

Chapter 29

Walking to the one next to it, I placed him on the bed. At least this cell had one. The phoenix stared at me and nestled against it. His eyes looked sad, and I could tell he was in pain. I wished I had magic so I could heal him. Maybe I could try to siphon some from somewhere? Taking my jumper off, I cringed. I only had one and two changes of clothes. Hopefully, it wouldn't get too cold, but he needed it more than me. So, I made him a make-shift nest out of it.

"I have to go," I tell him, patting his head. He watched me and nestled into his bed but when I went to leave, he squawked and my heart raced at the noise. I rushed back, clamping my hand on its beak. "Shh, shh, they will hear. You have to be quiet, I will try to catch you some mice or find some food, but you have to be quiet," I tell him, and it made a cooing sound but dropped its head, tucking it under its good wing.

I patted him for a few seconds on its orange-red feathers that remained on its neck before giving him a kiss. He ripped his head out from under his wing, and I thought at first he was going to bite me, but he pressed his big beak to cheek and I brushed the few feathers on his head.

"I will be back," I told him. He stared with eyes far too intelligent. My mother used to have a phoenix before she died, and after my father brought her back, turning her into a Dark-Fae. I remembered it hated my father, constantly pecking him

and snapping at him when he got too close to her, but it loved my mother. After she changed, it turned on her and attacked her, so dad killed it. I loved that bloody bird and cried for a week straight.

The Pheonix appeared to realize I was trying to help him nestled down in my jumper, and I raced upstairs. I went quickly back to my room, trying to find anything I could to help him and to see if I could find something to feed it. I smiled when I laid eyes on the bandages still sitting on the dresser from my ruined feet. They were filthy, but I might be able to use them to wrap his wing and part of his torso.

Phoenix's grew quite large and fully grown stood about 5 feet. My new little friend was a juvenile and was only around the size of a macaw right now, so I knew he would grow much bigger.

I grabbed the bandages and my pillowcase stripping it off the pillow before deciding to try to smuggle the entire pillow out for him. I remembered how cold it got down there. Deciding to shower before dinner, I retrieved one of their shirts. I always thought it odd that I found a new one in the room to sleep in every night. I only had two pairs of pants and two shirts plus my jumper, so I was excited because now I had socks and some flats to add to my tiny wardrobe.

Just as I was about to walk into the bathroom, I noticed the glint of steel on the bedside table. I totally forgot about the scissors I smuggled, but why were they on the dresser? One of them must have found them, yet they left them, which

surprised me.

Let's see them rip my damn hair out when I have none to pull on; I snickered at my thoughts, snatching the scissors off the top of the dresser and walked into the bathroom.

I tugged my jeans off and placed them on the counter since I still had to try and go and steal some dinner from the mess hall, and I certainly wasn't going down there in just one of my mates' shirts.

Looking in the mirror, I stared at my long, raven black hair. It was unruly and hung to my waist. My grandmother and father had the same color hair, and it saddened me that I was about to chop it off. But at the same time, I was sick of it being the first thing they grabbed. Grabbing the scissors, I hacked at one side. My stomach sank as I held up the handful of hair I lobbed off. Tears streamed down my face at how short it was sitting just below my shoulders blades.

Placing the hair on the bench, I tugged my hair up in a ponytail, just chop it off. You can do it, plus I already cut one side that looked like I tried to cut it with a fork; it was that uneven and the scissors were blunt. So I couldn't back out now. I raised the scissors and gripped my hair at the top of my head, close to the scalp. I started chopping at it when the door opened before I didn't even have a chance to see who it was before the scissors were snatched from my hand, and my head was yanked back by the very hair I was trying to get rid of.

I cried out and clutched the hands before spotting Darius in

the mirror. "What the fuck do you think you are doing?"

Darius snarled as Lycus wandered on in behind him. Kalen's voice reached my ears, but Lycus quickly slammed the door and locked it.

"Darius," Lycus hissed.

"She was..." Darius looked at me in the mirror before noticing my hair on the countertop.

"Why would you chop off your hair? What the fuck is wrong with you," he says, thrusting the scissors at Lycus's chest.

