

Excerpt: Queen of Air and Darkness

NOTHING THAT IS OURS

The pyres were still burning as the procession turned and headed back toward the city. It was customary for the smoke to rise all night, and for families to gather in Angel Square to mourn among others.

Not that Emma thought it was likely the Blackthorns would do that. They would remain in their house, closeted in with each other: They had been too much apart all their lives to want comfort from other Shadowhunters who they barely knew.

She had trailed away from the rest of the group, too raw to want to try to talk to Julian again in front of his family. Besides, he was holding Tavvy's hand.

"Emma," said a voice beside her. She turned and saw Jem Carstairs.

Jem. She was too surprised to speak. Jem had been a Silent Brother once, and though he was a Carstairs, he was a very distant relative, due to being more than a century old. He only looked about twenty-four, though, and was dressed in jeans and scuffed shoes. He wore a white sweater, which she guessed was his concession to Shadowhunter funeral whites.

Jem was no longer a Shadowhunter, though he had been one for many years, and was one of the most famous of the Carstairs family, along with his cousin Cordelia.

"Jem," she whispered, not wanting to alert anyone else in the procession. "Thanks for coming."

"I wished you to know how sorry I am," he said. He looked pale and drawn, but that couldn't be grief for Livvy, could it? He'd barely known her. "I know you loved Livia like a sister."

"Can we talk?" she said abruptly. "Just us?"

He nodded and indicated a low rise some distance away, partially hidden by a stand of trees. After whispering to Cristina that she was going to talk to Jem—"The Jem? The really old one? Who's married to a warlock? *Really?*"—she followed Jem to where he was sitting on the grass, among a tumble of old stones.

They sat for a moment in silence, both of them looking out over the Imperishable Fields. "When you were a Silent Brother," Emma said abruptly, "did you burn people?"

Jem looked over at her. His eyes were very dark. "I helped light the pyres," he said. "A clever man I knew once said that we cannot understand life, and therefore we cannot hope to understand death. I have lost many I loved to death, and it does not get easier, nor does watching the pyres burn."

"*We are dust and ashes,*" Emma said.

"It was meant to make us all equal," said Jem. "We are all burned. Our ashes all go to build the City of Bones."

"Except for criminals," said Emma.

Jem's brow furrowed. "Livia was hardly that," he said. "Nor you, unless you are thinking of committing a crime?"

I already have. I'm horribly in love with my parabatai. The desire to say the words, to confess to someone—to Jem, specifically—was like a pressure behind Emma's eyes. To forestall them, she said hastily: "Did your *parabatai* ever pull away from you? When you, you know, wanted to talk?"

"People do strange things when they're grieving," said Jem gently. "I was watching from a distance, earlier. I saw what Julian did for his brother at the funeral. I know how much he has always loved those children. Nothing he says or does now, in these first and worst days, is symbolic of who he is. Besides," he added with a slight smile, "being *parabatai* is complicated. I hit my *parabatai* in the face, once."

"You did *what*?"

"As I said." Jem seemed to enjoy her astonishment. "I struck my *parabatai*—I loved him more than anyone else in the world I've ever loved save Tessa, and I struck him in the face because my heart was breaking. I can hardly judge anyone else."

"Tessa!" Emma said, feeling suddenly rude that she hadn't asked after her before. "Where is she?"

Jem's hand made a fist in the grass. "She is in the Spiral Labyrinth with Catarina Loss, searching desperately for a cure. All the warlocks are sickening. Tessa herself seems protected by her Shadowhunter blood. But those who are older, who have used more magic and more powerful magic, are sickening first."

"Magnus," Emma said. "He's older, and powerful, isn't he? And he uses a lot of magic?"

Jem nodded grimly.

"How much does Tessa know about it?" Emma demanded. "What have they figured out?"

"Tessa thinks it's connected to the murders Malcolm committed with the Followers of the Guardian," said Jem. Emma blinked at him. All of that seemed a thousand worlds away. "He used the ley lines to power his necromantic magic—if they're poisoned, it might be communicating that poison to any warlock who uses them."

"Can't warlocks just not use them?"

