

Enslaved

I hadn't thought I'd ever find a witch pretty, since there's been too much bad blood between us for that. But this one... this Briar Fenix, according to the old lady with the sagging breasts and the velvet dress, is more than pretty.

Even her ridiculous all-pink outfit did nothing to distract from her startling blue eyes, flame red-gold hair, and small but curvy body. And from the sultry, sweet scent of her arousal and the interest stirring in her eyes, the witch liked what she saw.

When I realize where my thoughts have strayed, I curse the witch again.

Who the fuck wears that much pink outside of kindergarten? And then there were the small white teeth she seemed determined to show me in a grin so wide it made her seem unhinged.

And what the fuck kind of name is Briar? Sounds like a fucking bush.

She's a witch, and shewilldie. Right after I find out why the fuck she started off smelling like a witch before her scent changed. And my name. How the fuck did she know my name?

I stalk around the back alley to reach Main Street because wherever the witch ran to, she's no longer inside the café. I could track her, but she'd only run again, and now that I know what she's capable of, I'm going to have to come at this from a different angle.

A glance at my wristwatch reveals that I couldn't have been out cold for more than twenty or thirty minutes, tops. But just because the day is settling into late afternoon, doesn't mean the streets are empty.

On Main Street, eyes probe me from the shops on the other side of the road. Tourists reading the menu outside the Wolfe Trattoria turn to me, doing little to hide their shock at my half-singed appearance.

All the lights are on in the Italian restaurant. The scent of oregano, beef, and peppered steak lingers in the air. My belly grumbles happily in response, reminding me it's been far too long since I last ate. A greasy burrito at a hole-in-a-wall in Chicago, I think. Two hours ago.

But instead of heading for the restaurant, I make my way toward the dusty black truck in desperate need of a clean. Dad's truck, and now mine. The only thing I have left of him in the world.

With most of the businesses in Madden Grove owned by Liam Wolfe, and before him Amos, there won't be lasagna or steak in my future. Just whatever snacks I have in the cabin I checked into hours before—at least until I hit the grocery store.

I've just slammed the door of my truck shut when my cell phone vibrates in my pocket. Considering the dent I made against the dumpster, that it's working at all is a miracle, but at least something is going right today. Shifting a little in my seat, I pull it free and answer the call from a number I don't recognize.

"What?" I snarl.

Silence.

After cradling the phone against my shoulder and neck, I start up the truck so I can make the ten-minute drive to the cabin I booked for the next couple of days.

It's far enough away from the center of town that I'd hoped to avoid Liam Wolfe, but I should've known stopping in at the bar for a much-needed drink would only end one way.

"Keane Destin?" The male voice on the other end is so timid that it instantly pisses me off. He's not the first to sound this way, and he won't be the last.

"This is Keane." I swing the truck away from town, one hand resting on the steering wheel and the other reaching for the bag of nuts I picked up at a gas station a few miles back.

The shifter on the other end—because it's only ever a shifter who calls—clears his throat. "I, uh, I'd heard that you were the person to call if someone needed..." his voice trails off.

I wait for it to start up again, and when it doesn't, I grind my teeth in frustration. "Look, you want me to kill someone, have the balls to fucking admit it. If you can't..." Then hang the fuck up. I don't say the words, but they hang in the air between us.

"One of my pack is doing things he shouldn't be doing." The shifter's voice is a little too fast, as if he realizes just how close I am to hanging up if he doesn't get to the point and fast.

"What things?" I tilt my head back and toss a mouthful of nuts in my mouth. Dry and salty, they instantly make me crave beer or something wet.

There's water back at the cabin, but since I didn't think to stop off at a grocery store before checking in this morning, that's all I have. After my run-in with Jonas, and then the witch, I should keep my head down, at least until I've regained control of my emotions. I dart a glance at my singed t-shirt. And changed.

"There are women."

Finished chewing, I swallow. "What about these women? Because if he's just fucking some woman you like, that's not a good enough reason for me to—"

"He's killing them," the shifter interrupts. "Women were going missing in town, and I smelled blood and then... well. I know it's him."

I strangle my words, and this guy is lucky that I do because he does not want to know what the first thing I wanted to say was. I make the drive to the cabin in silence, but I feel his tension rising as the silence extends.

When I've pulled up in front of a small, red-wood stained cabin tucked a little in the forest just outside town, I turn the engine off and sit back in my seat. "What's your name?"

He clears his throat. "Paul."