"Because I am sick of everyone fucking grabbing it," I snapped at him, and he quickly let go. He seemed shocked at me yelling at him. I rubbed the back of my neck and the top of my scalp. It felt tender as strands were yanked out on the crown of my head.

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"You are not cutting it. You will look like a boy," Darius growled.

"That's the point, asshole. I would rather have no fucking hair than have you ripping it out every chance you get," Kalen banged on the door demanding to know what was going on, and Darius growled and looked over at Lycus.

"Deal with him while I deal with her," Darius snapped. He reached over, snatching the scissors from Lycus. Who looked at him worriedly.

"Go deal with him," Darius said, his aura rushing out and making the room hot with his anger. Lycus sighed but opened the door. He had to grab Kalen as he tried to force his way in before the door shut and Darius locked it. He turned to face me, and I took a step back away from him when he went to step closer with the scissors clutched tightly in hand.

"You ruined it," He snarled, and my heart rate skyrocketed at the evil look in his eyes. It's just hair. Why the hell does he care about whether or not I have hair on my damn head.

"Sit on the edge with your feet in the bath," He snapped, pointing at the bathtub. I glanced at the bathtub, and he growled at me, which made me move to do as he asked before he commanded me, giving me no choice.

"Don't cut your hair," he paused, and I felt his presence

behind me but didn't dare look at him. I felt fingers run through the lengths of it as he growled at my hack job before dropping the scissors beside me.

"Wait here," He said before he walked out of the room. I wondered what my chance was of escaping whatever punishment he was about to inflict when he walked back in, and I looked over at him only to see Tobias was with him. Tobias sighed and looked at Darius.

"Fix it," Darius snapped at him.

"Do I look like a hairdresser?" Tobias asked him. No to me, he looked more like someone that would scalp me, not fix hair. Darius dropped some pouch on the ledge of the bath beside me and rummaged through it.

"You do our hair all the time," Darius told him.

"That involves clippers, not scissors, and I am not sure I can fix that. You do it. You are used to cutting long hair. I have never done a woman's hair before," Tobias argued. That surprised me. I couldn't really picture any of them doing hair. Darius growled at him, but Tobias shook his head.

"Nope, you want it fixed, do it yourself. You used to do your mo -" Tobias stopped, his words cut off abruptly with the thunderous growl that left Darius. Tobias glared at him and walked out, and I looked at Darius who was fuming before he scrubbed a hand down his face and looked over at me. I flinched when he stepped closer, but he only reached down and grabbed the comb.

"Just stay still," Darius said, he turned my head straight so I had to look at the tiles. Frozen with shock when I felt him combing my hair, I stared off at the tiled wall. I was curious to know what Tobias said before being cut off by Darius.

"You like long hair?" I blurted the words slipping past my lips before I could stop them. Fuck Aleera. Curiosity killed the cat. You are the cat in this situation, I tried to remind myself. However, I was shocked when he answered.

"Yes, Lycus used to have long hair, but it annoyed him, and he cut it off not long after we found him," Darius said. I felt him brush up against me as he continued to comb the knots out. He reached beside me, pulling a clip out and piling my hair on my head, leaving sections.

My hair started falling away as he cut it, and I glanced down to see it was cut just below my shoulders before he pulled another section from the clip before combing it. "were you a hairdresser in a past life?" I chuckled at the thought. Darius huffed.

"You believe in that past life crap?" he asked. I shrugged, unsure what I believed or if I believed in anything after death.

"Not sure," I answered honestly. I jumped when he placed the scissors beside me and walked off before rummaging under the sink. He returned and wet my hair with a spray bottle, which made me jump again at how cold the liquid was inside.

Darius distracted while fixing my ruined hair, almost seemed

like an average person, or maybe it was the bond. His aura remained threatening. But he wasn't being cruel, so I figured he must have some form of humanity in him. I tried to contain my laughter at that thought when I remembered him telling his recruits my hair was off-limits when they threatened to burn it off.

"I will try not to grab it, but don't cut it again. It is now short enough," Darius said behind me, and I almost turned to look at him, but his fingers forced my face forward before I could.