"There are only a few sources of power," said Jem. "Ley lines are the easiest. Many of the warlocks *have* stopped using them, but it means they're exhausting their powers very quickly, which is also unhealthy." He gave her an unconvincing smile. "Tessa will solve it," he said. "She found Kit—she'll discover the answer to this as well. I'm more worried about you at this moment. You look thin and drawn—"

"I had to watch Livvy die," said Emma. "Have you ever watched someone you loved die?"

“Yes,” said Jem.

That was the problem with very old people, Emma thought. It was rare that you had a life experience that they hadn’t.

“And Horace Dearborn is the Inquisitor now,” she said. “It’s like there’s no hope for anything now.”

“There is *always* hope,” said Jem. “And though I cannot stay with you, for I must return to Tessa, I will be a fire-message away. Send me a letter and I will come, no matter how distant I may be.” He put an arm around her and hugged her close for a moment. “Take care, *mèi mei*.”

“What does that mean?” Emma asked. But he was already gone, vanishing into the trees as swiftly as he’d come.

Kit stood and watched the smoke rising in the distance through the window of the room he shared with Ty.

At least, he assumed he shared the room with Ty. His bag was here, tossed into a corner, and nobody had ever bothered to tell him whether he was supposed to be in a different room. He’d gotten dressed in the bathroom that morning and emerged to find Ty pulling his T-shirt on over his head. His Marks seemed unusually black, probably because his skin was so pale. He looked so delicate—Kit had to glance away from the shape of his shoulder blades, the fragility of his spine. How could he look like that and be strong enough to fight demons?

Now Ty was downstairs, with the rest of his family. People tended to cook when someone died and Shadowhunters were no exception. Someone was probably making a casserole. A demon casserole. Kit leaned his head against the cold glass of the window.

There was a time he could have run, Kit thought. He could have run and left the Shadowhunters behind, lost himself in the underground world of Shadow Markets. Been like his father, not part of any world, existing between them.

In the reflection of the window glass, Kit saw the bedroom door open and Ty come in. He was still wearing his mourning clothes, though he’d taken off the jacket and was just in a black long-sleeve T-shirt. And Kit knew it was too late to run, that he cared about these people now, and specifically Ty.

“I’m glad you’re here.” Ty sat down on the bed and started unlacing his shoes. “I wanted to talk to you.”

The door was still slightly open and Kit could hear voices coming from the kitchen downstairs. Helen’s, Dru’s, Emma’s, Julian’s. Diana had gone back to her own house. Apparently she lived in a weapons store or something like that. She’d gone back to get some kind of tool she thought could fish the splinters out of Julian’s bleeding hands.

Ty’s hands were fine, but he’d been wearing gloves. Kit had seen Julian’s when he’d gone to rinse them out at the sink, and they’d looked like shrapnel had blown into his palms. Emma had stood nearby looking worried, but Julian had said he didn’t want an *iratze*, that it would just heal the skin closed over the bits of wood. His voice had sounded so flat, Kit had barely recognized it.

"I know how this is going to sound," Kit said, turning so his back was against the cold glass. Ty was hunched over, and Kit caught the gleam of gold at his neck. "But you're not acting the way I expected."

Ty kicked his boots off. "Because I climbed up the pyre?"

"No, that was kind of actually the most expected thing you did," said Kit. "I just . . ."

"I did it to get this," Ty said, and put his hand to his throat. Kit recognized the gold chain and the slim disk of metal attached to it: Livvy's locket, the one he'd helped her put on before the Council meeting. He vividly remembered her holding her hair aside as he fastened the clasp, and the smell of her perfume. His stomach lurched.

"Livvy's necklace," he said. "I mean, I guess that makes sense. I just thought you would . . ."

"Cry?" Ty didn't look angry, but the intensity in his gray eyes had deepened. He was still holding the pendant. "Everybody is supposed to cry. But that's because they accept that Livvy is dead. But I don't. I don't accept it."

"What?"

"I'm going to get her back," said Ty.

Kit sat down heavily on the windowsill. "How are you going to do that?"

Ty let go of the necklace and took his phone out of his pocket. "These were on Julian's phone," he said. "He took them when he was in the library with Annabel. They're photos of the pages of the Black Volume of the Dead." He looked at Kit with a worried frown. "Will you come and sit down next to me so you can see them?"

Kit wanted to say no; he couldn't say it. He wanted this not to be happening, but it was. When he sat down next to Ty on the bed, the mattress sagged, and he knocked against Ty's elbow accidentally. Ty's skin felt hot against his, as if the other boy had a fever.

