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The moment I've pulled the truck to a stop, Briar scrambles out.

I'm out a second later, catching her in the forest that leads back to Main Street.

"Stop," I breathe against the back of her hair as I pin her against a tree.

She fights me with everything she has. If I hadn't been a wolf, I don't know I'd have been able to stop her.

I step into her body and lower my head. "Briar, stop."

She sobs, and my wolf howls right along with her.

When she sinks to the ground, I follow her down, keeping her pinned against the tree because right now, there's no telling what she would do if I were to let her go.

Minutes later, as if her strength has been exhausted, her struggles to get free slow.

I shouldn't care the least that she's crying, that she's mourning the last member of her family because she's a witch and a witch is always an enemy.

But I remember how that felt.

Learning I was the only one left alive, and all because I skipped the pack meeting in favor of fucking a tourist, is something I will never forget. I know the guilt that will be eating her up inside.

Just because she's a witch, it doesn't mean she can't feel.

I don't have comforting words or gestures to offer her. So I say nothing, just continue to hold her against the tree as she cries out her pain.

Long minutes later, her sobs slow and then stop. "Are you ready to get out of here?" I say against her hair.

She nods.

After helping her to her feet, I lead the way back to the truck with its doors still open and the engine running. We've just reached the passenger side when a tingle of awareness makes every hair on my head stand tall.

I throw myself to the right, taking Briar with me.

A second later, something scorches the ground where I was just standing. I take in the black burn and wonder if I would have survived it.

"Let my friend go, you animal!" A woman screams from behind me.

Sighing, I push Briar to one side and get to my feet. "Or I'm guessing you'll blow me up?"

Sera, the witch with the baggy dark clothes from the café, lifts her hands, and the tingle of awareness turns into a roar of warning.

Whatever spell she's aiming my way is going to hurt.

Or kill.

I reach for my wolf.

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BRIAR

I lunge in front of Keane. "Stop, Sera don't do it. Stop."

She blinks at me, and the spell she's brewing dies down. "He's a wolf, Briar. A wolf. Get out of the way. I'm sure this spell will kill him."

I eye my friend with more than a little surprise. "You didn't use to be this bloodthirsty."

She shoves her bangs out of her face. "That was before this town turned against the only decent person in it."