

# Enslaved

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“There’s only one way this is going to end, Briar. The longer it takes you to tell me what I want to know, the more painful it will be for you.”

Her pink lips tighten until they’re all but invisible. As the silence extends, the sharp tang of fear grows until it fills my nostrils.

“Why did you take the flowers?”

“I didn’t take them.” A whisper so quiet I almost miss it.

For a long moment, I study her bent head. It didn’t sound like she was lying, but just because I don’t hear the lie in her voice, doesn’t mean she isn’t using some kind of spell to hide it.

I want nothing more than to tear into her and rip the truth out of her. But that’s not all I want. There’s something about this petite red-headed witch that the man and wolf hesitate to destroy. I need to know what that is.

“So, you went skipping into wolf territory one Tuesday afternoon to pick flowers, and they were just gone? Is that what you’re saying?”

She jerks her head up and locks gazes with me. “I wasn’t skipping. I was…” her voice trails off, and she lowers her head again. “You wouldn’t believe me if I told you.”

No, I won’t.

“Try me,” I lie.

“You’re just saying that so you won’t feel bad about ripping my head off later.”

“That’s not true.”

I won’t feel bad at all when I rip your head off, regardless of what you tell me.

A gusty sigh blows out of her, sending long red strands fanning around her face. “I needed one of the flowers so I could speak to my mom.”

“That’s what a cell phone is for.” I bite out. Is she fucking crazy? “You do know what a wolf would have done if they’d found you there. Don’t you?”

“I know,” she whispers. “But where Mom is, phones don’t work.”

“And where is that?”

“The afterlife. Or the in-between place if she hasn’t crossed over yet.”

She must be joking. She has to be. Or she’s crazy.

Please do not let her be crazy because I need answers from this witch, not meaningless crap.

“The afterlife?” I repeat because maybe I just heard her wrong.

She blinks those big blue eyes at me. “You don’t believe me.”

“You don’t want to know what I believe.” Her lips part, but I slash the air with one hand to cut off any more bullshit. What I need are straight answers, so I ask her a straight question. “Tell me why you smell of wolf.”

She wants to argue. I read the intent in her eyes, and I narrow mine until she sighs. “I was crawling on the ground looking for the flowers and something hit me in the back.”

An image of her on her hands and knees pops into my head, but in it, she’s not looking for flowers. She’s not wearing clothes either.

I force my mind back on track. “What was it?”

She shrugs. “I don’t know. I thought it was someone attacking me at first, but it wasn’t. So I got up, and then there was a bird there. Staring at me. And then a mole. A brown one.”

She’s batshit crazy.

Can I kill a witch who should’ve been locked up in an institution? Probably. Will it add to my worsening nightmares? Most likely. But will I still do it? Yes. Yes, I will.

“A bird?”