It had never crossed his mind that Ty was lying or wrong, and he didn't seem to be either. After fifteen years with Johnny Rook, Kit was pretty familiar with what bad spell books were like and this one looked decidedly evil. Spells in cramped handwriting littered the pages, along with creepy sketches of corpses crawling out of the grave, screaming faces, and charred skeletons.

Ty wasn't looking at the photos like they were creepy, though; he was looking at them like they were the Holy Grail. "This is the most powerful spell book for bringing back the dead that's ever existed," he said. "That's why it didn't matter if they burned Livvy's body. With spells like these she can be brought back whole no matter what happened to her, no matter how long—" He broke off with a shuddering breath. "But I don't want to wait. I want to start as soon as we get back to Los Angeles."

"Didn't Malcolm kill a lot of people to bring Annabel back?" said Kit.

"Correlation, not causation, Watson," said Ty. "The simplest way to do necromancy is with death energy. Life for death, basically. But there are other sources of energy. I would never *kill* anyone." He made a face that was probably supposed to be scornful but was actually just cute.

"I don't think Livvy would want you to do necromancy," Kit said.

Ty put his phone away. "I don't think Livvy would want to be dead."

Kit felt the words like a punch to the chest, but before he could reply, there was a commotion downstairs. He and Ty ran to the top of the stairwell, Ty in his stocking feet, and looked down into the kitchen.

Zara Dearborn's Spanish friend, Manuel, was there, wearing the uniform of a Gard officer and a smirk. He was shrugging, and Kit leaned forward more to see who he was talking to. He caught sight of Julian leaning against the kitchen table, his face expressionless. The others were ranged around the kitchen—Emma looked furious, and Cristina had her hand on the other girl's arm as if to hold her back.

"Really?" Helen said furiously. "You couldn't wait until the day *after* our sister's funeral to drag Emma and Jules to the Gard?"

Manuel shrugged, clearly indifferent. "It has to be now," he said. "The Consul insists."

"What's going on?" Aline said. "You're talking about my mother, Manuel. She wouldn't just demand to see them without a good reason."

"It's about the Mortal Sword," Manuel said. "Is that a good enough reason for all of you?"

Ty tugged on Kit's arm, pulling him away from the stairs. They moved down the upstairs hallway, the voices in the kitchen receding but still urgent.

"Do you think they'll go?" Kit said.

"Emma and Jules? They have to. The Consul's asking," said Ty. "But it's her, not the Inquisitor, so it'll be all right." He leaned in toward Kit, whose back was against the wall; he smelled like a campfire. Kit realized it was probably sap from the pyre wood, and his stomach lurched again. "I can do this without you. Bring back Livvy, I mean," he said. "But I don't want to. Sherlock doesn't do things without Watson."

"Did you tell anyone else?"

"No." Ty had pulled the sleeves of his shirt down over his hands and was worrying at the fabric with his fingers. "I know it has to be a secret. People wouldn't like it, but when Livvy comes back, they'll be happy and they won't care."

"Better to ask forgiveness than permission," Kit said, feeling dazed.

"Yes." Ty wasn't looking directly at Kit—he never did—but his eyes lit up hopefully; in the dim light of the hallway, the gray in them was so pale it looked like tears. Kit thought of Ty sleeping, how he'd slept the whole day of Livvy's death and into the night, and the way Kit had watched him sleep in terror of what would happen when he awoke.

Everyone had been terrified. Ty would fall apart, they'd thought. Kit remembered Julian standing over Ty as he slept, one hand stroking his brother's hair, and he'd been praying—Kit didn't even know Shadowhunters prayed, but Julian definitely had been. Ty would crumble in a world without his sister, they'd all thought; he'd fall away to ashes just like Livvy's body.

And now he was asking Kit for this, saying he didn't want to do it without him, and what if Kit said no and Ty crumbled from the pressure of trying to do it alone? What if Kit took away his last hope and he fell apart because of it?

"You need me?" Kit asked slowly.

Ty nodded. "Yes."

"Then," Kit said, knowing already that he was making a huge mistake, "I'll help you."

