

Font Size: AA+A++

---

“There’s nothing to tell.”

“Your friend's scars tell me that there is,” I say.

She whips her head toward me. “I’ve told you that I don’t know who you mean. I never had magic lessons with someone called Mara.”

“But these magic lessons could leave burns?”

“I don’t know why you’re so fixated on this. What does it matter now? The Calla sisters are dead? Aunt Mel is dead. We’re going to be dead.”

My patience snaps.

Maybe I’d be more patient at any other time, but not now. I can’t be with the memory of a phone call about a pack being wiped out in Texas because I wasn’t there still fresh in my mind.

I back her against a tree. “It’s important because I don’t like being played and I don’t like walking into situations without knowing who the players are. You are keeping things from me. Things I need to know.”

She glares up at me. “No, I’m not.”

“So the Calla sister's magic lessons didn’t leave you with burns?”

Silence.

“Briar!”

“So what if they did?”

“But you don’t have any scars now. Why did this Mara girl have scars, and why did your aunt?”

Her gaze slides away from me.

I snarl.

“Because of Sera, okay,” she snaps, dragging her gaze right back to me. “No one else in this town would have cared how many scars the Calla sisters left me with. Sera would meet me after my lessons with healing spells. That’s why.”

If the Calla sisters weren’t dead already, nothing would stop me from ripping their guts out right this fucking second.

“But no one did the same for Mara or your aunt?”

She drops her gaze to my chest. “Aunt Mel is one of the weakest witches in town. I don’t know how, but my dad was one of the strongest when it’s always the women who have the stronger gifts. The green witches treated her like she was a servant to hand out cakes and tea at the meetings. The elementals treated her like she was a joke.”

“So that’s why no one healed her after the explosion?”

She shakes her head. “Everyone acted like she was an outsider, even though she grew up right alongside them. No one ever helped. If—”

“If what?” I probe.

After a long moment, she continues. “If someone hadn’t blown up the tearoom, it wouldn’t have stayed open much longer, anyway.”

“Why not?”

She raises her head and the anger burning in her eyes surprises me because it’s not what I’m used to seeing from Briar. “The business was failing. Aunt Mel went to Layla Markham for a loan so we could get through the quiet winter season.”

“And I’m guessing she said no.”

“She said that if Aunt Mel didn’t know how to run a business, then maybe it was time someone else did. That tearoom has been in our family for generations. It was hers, and Layla either wanted it, or she was just plain spiteful enough to take it from her because she could.”

“What else has this Layla Markham done? Because from what you’re telling me, it sounds like she could be capable of a lot.”

Her eyes search mine, the anger burning out. “You mean like killing your pack?”

