

Enslaved

He continues to stare at me so intently that I take another step back. “I’ll just go get that—”

Claws rake my back. I whirl around with a shocked gasp. But there’s no wolf there.

Sera stares at me from across the room, her eyes wide. She’s not the only one. “Briar, are you okay?”

I gaze at her as the same feeling of wrongness that chased me from the Madden Grove Wood returns with a vengeance. No, it amplifies, until there’s no doubt in my mind that something is seriously wrong.

With me.

An icy chill kisses my skin until I shake with it, and I know from the concern building in Sera’s eyes that I’m getting paler by the second.

The bird was there when it shouldn’t have been. The mole too. And something hit me in the back, and then all the souls were just... gone. And the flowers... what happened to the flowers?

Another growl makes me spin back around.

Hot wolf guy is still watching me, his expression unchanging.

I swallow hard. “You didn’t hear that, did you?”

“Hear what?”

The next growl echoing in my head isn’t just a growl. Beneath it, I’m almost positive there’s a word. A name. “Keane,” I whisper as my eyes search his face.

I’ve never seen him before, but I know who he is: Keane Destin. He was the only member of the pack who survived the slaughter in the forest. “You’re Keane Destin.”

And then I know why I’m hearing growls in my head, and how I know what his name is when I shouldn’t.

I'm possessed.

That's when panic hits. I rush to the kitchen, because I have to get out. I have to get out now.

Sera's call trails me as I sprint through the kitchen and burst out of the back of the cafe into the alley. But it isn't just her voice that follows me.

"You smell of wolf."

I spin around at the voice that isn't even close to being human. The man from inside. Keane Destin, the sole survivor of whatever slaughtered his pack, prowls toward me, his eyes flickering from gold to silver.

I back up, frantically shaking my head as I do. "No, I don't. I smell like me. Cookies and cake... and... witch. Definitely not wolf."

I hope.

His right hand shimmers as he stalks toward me, and then I'm looking at claws. Wolf claws. It's still daylight, and I'm sure Liam Wolfe would have a serious problem with him partially shifting in public like this, but Keane doesn't seem to care. "What were you doing in the forest?"

"Nothing. I wasn't doing—"

"You stole the flowers. Why? To cast some spell?"

I move faster. "No, um. Well, kind of, but not the one you mean. I can't even cast spells. I was just..." My voice trails off, because I'm just digging myself a deeper and deeper hole the longer I talk.

My back thumps against the wall, and suddenly he's there, his claws at my throat and murder in his eyes. "Tell me, and I'll make it painless."

Oh, Goddess.

"Leave her alone!" A half-panicked yell comes from somewhere behind us. Sera. "Or I'll—"

Keane leans even closer, completely ignoring Sera. "You don't talk, I'll start with her. No witch can cast a spell fast enough to beat a wolf lunge." His smile turns predatory. "And I would know."

A sudden memory hits hard. Sera told me he went hunting for the witch he believed killed his pack, slaughtering five of our kind before he left town. And he was seventeen at the time.