It was cold in the Scholomance, even during the summer. The school had been carved into a mountainside, with long windows running all along the cliff face. They provided light, as did the witchlight chandeliers in nearly every room, but no warmth. The chill of the lake below, deep and black in the moonlight, seemed to have seeped into the stone of the walls and floor and to radiate outward, which was why, even in early September, Diego Rocio Rosales was wearing a thick sweater and coat over his jeans.

Dusty witchlight sconces cast his shadow long and thin in front of him as he hurried down the hallway toward the library. In his opinion, the Scholomance was direly in need of an update. The one time his brother, Jaime, had ever visited the school, he'd said it looked as if it had been decorated by Dracula. This was unfortunately true. Everywhere there were iron chandeliers (which made Kieran sneeze), bronze dragon-shaped sconces holding ancient witchlight stones, and cavernous stone fireplaces with huge carved angels standing forbiddingly on either side. Communal meals were taken at a long table that could have accommodated the population of Belgium, though at the moment there were less than twenty people in residence at the school. Only a few students had stayed for the summer between study years, and most of the teachers and students were either at home or in Idris.

Which made it much easier for Diego to hide a faerie prince on the premises. He'd been nervous about the idea of concealing Kieran at the Scholomance—he wasn't a good liar at the best of times and the effort of maintaining a "relationship" with Zara had worn him down already. But Cristina had asked him to do it, and he would have done anything for Cristina.

He'd reached the end of the corridor, where the door to the library was. Long ago the word BIBLIOTECA had adorned the door in gold lettering; now only the outlines of the letters remained, and the hinges squeaked like distressed mice when Diego shoved the door open.

The first time he'd seen the library, he'd thought it was a prank. A massive room, it was on the top floor of the Scholomance, where the roof was made of thick glass and light filtered down through it. During the time that the school had been deserted, oak trees had grown up from the floor and no one had had the time or money to remove them. They remained, surrounded by the dust of broken stone, their roots cracking the floor and snaking among the chairs and tables. Branches spread out wide above, forming a canopy over the bookshelves, dusting the seats and floors with fallen leaves.

Sometimes Diego wondered if Kieran liked it in here because it reminded him of a forest. He certainly spent most of his time in a window seat, somewhat grimly reading everything in the section on faeries. Every day he made a pile of books he considered accurate. Every day the pile was small.

He glanced over as Diego came in. His hair was blue-black, the color of the lake outside the window. He had put two books into his accurate pile and was reading a third: *Mating Habits of the Unseelie*.

"I do not know anyone in Faerie who has married a goat," he said irritably. "In either the Seelie or the Unseelie Court."

"Don't take it personally," Diego said. He pulled a chair over and sat down facing Kieran. He could see them both reflected in the window. Kieran had gotten even skinnier, if possible, since they'd arrived at the school, and his bony wrists stuck out below the sleeves of his borrowed uniform. Diego's clothes had all been too big for him, so Rayan Muadabuchi had offered to lend Kieran some—he didn't seem bothered that Diego was hiding a faerie in his room, but nothing much ruffled the surface of Rayan's calm. Divya, on the other hand, Diego's other best friend at the school, leaped nervously into the air every time anyone mentioned they were going to the library, despite Kieran's uncanny ability to hide himself.

Divya and Rayan were the only people Diego had told about Kieran, mostly because they were the only people currently at the Scholomance that he trusted. There was only one professor in residence—Professor Kaidou, who was involved in a research project about the magical properties of the water of Lake Lyn and rarely came out of her study—and while there'd been a time that Diego would have trusted a professor without a second thought, that time was past.

"Have you heard anything from Idris?" said Kieran, looking down at his book.

"You mean Mark," said Diego, "and I haven't heard anything from him. I am not his favorite person."

Kieran glanced up. "Are you anyone's?" Somehow he managed to ask it as if it weren't an insulting question, but something he merely wished to know.

Diego, who sometimes wondered the same thing himself, didn't answer.

"I thought you might have heard from Cristina." Kieran closed the book, marking his place with his finger. "About whether she is all right, and Mark—I thought the funerals were today."

"They were," Diego said. He also thought he might have heard from Cristina; he knew she'd been fond of Livia Blackthorn. "But funerals for us are very busy times. There is a great deal of ceremony, and a lot of people who visit and express condolences. She might not have much time."

Kieran looked pained. "That seems as if it would be annoying. In Faerie we know to leave those who are grieving to themselves."

