

Chapter 56

Aleera POV

The next morning, I awoke cold; Darius walked into the room and tossed some clothes at me. "Get dressed and get to class," he snapped. I looked at the clothes on the bed and scrambled for them, snatching them and chucking them on. Anything for the extra warmth they would provide. I was just thankful he wouldn't make me go to class in my bra undies. Darius stood in the doorway, watching as I got changed.

He growled when I took too long, and I looked down at my feet, which were still bare. Great, back to no shoes again, thought. At least I had pants and a blouse. "You try to run, you try to speak to anyone; I will retake your voice," he said before waving his hand and giving me my voice back. Warmth tickled my throat, and I went to explain I wasn't running. The moment my lips moved, he gripped my throat.

"That means speaking to me too; I don't want to hear it. Now get to fucking class," Darius sneered before turning on his heel and leaving me. I swallowed and walked down to breakfast, hoping that Tobias would feed Ryze. Worrying about him kept me up most of the night, and I wondered if Ryze caught his own dinner last night when I didn't come up to see him. I made my way to the mess hall. The moment I stepped in, all eyes went to me. I grabbed a sandwich and moved to an empty table.

Something felt off this morning. I didn't know what, but something felt different as I glanced around the crowded room. Leering eyes watched me from where I sat alone in the mess hall. My usual spot was taken, preferring to be closest to the exit where I mainly remained unnoticed. Closer to the door was safest because it gave me an escape route.

Their sleazy gazes had me on edge as they watched me hungrily. I hated this place. There were no other women here. Most of all, I hated being the subject they loved to torment. All made worse by the fact I am powerless to stop them.

The surrounding chatter quieted down and made me quickly glance around before I ducked my head when I noticed them. Darius had entered the room with my other three mates. They walked to the back of the room and took seats at the back, which I thought was a little odd; I rarely saw them here. It appeared they had something to talk about with their recruits because Darius spoke about some crap I showed no interest in knowing. Keeping my head down, I ate quickly, wanting nothing more than to get the hell out of here and also worried if Kalen tried to speak to me, I would be forced to ignore him or lose my voice if I tried.

However, the moment I stood up and went to chuck my rubbish in the bin, my muscles spasmed, my feet faltered as I tried to take a step away from the table, and my entire body locked up with one command.

"Aleera, freeze," came a voice. I recognized the voice instantly and dreaded what he would do this time.

My entire body stopped at the command. I couldn't move an inch, and everyone erupted with laughter. Oh, how I tried, but I couldn't so much as wiggle a toe. What were these savage men going to subject me to this time? They never usually went this far. Usually, they tormented me, chased me, hurt me. However, this was the first time they used compulsion on me, and it felt wrong as every muscle in my body tensed.

My eyes went to my mates at the back; Darius, Tobias, and Lycus watched from the far table. They were always happy to witness my suffering. Kalen, however, glanced around the room before he looked at me and dropped his head.

My stomach dropped when Zac got up from his seat. My lungs constricted at the cruel smirk plastered on his face. Zac sauntered over to me before he stopped in front of me. His eyes hungrily looked me over from head to toe. Zac was the worst out of all the recruits I have come across here. The vile bastard had no boundaries. He was usually behind my worst degradation. Zac walked around me slowly and plucked the sandwich wrapper from my fingers while I remained unmoving.

"Stand up straight," he ordered, and I gritted my teeth. My forced body did as commanded as Zac's cold magic caressed over me. A violent shudder ran through me in repulsion as I tried to fight against the command, but it was pointless. I was a puppet on strings, and he was the puppet master at this moment.

"Nothing to say, Aleera?" he chuckled, and the entire room erupted with laughter. Except for my mates that watched from the back with expressionless faces.

"Nothing I say will stop you. Did you want me to beg? Beg for you not to do whatever vile thing it is you intend to do?" I spat at him, knowing I would probably lose my voice for speaking.

Being trapped in this place, I learned quickly not to beg. It just made the torment worse when I did. They didn't care that I was female; they didn't care I was powerless. All they cared about was the control they had over me.