"Stay still," He snapped, and I swallowed.

"I can't picture Lycus with long hair," I admitted and Darius chuckled.

"When we found them, it was really long, almost as long as yours was,"

"So you liked doing his hair," I pried.

"No, he cut it off. I was furious, but-" he stopped like he remembered who he was talking to.

"Do you even care, or are you just trying to make small talk?" he asked. I thought about it for a second because it was kind of both; I cared because if he was talking, that meant he wasn't killing me; but I was also curious why he was so upset about hair.

"Just curious why you got angry when you seem so intent on ripping mine out," I told him honestly. He paused his cutting

and cleared his throat.

"Don't try to cut it, and I won't grab it," he finally said, and his aura dropped, which allowed my shoulders to untense.

"My sister used to have long hair,"

"I thought you were an only child?" I asked him.

"She died when she was seven."

"What was her name?"

"Molly, she was my mother's illegitimate child. She had an affair on my father," I chewed my lip at that bit of information. That definitely wouldn't have gone down well. Especially if he was anything like Darius.

"He forgave her, but when the plague hit my sister, died, along with the rest of the Fae,"

"Wait, your sister was a white Fae?"

"No, a harmony one, both my parents were dark-demonic, Molly's father was a white-Fae,"

"Wait, but the Fae plague hit before I was born," I tell him, and he hums in agreement.

"Yes, but the second wave hit seven years later. She would have been the same age as you," my brows furrowed in confusion. I don't remember a second wave talked about, and how did I survive it if there was one?

"It wasn't like the first one. They poisoned the water system, we ran off town water, when the rumor started about the plague my sister and mother went into confinement under the castle, she survived the first wave because it was airborne. My father had strict protocols on who was allowed in and out. They lived down there for 3 years before we realized they could come out. Mum wouldn't leave her down there by herself. Yet when the second wave hit, no one saw it coming, and the water supplies were poisoned, she had a bath and fell ill,"

"So you used to do her hair?" I asked him.

"No, my mother's, after Molly died, she became depressed and couldn't look after herself; I looked after her until she died," Darius answered. I swallowed, not knowing what to say, and he didn't tell me anything else, just kept cutting my hair.

When he was finished, he tapped my shoulder for me to turn around before gripping the ends. His face was in deep concentration as he cut some of the hair around my face before making sure the ends were the same length.

He then nodded and stood up before he walked out. I stared after him before shaking my head and dusting off my shirt.

Looking in the mirror, he cut just below my shoulders. Darius returned a few seconds later and placed some hair ties on the counter, not saying a word before he walked out again, leaving me alone. I quickly locked the door before cleaning up all my hair and dumping it in the bin. I then showered fast so I could get to the mess hall early so I could get back to my feathery

friend.

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I rubbed my arms against the cold night air that drifted through the castle doors as I came downstairs. It was freezing tonight, and I worried for the phoenix since he was almost completely featherless and hoped he would be warm enough for the night. Voices in the mess hall made me cringe as I approached it, but I needed to eat something; I was beginning to feel quite shaky. I couldn't survive off toast of a morning alone.

I kept my head low as I made my way into the line, wishing I still had my hoodie to obscure my face. The smell of the food made me ravenous, and my stomach growled hungrily. The man in front of me turned and looked down at me before snarling and looking away. Retrieving a tray and plate, I made my way down the line only whenever I stopped at one of the stations the person stationed there would close the lids, not allowing me to retrieve anything.

I rolled my eyes and went to lift the lid off of the last one, not really caring at this point what it was. Only the moment I did, the demon stationed there slammed the piping hot lid on top of my hand and I felt his magic make the lid vibrate as he used his magic to turn the steel red as he forged heat into it. I cried out and tried to jerk my hand free, but he growled and pressed harder. The steel lid burned my flesh, and I could feel the bubbling of my skin.

"Traitor," He sneered at me while I held back the tears that threatened to spill. I would not let him see me cry. Gritting my teeth, I jerked my hand out, bringing the ladle with me full of what looked like stew, and tossed it as his face. He shrieked loudly but fuck him. If I had my magic, I would have scorched the bastard alive and watched him burn for the shit they keep doing to me.

