darius tells him. Kalen sighed when Darius spoke again.

“No names. You must not tell her who you are. That is the rule of the school, not ours, by the way.” Darius nods and Kalen unlocks the tablet.

“I thought you said no names,” Kalen asks, staring at the pen name. Darius smiles slyly. “You told her yours,” Kalen laughed.

“No, I didn’t,” Darius says.

“THIARW is Wraith spelled backward, definitely your name,” Kalen laughs.

“Our name, you are a Wraith too now,” Darius tells him.

“What?”

“We all have to take a name, so what better name than to take the name of the demonic king? No one will dare touch you when

you share ‘my name,” Darius tells him. Kalen snuffles and nods, his thumb brushing over the tablet. Darius turns to leave his room when Kalen speaks.

“Darius?” he calls out. Darius stops and turns to look at him.

“Thanks,” He says, holding up the tablet.

“No, thanks. We are mates. What’s mine is also yours,” Darius tells him. Kalen nods, and watches as Darius leaves. Even with

Darius’s words, he still felt unworthy.

Kalen messaged me, and I replied. At first obligated to, until I was just as obsessed with him as he was with me. He was the

highlight of my day, and I was his. Until I stopped replying.

Kalen was excited because he would meet me today, and he waited patiently, but today he couldn’t contain his excitement as the

memories moved along. That excitement died along with him. Five years and, he was able to tell me who he was, only I never replied, and he spiraled.

I was the last rejection he could take, so he hung himself. He believed he ruined everyone’s chance to have their keeper. He

convinced himself he was the reason I ran. Then he convinced himself they would be better off without him. So he repeatedly killed himself, becoming more unstable each time he came back to find I never came back for him.

—

My heart broke, knowing I was his last straw, a life of rejection, and the one person who should love him most. His keeper never came for him. No. Instead, I ran from him, and in turn, I killed him. That knowledge burned my soul, marred my heart, and broke the spell I was under as I lurched forward, ripping myself out of his memories and into the present world. Kalen sat next to me staring at me.

Kalen dropped his head. “It was you all along,” I whispered. Tears glistened in my eyes before spilling over. I never ran from you Kalen. I was trying to find you, find my internet friend,” I tell him and he sucks in an unsteady breath.

“You’re not mad, I didn’t tell you?” | shake my head.

“No, I am mad Iran,” I tell him before throwing myself in his arms.

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2... Aleera ran away from

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Chapter 80

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Chapter 80

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Book 2 Chapter 1

Kalen POV She was out cold for hours , her shredding had died off , but we all knew it was only a matter of time before it

returned . There were four of us after all , and until she completed it entirely , it would only keep returning , though the first part

seemed to have worn off . ” Try to get some sleep , ”

Lycus murmurs behind me , yet all I could do was stare and watch her

eyelids move as she watched the disaster of my entire life unfold . I hated myself , hated that being our keeper , she would have

to endure all my misdoings , all my failures , and most of all , I hated that she would know . She would see how truly pathetic I

am . Aleer would know that I am weak . I had nothing to offer her , and I worried she would be upset that she was cursed with a

mate like me . Lycus growls , gripping my face and tilting my head to look up at him . ” Get some sleep ! ” he growls , but I shake

my head , gnawing on my fingernail while staring back at her sleeping body . ” Leave him be , Lycus ,

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” Tobias says as he gets ready for bed . He climbed in beside Aleera , tucking her tiny body against him . She reacted instantly to

him , rolling into him and clutching his arm as she whimpered at whatever she was living through in my memories . Lycus squeezes my shoulders , kneeling behind me as he watches her . ” She will be fine , ” ” I know that . It isn’t what I am worried about , ” I whisper , and he leans down , resting his chin on my shoulder and wrapping his huge tree – trunk arms around my waist . ” Then what is it ? ” he asks , nipping at my mark . ” You’re not weak ! ” Darius snarls , and I glance at him over my shoulder . He was sitting by the fire , glaring at it while Ryze perched on the back of the armchair , watching him . ” Is that what you think ? ” Lycus growls at me . His anger erupted through the bond , and I hung my head . Darius always read me too well . They all did . Darius , however , was usually the most observant . ” What if she thinks I am ? ” I murmur . ” You are not weak . Never say that again . You know I hate when you talk like that . ” ” 1 Lycus snapped . ” Lycus , calm down , ” Tobias scolded as Lycus trembled behind me , fighting the urge to shift at my words . Yet I couldn’t help but believe

she would hate me for being weak , hate me for not telling her it was me all along that was talking to her , hate me for them hating her for what I did . ” Lycus , go for a run , ” Darius snarled , making me jump when he ripped Lycus off the bed just as Lycus shifted into his gigantic black wolf . His claws ripped apart the rug as he skidded along it . Tobias clucked his tongue while Darius glared at him and pointed at the door . Ryze hissed and squawked at the huge werewolf . Lycus’s anger grew , and his werewolf instincts took over , making him savage . No longer in control , he lunged at Ryze , but Darius snatched him off the back of the armchair before his powerful jaws wrapped around the bird . Tobias pointed to the door , and Lycus growled , his claws scratching the floor up . Lycus pivots and runs out the door when Tobias moves with inhuman speed and opens it . ” What’s wrong with him ? ” I asked . He didn’t usually lose control like that . 11 ” He is picking up on her anger as well , Darius says and I look at Aleera and put my head in my hands . She thought I was weak