"It's annoying, but also not," Diego said. He thought of the death of his grandfather, how the house had been full of the light of *velas*, candles that burned with a beautiful light. How visitors had come and brought gifts of food, and they had eaten and drunk together and shared remembrances of his grandfather. Everywhere there had been marigolds, and the cinnamon smell of *atole* and the sound of laughter.

It seemed cold to him, and lonely, to grieve by yourself. But faeries were different.

Kieran's eyes sharpened, as if he had seen something revealing in Diego's expression. "Is there a plan for me?" he asked. "Where am I to be sent, when my time hiding here is over?"

"I had thought you might want to return to Los Angeles," said Diego, surprised.

Kieran shook his head. Locks of his hair had turned white; his hair color seemed to change with his mood. "No. I will not go back to where Mark is."

Diego was silent—he hadn't really had a plan. Cristina had asked him to hide Kieran, but had never said for how long. He had wanted to do this for her because he knew he owed her; he had thought of Zara—had remembered the hurt on Cristina's face when she'd first met Zara.

It had been his fault. He hadn't told her about Zara because he'd been desperately hoping something would happen that would get him out of the engagement to her before it was necessary. It was the Dearborns who had insisted on the marriage contract. They had threatened to expose the Rocio Rosales family's secrets if Diego didn't do something to prove to them that he was truthful when he said he didn't know where his brother was, and didn't know where the artifact was that Jaime had taken.

There had never been a question of him loving Zara, nor of her loving him. She seemed to feel it was a feather in her cap to be engaged to the son of an important family, but there was no passion in her except passion for the horrible causes her father espoused.

Kieran's eyes widened. "What's that?"

That was a bright light, like a will-o'-the-wisp, over Diego's shoulder. A fire-message. He caught it out of the air and the paper unrolled in his hand: He recognized the handwriting immediately. "Cristina," he said. "It's a message from Cristina."

Kieran sat up so fast the book tumbled out of his lap to the floor. "Cristina? What does she say? Is she all right?"

Odd, Diego thought; he would have imagined Kieran would have asked if *Mark* was all right. But the thought flew from his mind almost immediately, scrawled over by the words he was reading.

Feeling as if he had been kicked in the gut, Diego handed the message over to Kieran, and watched the other boy turn ashen as he read that Horace Dearborn had been made the new Inquisitor.

"This is a slap in Mark's face," said Kieran, his hand shaking. "The Blackthorns will be heartbroken, as will Cristina. And he is a dangerous man. A deadly man." He looked up at Diego, his eyes night-black and storm-gray. "What can we do?"

Diego shook his head. "It is clear I know nothing of people," he said, thinking of Zara, of Jaime, of all the lies he had told and how none of them had accomplished what he had wanted, but had only made everything worse. "No one should ask me how to solve anything."

As Kieran looked at him, astonished, he dropped his face into his hands.

"I know these words must seem empty at this point," said Jia, "but I'm so sorry about Livia."

"You're right," Julian said. "They do."

It was dark outside the Consul's windows, and the demon towers were strung across the skyline of Alicante like a row of jagged diamonds. Emma looked around, remembering the last time she'd been in this room—she'd been twelve, and she'd been so impressed at how plush it was, with thick rugs underfoot and a desk of gleaming mahogany. Now she, Julian, and Diana were all seated in wingback armchairs before Jia's desk. Diana looked furious. Julian just looked blank.

"These kids are tired and grief-stricken," Diana said. "I respect your judgment, Jia, but does this have to be now?"

Jia pressed her fingers against her forehead. "It does," she said, "because Horace Dearborn wants to interrogate Helen and Mark, and any other Downworlders or part Downworlders in Alicante. Magnus and Alec are already packing their things to Portal out tonight. I would have thought you would have wanted Helen and Mark to leave as well."

"He wants to *what*?" Emma sat up straight, indignant. "You can't let him."

"I don't have a choice. He was elected by a majority vote." Jia frowned. "Interrogating people is what the Inquisitor does—the decision is at his discretion."

"Horace Dearborn has no discretion," said Diana.

"Which is why I'm giving you advance notice," said Jia. "I suggest that Helen and Mark—and Aline, since she won't leave Helen—be Portaled to Los Angeles tonight."

There was a moment of silence. "You're offering to send Helen to Los Angeles?" said Julian finally. "Not Wrangel Island?"