I silently promised myself that I would get my revenge and when it came that time these men would know who they fucked with. I had no idea when that would be, today tomorrow. Years down the track. However, when I came for them, they wanna beg because I would burn this place to the ground with them trapped in it.

He clutched his eyes as the boiling hot liquid splashed on his face, and I examined my hand. Blisters bubbled on the back of my hand, and the outline from the pot melted my skin and tore my flesh away when I jerked my hand out. I turned away to leave when someone grabbed me by the back of my neck. I screamed and tried to fight back, but he was behind me as he dragged me nearer to bubbling stew. I clutched the sides of the bench as he tried to force my face into the boiling bubble.

Those present laughed, and my hand slid into the pot, pain seared up my arm to my elbow. I hissed in pain, and I yanked it out only for my face to press too close. The heat I could feel against my face when I threw my boiled hand back and connected with something that made him let go. A shocked collective gasp filled the room as I turned on my attacker and

looked at him, clutching his manhood he had dropped to the ground. Good to know I hit somewhere painful. Though that was short-lived when I got a good look at his face.

"You're dead bitch," He choked out, and I looked in horror at the person I tossed the soup at. It was Deacon, one of Zac's friends. I quickly ran from the room as I heard chairs screeching and didn't bother looking back as I ran for the stairs. Fuck, I knew it wouldn't end well. But what choice did I have? Once on the top floor, I knew I was safe, or as safe as I could be, in this dreadful place.

I had noticed no one other than my mates ever came up to the floor where my room was. Like it off-limits to the rest of the recruits, I was thankful for that for once. My hand and arm seared with burning pain, and I rushed to the bathroom and turned the faucet on. Placing my burnt limb under the cool liquid. My hand looked like bubble wrap; the skin was that blistered. Tears welled in my eyes, and I knew that was the last of my dinner outings. It looked like my only meal would be breakfast if I could get there early enough.

I would have to manage until I found an escape out of here, but what would I do with my phoenix? I needed to find a way to get out of here and figured I would wait until he got better. If I carried him, it would slow me down, and if they caught me, they would surely kill him. So I needed to make sure he could fly on the off chance they did catch me. At least he could escape and be free.

When the pain subsided a little, I walked back into my room

and flopped on my bed. I suppose I could try and sneak out tonight if they left my door unlocked. I could rummage through the bins for something for the phoenix to eat. He must be hungry. I knew I was, but I wasn't at the point where I was going to start eating everyone's leftovers, not that I hadn't dumpster dived before. How did it get to this? My life become this nightmare? I knew logically because I called on them, but now I saw that for what it was, stupidity. But what of Kalen. Could I really abandon him after knowing him?

I tried to light the stupid fire; the room was freezing, and whoever kept opening up that damn window needed a swift kick up their ass. I glared at it before going over to yank it shut, and I actually managed it this time. The window slammed with a loud thud. I cringed, hoping they didn't come in and think I was breaking the place up.

Turning back to the fireplace, I tried to get the coals to catch a piece of wood on fire. They could at least leave me a lighter. Seriously who uses a flint? I thought, picking it up and examining the ridiculous thing. I shook my head when the door opened, and Tobias stepped in. I jumped to my feet when I saw the hungry look on his face; his fangs protruded. And before I even had a chance to find something to defend myself, he had me pinned against the dresser. A feral growl left his lips as he pressed his face in the crook of my neck.

Chapter 32

Tobias POV

We had just finished eating dinner, yet I was craving something else. Someone else. I never should have fed on Aleera. I was only allowed to feed on Lycus and Darius, and I knew the reason for it, but her blood had been calling me from the moment I laid eyes on her. I told myself just a taste, but I knew I was done for when I fed on her when I tried to take the shadows from her.

Lycus watched me; he had been looking at me strangely all day since he found me arguing with Aleera.

"I need to check the wards in the forest. Do you want to come?"

"Darius asked, getting up from his seat.

