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“I can hunt you, which won’t take a minute, or you can show yourself,” I call out.

After a protracted moment, a slim figure in a pair of baggy black jeans and a black hooded top steps out from behind a tree a few feet ahead.

With her head bowed, her clothing doesn’t leave an inch of skin on show. Yet it’s the same witch from before.

“You were looking for me,” she murmurs in a voice so low that even with shifter hearing, I have to strain to hear her.

I study her. Should I move closer? Or, after what she did to Jonas and the others, would that be suicidal?

No. Play it safe. At least for now.

“You helped me last night. I want to know why.”

“What makes you think I was helpingyou?” she asks in that low, husky voice.

I stare at her.

After a beat, she shrugs. “Maybe I don’t like bullies.”

My eyes narrow. “You’re a witch. I’m a wolf. Bully or no bully, we don’t help each other. Why did you do it? What do you want from me?”

Because thereissomething. No one does anything for free.

Somewhere down the line, there will be a price—and likely a hefty one, since I’m dealing with a witch.

She lifts her head a touch, and for just a second I glimpse the barest hint of something red on the right side of her face before she lowers her head again. A scar or a birthmark? “You’re here to find the witch who killed your pack.”

It's impossible to tell her age from her husky voice. Young or old, her words raise my hackles. I take a step closer and reach for my wolf, ready to launch myself at her if I need to. "What do you know about that?"

"Not a lot. But I know someone who might."

"I don't believe you," I bite out. "What do you want, witch?"

A tingle of awareness ripples over my skin, warning me that she's working a spell. But before I can react, she tugs down her black hood.

Nothing about her would attract attention. From her drab, mousy brown hair to her oval brown eyes, pale skin, and thin lips, she has the sort of face I'd pass in the street and never give a second glance.

Or it would be if it wasn't for the red, puckered scar on the right side of her face.

A burn. And a bad one.

Just like her voice, her age is impossible for me to determine. Her face seems young, but her eyes have an ageless quality to them. She could be twenty-two or forty-two. "Bad burn," I say.

A bitter smile touches her lips. "When you have the misfortune of taking lessons with elementals, burns are an occupational hazard. I use spells to hide the worst of them." She gestures to the burn with her left hand. "This is the most palatable version of what I look like. If you saw what the burns were truly like... well, you'd understand why I make sure to always keep my face covered."

My brows crease in a frown.

Briar had magic lessons with elementals, but she doesn't have burns on her face or body. So did the Calla sisters just go easier on Briar than this witch?

I think back to this morning. They didn't hold back in attacking her with their words, so it's no stretch of the imagination to believe they wouldn't attack her with their magic.

She shakes her head. "Anyway, it's not important. Not anymore. I'm Mara."

"What isn't important?"

Her fingers flutter toward her cheek, but she doesn't touch the raised mark. "No one will have to go through what I did. They deserved to die."

I take a second to study the witch. I don't trust her, but I'm not getting the sense she's lying to me. My wolf doesn't like her, but that isn't new. He doesn't like any witch.