; I knew she would . I wasn't like them . I wasn't powerful . I wasn't strong . Darius steps closer , holding Ryze in his hands like he is holding an oversized chicken . Instinctively , I cringe away , and Ryze flaps his wings . Darius lets him go , and Ryze flies over to perch on the headboard . His tail flicked over her arm as he petted her like she was his pet , not the other way around . ”

Crazy bird , ” Darius mutters , climbing on the bed beside her . Ryze hisses at him , but he waves his hand at him . “

Hate me all you want . Just do it quietly , ” Darius snaps at him . I shake my head , but Ryze seems to listen , huddling in his feathers like an owl watching with wide eyes , but he remains quiet . Darius leans his face closer , sniffing her neck before sighing and laying back . He pats his chest with his hand while looking at me expectantly , but I don't move . ” One ! ” Darius says , and I ignore him , not in the mood to cuddle . I was antsy and irritable .

” Two ! ” I pick at the blanket , watching her squirm as fear floods me through the bond from her . ” Don't make him get to three ,

Kalen , ” Tobias hisses behind me and nudges me toward him . I roll my eyes and look at Darius , who raises an eyebrow like he was daring me to disobey him before pursing his lips . He lifts a finger , motioning for me to come to him , and I growl before crawling closer . Obviously , I didn't move fast enough when Darius ripped me on top of him . ”

Stop your pouting and sleep , ”

Darius growled before pressing his lips to my forehead . His hand was warm as it trailed up my arm gently .

” You're not weak , ” he whispers , while I trace the scars on his chest with my fingertips . I looked up at him , observing his aura , but I could see he was worried about something . His aura was black but flickering red oddly .

Everyone had color in their aura , depending on the emotion . Mostly everyone was a shade of black or grey , sometimes blue . Looking at Aleera's was like looking at a bubble when the sun hits it , a mirage of every color you could think of . Observing Darius again , he was nervous about something . ” What are you worried about ? ” I asked him . ” Nothing that concerns you , now sleep , ” ” Only if you tell me ,

" I tell him , and he growls , squeezing my arm before he sighs . " She will know all my secrets , just like she knows yours , " You worried she will find out about your father ? " " No , something else , " I could tell he wouldn't answer any more than that and sighed before looking at Tobias , who curiously watched Darius . Darius grabs my hand , placing it over his heart and holding it there . " Try to sleep . I will wake you when she is up , " he says before I feel his magic wash over me . I melt against him , letting his scent soothe my anxiety . A few hours later , I am woken by screams ; I lurch upright , and so do Darius and Tobias . Lycus , having returned , growls , stepping over me , his eyes on the door . Blinking , I see it is still dark , but definitely early morning . The light outside was lightening , and I could just make out the trees in the distance . "

For crying out loud . What now ? " Tobias groans , tossing the blanket back and climbing out of bed . Something was going on downstairs . Darius tapped my arm , and I rolled off him . He leaned down , kissing my lips softly , his tongue forcing its way into

my mouth as he kissed me . All too soon , he pulls away before ruffling Lycus ' fur as he climbs off the bed . " Stay here , " he says , grabbing a shirt and tugging it on as he follows Tobias to the door . They leave , and I look at Lycus , who starts to shift back before moving off the bed toward the closet . Sitting up , I see Aleera was still asleep , but her eyelids moving rapidly when she shot upright , scaring the crap out of me . She blinks , her eyes trying to adjust to the light . " " It was you all along , " I whispered . Tears glistened in her eyes before spilling over . " I never ran from you , Kalen . I was trying to find you , find my internet friend , " she tells me , and I suck in a breath . " You're not mad . I didn't tell you ? " I ask her .. " No , I am mad I ran , " she says , tears roll down her cheeks before she threw herself in my arms . I wrap my arms around her , squeezing her tight . She didn't hate me , and I had never felt more relieved . Feeling the bed , I watch Lycus climb on the bed . He kisses my cheek before running his fingers through her hair , and Aleera turns her head on my shoulder to look at him . I kiss her nose , hugging

her tighter when Lycus runs a hand down her sides before pinching her chin and pulling her head off my shoulder . Her lips part , and he kisses her gently at first before his tongue invades her mouth , making my cock twitch beneath her . ” Thank you , ” Lycus whispers , pulling his lips from hers and she looks at him oddly , clearly confused by his words . ” For what ? ” she asks , confused . Lycus pecks her lips before laying down , pulling us with him .

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