"You're right. It wouldn't stop me; the guys and I want you to put on a show for us," Zac said in an amused tone. I glanced around the room to find the men all were leaning forward eagerly; one even winked at me while another licked his lips.

My eyes darted to the table where my mates sat. Not a scrap of emotion was shown on their faces for what I was about to endure. They would not help me, not that I expected them to. They never did. If they just told them who I was to them, if their soldiers only knew. I wouldn't have to deal with this shit daily. However, I knew they would deny it if I spoke up. Darius had threatened to kill me if I told anyone here who I was to them. So I had kept my mouth shut. They hated me, and the feeling was mutual. Yet, I couldn't bear to see them hurt, so how could they watch my humiliation with no expression at all?

My eyes went back to Zac, who looked me up and down. Was he going to make me dance? What did he mean by a show? I was already on display. How much worse can it get?

"You could always say no?" Zac teased before he scoffed.

"Oh, that's right, you can't. Poor helpless Aleera, always so easily influenced, so easily overpowered, must truly suck being the weakest form of Fae," He mocked. His demonic eyes ran the length of me in a sleazy, obscene way. His gaze stopped at my breasts, and I felt my stomach drop somewhere deep and cold within me. I knew what he was going to say before he said it. Prayed, I was mistaken, but his following words confirmed my thoughts.

"Strip, Aleera," Zac said, his voice coming out like a purr. I blinked at him, tried to fight his compulsion with everything in me, even though I knew it was pointless. My eyes burned as tears threatened to spill, and my hands shook as I tried to resist doing what he asked.

"All of it, I want to see you completely bare" My fingers forcibly undo the buttons on my black blouse. My breathing became harsher as I tried to resist his compulsion. A sob tore from my lips that sounded more like a whimper. My vision blurred as my top fell open and revealed my black bra. Zac gripped my shirt and yanked it, my shirt tearing painfully from my body under the force he used. My scars were on display for everyone to see. The worst was the burn that went from my shoulder to my hip.

The men watching hollered and whistled, and some even poked fun at my burned, scar-ravaged skin. Was this high school? Were they truly this immature? Fully grown men, and they were all subjecting me to this. Worst of all, my mates just watched. Although I noticed Kalen looked away when my eyes fell on him; he almost appeared to look guilty, like he wanted to step in and stop it. My fingers were still working to undo the buttons and zip on my black slacks. My eyes stung from the tears that brimmed and spilled over as I bent over to remove my pants.

"Please stop," I choked out as I stood upright. How could they all be so cruel?

"All of it," Zac commanded again.

My entire body shook at his command, my cheeks burned with the humiliation, tears ran down my cheeks and dripped off my chin, and I could hear them all talking and laughing.

My bottom lip trembled as my hands reached behind my back and fumbled with the clasp of my bra. A hiccuped sob left me as it unclipped. I couldn't handle it, so I clenched my eyes shut so I didn't see their faces watching me. I hoped it was stuck, but of course, it would come undone easily and expose me more.

Zac's hand ran down my arm from my shoulder to my elbow as he pulled the strap of my bra down. My eyes flew open at his touch, his other hand moved to my hip, and I felt the bile rise in my throat. The feel of his hands on me disgusted me. I wondered how far he would take this. Looking over at my mates, Kalen got up and walked out along with Lycus. Darius and Tobias, however, were enjoying my torment.

"Hurry, Aleera, take it off, take it all off," Zac purred, as he tugged my bra strap off my other shoulder. I stared at Darius. Is this what he wanted? Was this still not humiliating enough? His

eyes darkened when Zac ran his hand up my side before grabbing my breast roughly. He twisted my nipple painfully, making me cry out, and I felt more tears spill over as my bra fell away. The room erupted with whistles and vulgar taunts.

Darius and Tobias could stop this, and I pleaded with my eyes for them to step in, just this once, and not subject me to this. My hands shook violently as they reached for my panties. It was the last article of clothing I had left, the one place left untouched.

My fingers gripped them, and I closed my eyes and went to tug them down. When something wet splattered on my face and skin. The sound was so sickening it made my eyes fly open to see blood drops on the floor before blood pooled around my feet. Zac's command was suddenly gone, and I felt the weight of it lift when arms wrapped around me, crushing me against a warm chest.