"I'm suggesting Helen and Aline temporarily run the Los Angeles Institute," said Jia, and Emma actually felt her mouth fall open. "As the Consul, that is within *my* power, and I believe I can make it happen now, while Dearborn is distracted."

"So you're saying we should *all* Portal back?" Emma said. "And Helen and Aline can come with us? That's great, that's—"

"She doesn't mean all of us," said Julian. His hands were both bandaged. He'd gotten most of the splinters out himself, with the tip of a sharp knife, and there was blood on the bandages. He didn't seem to have felt it—Emma had felt the pain herself, watching his skin split under the blade, but he had never wavered. "She means Diana, you, and I are going to stay here, in Idris."

"You've always been clever, Julian," said Jia, although not as if she admired the quality all that much.

"If Helen and Mark aren't here, he'll interrogate us," said Julian. "Isn't that true?"

"No," Diana said sharply. "They're *children*."

"Yes," said Jia. "And one of them broke the Mortal Sword. The other brought Annabel Blackthorn into Alicante."

"But I don't know how it was broken," Emma said. "I swung at Annabel because she was trying to kill me. It was self-defense—"

“People are terrified. And fear isn’t logical,” said Jia. “This was the worst possible time for the Mortal Sword to be broken, at a time of serious instability and on the eve of a possible war with faeries. And after the Unseelie King snatched Annabel from the Council Hall—don’t you understand that *you* brought her here?”

“That was just me.” Julian was white around the mouth. “Emma didn’t have anything to do with it.”

Emma felt a faint spark of relief light among her panic and outrage. *He still has my back.*

Jia looked down at her hands. “If I were to send all of you back home right now, there would be a riot. If Dearborn is allowed to question you, then public attention will swing away from you. The Cohort questions your loyalty, mostly because of Helen and Mark.”

Julian gave a harsh laugh. “They suspect us because of my brother and sister? More than because I brought that thing—because I brought Annabel into the city? And promised everything would be all right? But it’s Mark and Helen’s blood that matters?”

“Blood always matters, to the wrong sort of people,” said Jia, and there was a rare bitterness in her voice. She passed a hand over her face. “I’m not asking you to be on his side. God, I’m not asking that. Just get him to understand that you’re victims of Annabel. Those not in the Cohort are very sympathetic to you right now because of Livia—he won’t want to go too much against public opinion.”

“So this is like a pointless little dance we’re doing?” Emma said. “We let the Inquisitor question us, mostly for show, and then we can go home?”

Jia smiled grimly. “Now you understand politics.”

“You’re not worried about making Aline and Helen the heads of the Los Angeles Institute? Given the Cohort’s concerns about Helen?” said Diana.

“It’ll just be Aline.” Julian gazed unwaveringly at Jia. “The Consul’s daughter. Helen won’t be running anything.”

“That’s right,” said Jia, “and no, I don’t like it either. But this may be a chance to get them back permanently from Wrangel Island. That’s why I’m asking for your help—all three of you.”

“Am I going to be interrogated as well?” There was a sharp tension in Diana’s voice.

Jia shook her head. “I’d like your help. As you helped me before with those files.”

“Files?” echoed Emma. “How are files important right now?”

But Diana looked as if she understood some secret language Jia was speaking. “I’ll stay, certainly,” she said. “As long as the understanding is clear that I’m helping *you*, and that my interests are in no way aligned with the Inquisitor’s.”

“I understand,” said Jia. *Nor are mine* hung unspoken in the air.

“But the kids,” said Emma. “They can’t go back to Los Angeles without us.” She turned to look at Julian, waiting for him to say that he wouldn’t be separated from his younger siblings. That they needed him, that they should stay in Idris.

“Helen can take care of them,” he said without glancing at her. “She wants to. It’ll be all right. She’s their sister.”

“Then it’s decided,” said Jia, rising from behind her desk. “You might as well get them packed—we’ll open the Portal for them tonight.”

Julian rose as well, pushing back the hair that had fallen into his eyes with one of his bandaged hands. *What the hell is wrong with you?* Emma thought. There was something going on with Julian beyond what could be explained by grief. She didn’t just know it, she *felt* it, down in the deep place where the *parabatai* bond tugged at her heart.

And later tonight, when the others were gone, she would find out what it was.