

Font Size: AA+A++

---

Briar twists her head back, but my pace doesn't allow her to slow or stop. "But I didn't do it. I didn't—Rose, it wasn't me. I didn't—"

I shove her in the passenger seat, slam the door shut, and round the truck to the driver's seat.

As I get in, every tourist is gaping in horror at the destroyed, smoking building, but every witch is staring through the windshield at Briar. None of the attention is the least bit friendly.

I start up the truck and take off.

"It wasn't me," Briar whispers.

Maybe it wasn't, but with no flower, it means no way to speak to Dad—and after that explosion, I doubt there's a witch in town who will help Briar.

Fuck.

13

BRIAR

Keane's hand grips my arm tight as he leads us back into the cabin. It's about the only thing that feels real right now. Did I just watch Calla's Cauldron blow up in front of my face?

Was it me?

"Briar?"

Maybe it was me. I know I didn't feel anything, but this power is changing. I thought something big would happen. This could be the start of it.

My butt lands on something hard, and it takes me far too long to work out that it's a wooden chair in the kitchen.

What if the next thing I blow up is Keane? Or the entire town?

I blink up at him. “I know I’m not supposed to care, but maybe you should’ve fed me to the wolf when you had the chance.”

He stares down at me. “What?”

“Before I blow up and kill you.”

His expression is impossible to read. “You didn’t do it.”

“What makes you so sure?” I murmur. “I’m broken.”

He turns and crosses over to the refrigerator. When I catch myself staring at his black jean-covered ass, I jerk my gaze away, my cheeks hot.

After returning with two bottles of beer in hand, he drops into the seat across from mine and slides a bottle toward me. “With that ability of yours? Doubt it.” He pauses. “From what I’ve seen, it’s triggered by someone threatening you. This was something else.”

I eye the beer. “I don’t drink.”

He screws the lid off and takes a draw. “You’re old enough.”

“But that doesn’t mean I should.” I frown. “And it isn’t even nine yet. It’s time for breakfast, not—” I shoot to my feet. “Aunt Mel! She won’t know where I am. The café. I have to—”

A foot hooks the back of one of mine, and I plop back into my seat again. “You’re not going anywhere.”

And then I remember.

He kidnapped me. Knocked me out and carried me to his cabin in the woods. Just because he’s not threatening to kill me right this second, doesn’t mean it won’t happen sooner rather than later.

My gaze returns to the beer. Sure, it isn’t nine yet, but it isn’t that early... somewhere else in the world.

A black cell phone comes into my line of vision, distracting me from an early morning drink I’m already regretting. “That friend of yours? Sera? Can she remove the souls? Or get them to talk some other way?” Keane asks.