My entire body shook, and the place fell silent. Tobias's scent wafted to my nose, and a choked sob left me; I hated them, fucking hated them, but his body was the only thing shielding me from the watchful eyes of everyone else. The thunderous growl that echoed around the room made me whimper.

When suddenly all the windows exploded with Darius's rage, the blast sent shards of glass everywhere before I heard more sickening tearing sounds, blood washed over my toes, and I heard popping sounds followed by screams. Blood spatter hit me from everywhere, coating me in blood, and Tobias was murmuring something, but I couldn't understand anything until Darius's voice boomed through the room. His words left no room for debate or argument and I shook as publicly claimed me.

"Nobody touches our fucking mate," He snarled. The collective gasp from those present was audible. My toes squelched in the blood, and I looked down and could see Zac's body by my feet. The room cleared quickly, the screech of chairs was loud as everyone took off and ran out.

"Get her back to her room while I clean this up," Darius snapped at Tobias, who turned to steer me toward the portal Darius opened.

Bile rose in my throat when I saw blood covering the walls and ceiling, blood everywhere along with limbs. Zac was dead, and his entire group of friends, the man that licked his lips at me also dead, a few I recognized that catcalled and whistled also blown to shreds, their limbs lying everywhere like they suddenly exploded, while Zac's body was in pieces. His hands were removed, his head was almost severed off completely, hanging beside his body, and a hole lay in the center of his chest. Tobias pushed me through the portal which led to my room. The moment I was in my room, I smacked into Tobias.

"You just let them, you just let them do it!" I screamed, smacking and punching him. Tobias whimpered, and my fist connected with his face. Tobias tried to restrain me, but I wouldn't stop. I hated them, hated them, they all just watched. Tobias became angry, pushed me back before walking back through the portal and disappearing as it closed. As soon as it did, my knees gave out beneath and turned into a sobbing mess as my knees hit the floor.

Chapter 57

Aleera POV

My stomach twisted, yet I welcomed the pain, anything to stop the memory of them all laughing, anything to stop the sight of my mates just watching. Darius had brought food in earlier and set it down. I just stared ahead; I had no appetite, no will to do anything. Darius lingered, and I remained where I sat; I hadn't moved from the spot since, even though it was now dark and entire day had passed by.

"You should shower," Darius said. Silence was all he earned in response; I didn't even acknowledge his existence. I didn't care if Darius killed them. He still watched what they did and only interfered in the end; he still allowed them to get to the point they got to. They still allowed them to humiliate me. I heard the door lock when he left.

If he said anything else, I didn't hear him. Eventually, I got up and showered. The blood coating me made me itchy as it dried. I was numb to everything; I couldn't even feel the water beating down on my skin. It offered no warmth. Getting out, I walked back to my room, only to hear the bathroom door lock a few moments later when one of them showered.

I looked for clothes only to remember Darius emptied my room out of everything and everything was in their room. The only thing left was a fresh pair of underwear and a sports bra from the clothes he gave me this morning. Which were for tonight; the punishments never end. I slipped them on before climbing into bed.

All night I shivered, freezing cold from only having a sheet, my teeth chattering after the fire had gone out earlier during the night. I only had woken up when I heard the cawing sound of my Pheonix making me jolt upright. I rushed toward the window, trying to shove it open, but the damn thing was stuck, and I saw him fly to the window next door.

He had done it before, but Tobias luckily shooed him off before Darius spotted him, and I wondered if Tobias fed him for me. The fact he was at the window, I doubted he had. I tapped on mine, trying to get his attention and divert him away from their window. Panic seized me, and I banged louder. I knew they were all in their fucking earlier by the power that emanated from the room and seeped under the bathroom door, and I could also hear the shower running in the bathroom.

It was only moments later that I heard the glass shatter, and my eyes flew wide as Ryze, looking for me, barged through and broke their window. I hit the door so hard that I nearly knocked myself out in my panic.

