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Her head jerks toward me. “What? What do you—”

I accelerate, and the engine makes a grinding sound, cutting her off mid-sentence. Growling, I wrench the truck to the side of the road and turn it off. “Shit.”

“What do you mean, shit?”

“I mean,” I shove the truck door open as I swallow another growl that wants to erupt, “that this piece-of-shit truck is one more breakdown away from stopping and not starting again if I don’t figure out what the fuck is wrong with it.”

As I stalk around the front of the truck, I hear Briar do the same. Before I can order her to get back inside, she’s beside me. “I can have a look if you want.”

With my hand on the hood, I turn to her, my eyebrows raised in disbelief. “You can, can you?”

She gazes back at me calmly. “I know a little bit about cars.”

Snorting, I shove the hood up, my eyes scanning the interior even though I have no idea what I’m looking for. Nothing is smoking, which is what I’ve been most worried about whenever I’ve heard the grinding before. Something does smell like it could be burning, but that could just be the engine overheating.

“A witch who knows cars. Got a spell for that?”

The moment the words emerge, I remember her claim about being broken, and how spells don’t work for her. Since she managed to get herself stuck in a window of all places and she hasn’t once flung a spell at me, it’s hard to dispute that.

“No. I would help my dad when he fixed up cars,” she admits in a quiet voice.

When I dart a glance over at her, she has her head bent over the engine, her long red hair obscuring her face. But that doesn't mean I don't hear the pain in her voice.

"How old were you?" If she can fix this truck, witch or no witch, I'm not about to say no when I'm looking at several thousand dollars to replace it.

"From when I was about eight until eleven when he... well, you know."

"That long ago, huh?" I start mentally working out how many hunting jobs it's going to take me to replace the truck.

Just let this engine hold out long enough for me to talk to Dad, find the witch who killed him, and get out of town before Liam Wolfe sends Jonas and his enforcers after me. That's all I ask.

My eyes track Briar as she scans the engine as if she's searching for something. "It was. But there are some things I will never forget."

I know the feeling.

Hunts with the pack, sitting around a fire as we stared up at the stars, laughing, wrestling... there are so many moments I won't have again. "What are you looking for?"

She leans further over the engine and sniffs, "not sure yet. How often does the grinding happen?"

As she grabs her hair and shoves it over her shoulder, I debate the merits of snapping at her, but curiosity wins out, so I decide to humor her. "I'm usually on the highway. Sometimes it happens when I switch gears, but that hasn't happened for a while. Mostly it's when I—"

"Accelerate?" she interrupts, finally lifting her head from the engine.

I nod.

For several seconds, she studies me, her brow creased and her gaze distant.

"What is it?" I ask.

"Just remembering something Dad told me."

"About?"

“Signs that a transmission clutch needs replacing.”

I nearly lose my battle to hide my surprise because I hadn't expected her to even know what one was. “Transmission clutch?”

She nods, her gaze refocusing. “The grinding is a big sign.”