"No, I will wait here," I told him. He tilted his head to the side, examining me. I always went with him, and I knew he was suspicious of me too. They all were. My hunger was insatiable, one of the reasons I was only to strictly feed on Lycus and Darius. They could fight me off. Kalen and Aleera, not so much if I lost control.

"When did you last feed? You seem to be in a mood," Darius asked before his eyes flicked to Lycus.

"Earlier off me, twice actually," Lycus answered, and Darius turned his gaze back to me, and I noticed Kalen get up to head through the bathroom, and I growled in warning at him.

"Sit Kalen, I will take you to see her later," I told him, and he sighed but sat back on the bed, yet Darius still didn't leave.

"Are you struggling since feeding on her the other night?" Darius asked me, and I shook my head.

"No, I am just drained," I lied. He didn't look like he believed me, but I also knew Darius had an obsession with the wards, and my mood wouldn't keep him here much longer; I just needed to wait him out.

"Lycus, do you want to come?" Darius turned and asked him.

"Can I?" Kalen asked him excitedly.

"I thought you wanted to see Aleera?"

"I can't until you come back anyway," Kalen huffed before pouting.

"Lycus can go. I will see if Aleera is back and take Kalen to see her," I told them, and Kalen's eyes lit up. My lips quirked in the corners loving his excitement, and I wished he always looked so happy. Why couldn't we be enough for him? Why did she bring out this more optimistic side of him?

"No, Tobias. He needs to wait,"

"I will be with him," I told Darius, and he sighed and rubbed his temples. Kalen pouted at him and gave him a pleading look and I knew Darius was going to sway. He had trouble denying Kalen unless it was strictly in the range of harming him.

Darius knew I wouldn't allow her to hurt him, understanding that he sighed and turned to me.

"Don't leave him with her, and don't let her touch anything,"

"What, you still want to bring her in here?" I asked him. I didn't think he was serious about that. Darius looked away, and I knew he was just as affected by her presence as we all were. He was just better at hiding it.

With me, her scent was all I could think about and the taste of her blood. I hated her more for wanting her, and I couldn't help but glare at the floor.

"Fine, we won't be gone long, but remain with them, don't leave them alone together," Darius snapped before opening up a portal. Lycus groaned, and I know he hated leaving Kalen. Nighttime was pretty much the only time we were all together in one place, and I know he missed Kalen most.

We all did; he was our glue. But Lycus and Kalen were together long before Darius, and I joined the party. At first, the idea of marking them disgusted me, and I could have lived without the powersharing. I could retrieve magic by drinking blood alone in little dribs and drabs, but I wasn't sure I could part from them after finding them.

After the fire and Darius and I cloaked her, which was stupid on our part, we cloaked her so well we couldn't even find her if we wanted to. If she left, the chances of us finding her again were pretty slim. The cloaking spell had turned to a permanent shield on her for some reason. The only way to

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break it was by marking her, which Darius would never allow.

And damn how we had searched for her, following lead after lead. We weren't sure powersharing was possible without our keeper, not until we witnessed it ourselves.

Kalen and Lycus, when we found them, were sleeping on the streets, and Lycus had become sick after accidentally ingesting wolfsbane, which in turn made Kalen call on us. I still remembered how filthy and skinny they both were, and Darius and I were both furious at how they were both living, and to find out they had both been living on the street for two years together startled us.

So when they called on our 18th birthday, we came to them and brought them back here. Just before learning Aleera's parents tried to kill her, we felt her distress. How we felt her was beyond all of our reasoning. It was almost like she called on us. She wasn't bonded to us yet, but we all had an inkling she was in trouble, and our marks burned our wrists when she did.

I shook that memory away and watched Lycus grab Kalen's chin and kiss him. I smirked, watching them before Lycus let him go and followed Darius through the portal. That was also how we realized we could power share. We walked in on Lycus and Kalen fucking and felt the magnitude of power in the air, so Darius did some research, and we learned by marking each other that we could share our energy.

It was taboo and only accepted if the keeper was dead. Ours wasn't, so it caused a lot of issues. Mostly with mine and

Darius's family.