The shower cut off, and I started pounding on the door, praying they would open it. I could hear Ryze screeching, hear Darius's angry voice and Lycus yelling, and things being smashed. My heart sank, and tears blurred my vision. When the bathroom door finally opened, I burst through, nearly slipping on the wet tiles.

I didn't know who I barged past because all I cared about at that moment was getting to Ryze,

who was squawking loudly. Bursting through into their room, everything was getting knocked over as Ryze flapped around trying to avoid Darius's magic as he tossed it at him, but he had no escape.

"Shit!" Tobias hissed behind me, barreling into the room as Darius blasted him and I screamed. The sound was blood-curdling, and Darius scooped him up by his neck only for him to flap his wings frantically, Ryze turned his head to latch onto his hand. Darius growled and let go.

Ryze flapped his wings frantically, trying to escape, when I saw Darius lift his hand, stunning him in the air. My body crashed against Darius as I tackled him, and we both hit the ground. I landed on top of him before turning to look for my phoenix. Lycus grabbed Ryze, who was stunned, holding him by his neck. Tobias rushed over, grabbing Ryze from Lycus, who looked happy to be rid of him.

I let out a breath and got to my feet, and rushed toward Ryze in Tobias's arms as he moved toward the window. I ran over, and Tobias looked at me before his eyes went behind me. Within seconds, I was ripped backward by my hair and dropped on my ass at Darius' feet. 2

"Fucking kill it and be done with it. Fucking thing broke the window," Darius snarled, and I screamed at the thought, trying to get up only for Darius to growl at me. Tobias looked torn and clenched his jaw. "What the fuck are you doing in here?" Darius snapped at me before wiping his mouth where my forehead connected when I tackled him. Blood trickled down his chin and my eyes went to Lycus and Kalen, who stood around looking stunned by the situation. Or maybe they feared my phoenix; I wasn't sure.

"No, he's mine," I yelled.

"Kill it," Darius said dismissively, and I wondered if he heard what I said.

"No, Tobias, don't do it," I begged.

Darius jerked my head back painfully. My neck craned so far back I actually fell back against his legs. Darius snarls and lets me go. Ryze shrieks again and starts flapping, ruffling out his feathers and using his beak to climb up onto Tobias's shoulder. Tobias froze while Lycus gasped as Ryze fluffed out his feathers and puffed before glaring at Darius. 1

Tobias, too petrified to move, made a strangled noise as Ryze started grooming his beak through his wet hair. I tried to get up to go to him when Darius jerked me down by my shoulders, and Ryze lost it; he flew off Tobias's shoulder and started attacking Darius, clawing at him and snapping his sharp beak at him. Tearing him to pieces up with his talons. Tobias, shaking himself out of the stupor, rushed toward Darius as he flung his magic blindly, and Tobias was blasted back. 2

Sticking my fingers in my mouth, I whistled, and Ryze stopped, flying back to me and settling on my shoulder. His talons dug into my shoulder, piercing my soft skin as I tried to calm him while Darius got up, his chest and shoulders bleeding and torn to shreds, and I rushed toward the window to toss Ryze out, only Darius commanded me, and my feet halted. I choked on a

sob, and my eyes went to Tobias near the window.

Chapter 58

"Please, Tobias," I cried when I couldn't move my body, he looked torn and his lip, his eyes went to Ryze.

"Please," I begged, tears trekking down my face, and I saw his lip quiver before his eyes went to Darius behind me. "Turn around, and someone better fucking explain why that thing just attacked me," Darius snarled behind me.

My feet obeyed his command, and the moment I turned, Darius stalked toward me, reaching for Ryze. Just as he went to snatch him, Tobias grabbed him first, earning a glare from Darius. Ryze screeched as Tobias plucked him off my shoulder, holding him as if he was an oversized chicken, his talons ripping from my skin painfully.

"Kill it," Darius sneered.

"No, please," I sobbed. My knees gave way beneath me, and I fell at his feet. He tilted his head to the side, looking between Ryze and me before his eyes went to Tobias, who turned his head away from Darius's glare. Lycus and Kalen remained still, their eyes not leaving Ryze like they were petrified to move if he attacked. Though he had no magic yet, but was still deadly, especially with how big he had grown in a few weeks.

