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What the hell was that?

A vibrating hum draws my gaze toward the bedroom door.

It takes me a second to work out what it is. But then I do.

“Keane’s phone.” I’m off the floor and sprinting for the door, which is rare for me.

I don’t run. Ever.

Not unless I’m being chased.

The door swings open under my touch, and I’m at once relieved that Keane didn’t lock it, but also disturbed that he’s so confident I won’t run that he didn’t feel the need to.

Crazy or dead, Briar. That’s why.

And he’s a hunter. He wouldn’t even need to run or shift to track me down. A fast walk would get the job done in zero seconds flat.

I snatch the cell phone off the dining table, hoping it’s not someone looking for Keane. But one glance at the number on the screen and I heave a relieved sigh.

“Sera?” I gasp, struggling to catch my breath.

“Briar? Whose phone are you—”

“It isn’t important.” I drop into a dining chair and press the phone tighter against my ear. “Please tell me you know how to get rid of clinging souls.”

Silence.

“Sera? Are you still there? Ser—”

“Shhh,” her low hiss cuts me off.

In the distance, a woman shouts something inaudible. Rapid footsteps and a creaking door cut the sound out. "Sorry, Mom wanted to know what I want for breakfast, so I don't have long before she comes looking for me. What souls are you talking about?"

I hesitate.

Sera is a friend. A good friend, and whatever I decide to do next, has the potential to ruin her chances of being the coven leader, potentially being tossed out of said coven, and ruining her life.

Probably even killed.

"Briar?" Sera whispers. "What's wrong?"

I stare at the muffin crumbs on the dining table. "You do so much for me already. If Layla found out that you were sharing spells from your coven's grimoire... I don't want to involve you."

"Briar, you're my friend. Mybestfriend. And the only one I care about in this town. Tell me what's wrong. Did something happen in the forest?"

"You could say that," I mutter. "I'm guessing everyone knows about Calla's Cauldron."

"Mom woke me up. Said you had done it, and Diana Calla was after you."

I close my eyes. I knew it, but hearing Sera say it is something else.

"But I knew you couldn't have. She won't let me work at the café in case—" Sera doesn't have to finish the sentence. I can guess what she thinks.

"Diana Calla blows it to pieces thinking I'm inside."

"She wouldn't do that." Her voice is hesitant.

But she's not convinced, and she's right not to be.