So we marked each other, but it didn't work. We were back to square one, but Lycus and Kalen continued having power somehow when we realized how they were transferring it. Emotion. It repulsed Darius and me when we figured it out.

Knowing if we wanted to remain strong, we actually had to bond, which meant mate each other and commit to an actual relationship. Lycus and Kalen had no such issues, but Darius and I were straight. Completely straight. She gave us no choice when she ran, and we were forced to forge the bond. Kalen and Lycus were both patient and never pushed us past our comfort zones too much. When eventually, Darius got injured, protecting me from bloodhounds, we had refused for years to share power the way Lycus and Kalen did. But while hunting for her, we were set upon by the hounds, and neither of us had enough ability to take them down, forcing us to run.

He had sacrificed his life for mine, and in turn, I kissed him. Didn't even think twice about it? He saved me, and I owed him, and I realized it worked better than feeding him my blood. After that, it became a non-issue. As long as nothing went near my ass, I was okay with it. Well, for the first few years until the bond forged entirely, and I started craving them all, that craving extended to any way I could have them.

Darius is the most powerful. His power was potent, and I had never met anyone that yielded or controlled magic the way he did. Darius sort of became our keeper. He had particular gifts. We all found ourselves more inclined toward him. When we

needed power, we usually went to him for it. His was the most potent and charged us quicker. Good thing he has good stamina. I chuckled, not realizing I did out loud.

"What are you laughing at?" Kalen asked, making me look up at him.

"Nothing, just when we all first got together," I told him, and Kalen smiled deviously before crawling to the edge of the bed. I could see he also remembered the orgy fest it turned into.

His eyes sparkled, "I was wondering why your aura changed,"

"Changed? How so?" I asked him while getting up from my seat. I walked over to him, and he leaned back to look up at me, and he shrugged with a coy smile on his lips.

"More color in it?" he said before his brows pinched together.

"Well, that is new. Since when do I have color in my aura?" I asked him, knowing mine was usually a smoky grey color. He seemed to think. "Since you took the shadows from Aleera," he shrugged.

"Well, she is our keeper. I suppose her aura would be vastly different," I told him.

"I swear I saw something in hers, though, hers was different, something about it-"

"You were manic, Kalen, you know you see weird things when you are like that," and he nodded when I tried to feel for his aura. His was surprisingly stable. I couldn't see it but felt it

was the most transparent it had ever been. Like he was before he tried to kill himself the first time. Before the shadows clung to him.

"You took your meds?" I asked him, and he looked down at his hands. I placed my knee on the bed beside him forcing him back as I crawled on top of him.

"Is that no?" I asked, nipping at his lips. His hands went to my sides and under my shirt. Sparks rushed across my skin when he tugged me closer, so I was pressed between his legs. His breathing became heavier, and his scent heady made me inhale deeply before I kissed him. He tasted sweet, not as sweet as Aleera's blood, but I swear I could taste her on him.

Like she tainted him some way. Kalen answered my kiss instantly. His tongue played with mine when I pulled away and kissed down his jaw to his neck. I could feel his pulse under my tongue as I licked his mark, and I pressed my lips together when I felt my fangs slip out.

"Tobias?" Kalen murmured, and I heard his heart rate pick up, smelt the cologne of his fear seep from his pores. I shook my head and pulled away. He stared at me worriedly, and I pushed off from him.

"I will go get Aleera for you," I told him before hopping off the bed and walking out. What is wrong with me? My fangs refused to retract as I moved toward her door. I could hear her cursing under her breath through the door, and I sucked in a breath trying to will my hunger down, trying to control the

bloodlust as it tried to consume me.

Thinking it was under control, I pushed her door open and closed it behind me, but the moment her scent hit me, a growl escaped me. Aleera looked at me startled and stood up, yet all I could hear was her blood pumping through her veins. She gasped as I pinned her against the dresser and buried my face in her neck and an hungered growl escaped me when she dropped her chin, trying to stop me from getting to her neck. Her words were not registering as she spoke in what I could tell was a panicked tone. My fangs grazed over my skin, and my mouth watered at the delicious scent permeating off of her.

"Tobias!"