"It's a phoenix, Aleera. They are fucking dangerous," Darius spat at me.

"He is hers; she has been looking after him," Tobias blurted, and Darius's eyes flickered toward him. He looked at Tobias, and Darius' eyes turned demonic.

"What, and you knew?" Darius asked, looking at Ryze, still clutched in his hand. Tobias sighed and nodded.

"His name is Ryze; Aleera found him injured and nursed him back to health; I knew you would kill him, so I never told you; it's also why she fainted, Darius. She was sharing her food with him," Lycus scoffed, and everyone's eyes went to him while I sat helpless on the floor.

"What?" Darius asked him.

"No wonder she fucking fainted when she was only eating one meal a day," Lycus said from behind Darius.

"Bullshit," Darius snarled, and Lycus shrugged. I have seen them down there, so how would he know?

"I had to go sit with her the other day. They weren't letting her eat. I also spoke to one cook; he said she only snuck in just as the doors opened to steal food but never went to lunch or dinner, hadn't until I told them to lay-off her," Lycus snapped at Darius. I dropped my gaze to the floor; the way he said it, I sounded like a thief. Shame washed over me.

"And you didn't think to fucking say anything?" Darius snapped at me, gripping my face and

forcing me to look at him. I opened my mouth before closing it. There was no point defending myself, not against him. 2

I didn't care what he did to me as long as he left Ryze alone. Ryze squawked, and Tobias set him on the floor; Ryze moved, hopped, and jumped toward me before stopping and hissing at Darius, who stepped back from him as Ryze curled up in my lap. 2

"You let it bond to her?" Darius snarled and Ryze hissed at him. Lycus and Kalen moved further away from him in my lap, and I stroked his feathers, calming him.

"How is that even possible?" Lycus gasped, and I went to say because I found him hurt, but Tobias stepped in.

"He was nearly dead when she found him. She said he tried to bite her but then got used to her. Somehow he bonded to her," Tobias explained.

"And you didn't think to fucking say anything?" Darius snarled.

"I wasn't going to let you kill it," Tobias snapped back at him.

"Is this where you two have been sneaking off to every day? To feed that?" Darius growled, pointing to Ryze. Neither of us answered, and Darius snarled.

"Well, she can't keep it. What happens when it awakens?" Darius said, raising his hand, and my eyes widened.

"No," I yelled, covering Ryze with my body. Darius's feet stopped next to me before my head was jerked back. Ryze hissed and tried to bite him. I held him tighter, knowing Darius would kill him if he did. 1

"I will do whatever you want; just don't hurt him," I blurted out unthinkingly. Darius tilted his head, observing my face. "Anything?" he asked, and I nodded, clutching Ryze, refusing to let him go as he hissed at Darius, who still had a hold of my hair. He shoved me forward, and I let out a breath. 1

Ryze cawed softly, rubbing his face and beak across my chest, making me remember I wasn't even clothed as I looked down to see I only had my bra and panties on. Goosebumps covered my skin, and I looked at everyone, all of them staring at Darius before my eyes went to him, too.

"If I let you keep it, you will do what I ask?" I chewed the inside of my lip and saw Tobias shake his head. He scrubs a hand down his face.

"Darius, no! You have done enough damage today, don't you think?" Tobias snarled like he knew what Darius would ask. I just stared at him, wondering what it was he wanted. 1

"Yes or no, Aleera, you do as I ask, or I kill your pet," Darius snapped, and I looked at Ryze. His tongue slivered out and licked my chin, and I looked at Darius, sniffled but nodded my head. 1

"Fuck sake, Darius," Tobias snapped.

"Shut up! It's her choice. She could say no, and I kill it, or say yes, I will let her keep it."

"Until you want something else from her," Tobias snarled. 1

"He bites me or tries to attack me. I will kill him, go put him somewhere," Darius snapped at me, and I got up and went to rush to my room when he called out again. "In here, he stays, but he moves to hurt me. He dies," Darius says, and I froze, wondering why he kept saying that before looking for a spot to put him.