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Except Briar.

“Was it you? Did you cause the explosion?”

She smiles, but it’s an empty thing, devoid of warmth. “Briar Fenix did that. It’s all over town. Haven’t you heard?”

You say that, but why don’t I believe you?

“So, because your bullies are dead, that’s why you’re helping me?” I ask. “Which still doesn’t explain why you intervened last night.”

She shrugs. “I don’t like bullies, and the Calla sisters weren’t the only ones in town.”

“Jonas? You’re saying that the beta bullied you?”

“What I’m saying is there are cruel people in this town. A fact that you, out of anyone in Madden Grove, should know already.”

“So, you’re like the Robin Hood of Madden Grove, except you’re busy righting wrongs in a black hoodie? Is that what you’re saying?”

For the first time, her eyes lock with mine. Directly with mine. “Justice is important to me. Isn’t it to you?”

I don’t have an answer for her.

In the silence, she raises her hood. “No witch would tell a wolf this, but there was a woman who once lived in town. A powerful witch. She was around when your pack was alive.”

Her words are like a hard punch in my gut. “This witch killed my pack,” I growl.

She shrugs. “I don’t know. All I know is that she was around, and after someone killed your pack, she moved to the woods. Now, she uses magic to hide herself—

but since you're a wolf, you have a nose that can't be tricked by spells. Diana Calla will strike at you and Briar with enough force to level the town. Maybe you can convince this witch to help you. She might even be able to tell you what happened to your pack."

"Unless she was the one who slaughtered my pack?" My voice is dry.

"Unless she was." She turns to walk away. "But staying in town is a death sentence. For both of you."

It would be the easiest thing in the world to rush her. I could be on her in a heartbeat, pinning her to the ground as I beat information from her.

But I don't.

"Why should I believe anything you said?" I ask her back.

She stops. "Believe me, don't believe me. It doesn't make a difference to me. Ask Briar about the witch in the south wood. Briar Fenix is many things, but she's no liar."

And so I watch her go, despite my wolf growling at me to chase her down and gut the truth from her.

Soon, the forest swallows her figure.

I'll ask Briar, who I'd better not find stuck in the window. If I learn this witch—this Mara lied—it'll be easy enough to track her down and rip her apart.

It won't be the first time I've hunted a witch, and I doubt it'll be the last.

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BRIAR

My gaze settles on the window that caused me such grief before, and which I'm once again contemplating climbing out of. There aren't many things worth repeating that level of humiliation, but some things are.

Some people are.

Keane didn't tell me where he was going, so it must be Sera he's going after.

Or Aunt Mel.

