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“Because wolves don’t think before they act. They’re reckless and stupid,” I whisper.

Furious snarls and growls erupt. Each one makes me flinch as I form tight fists with both hands.

The coppery tang of blood drifts inside the cave. Enough that at least one wolf must be dead already.

When the cave gives a violent shudder, I lose my balance and stumble, nearly falling.

From the distance, something crashes. I turn my head to the back of the cave. Another crash rocks the cave, and I sway. Then another. And another. It sounds like a giant is playing dominoes with large rocks.

I start backing toward the entrance because staying in here just became a death sentence.

A small rock conks the top of my head. Cursing as I rub at the sore spot with one hand, I back up even faster.

And as the falling rocks shake the cave, the wolf growls outside continue.

If I go out, I’m dead. If I stay in here, I’m just as dead.

I trip and thud to the ground, still rubbing at the top of my head. Which is when I see it. The rocks just over my head shaking. I scurry back, and the rocks rain down, just missing me.

Okay, so it looks like I’m going out there, then.

After scrambling to my feet, I sprint for the cave entrance as small rocks pummel me, while in the distance, an echoing roar warns of something even worse to come.

I burst out into the daylight, trip over a dead wolf, and crack my chin on the ground so hard that I bite my tongue.

Rolling onto my back, I freeze when my gaze connects with a familiar black-gray wolf with silver eyes. “Oh, come on,” I mutter. “Why is it always you?”

The wolf lunges. Screaming, I cower with my hands over my face.

A wolf snarls. It’s a sound so full of rage that I jerk my head up, and there, parked right in front of me, facing down the black-gray, is a large tan wolf. Keane.

He saved me. Again.

“A wolf protecting a witch. Unusual.” The female voice is so cold with fury that I couldn’t stop my shudder even if I wanted to.

My gaze goes to the tall, slim blonde woman stepping free from the forest.

Diana Calla.

She’s beautiful, just as her daughters are. Or were. It’s what the name means. Calla is Greek for beauty. It was one of the first things she told me in my magic lessons. Not because it was important or in any way relevant to my lessons, she just wanted me to know it.

Dressed in a pink and peach floral ankle-length dress, her tight golden curls framing a heavily made-up face, she shouldn’t intimidate anyone, but she does. I’ve felt the lash of her power, and I know what she’s capable of.

A black wolf spins around, snarling at her.

Diana glances at him and flutters her pink manicured fingers his way. The wolf explodes in a burst of flames.

I choke as the acrid scent of burning fur and flesh fills the clearing. Three other wolves, who were moments ago tearing into Keane, back up.

Out of the corner of my eye, Keane’s muscles tense, and I know he’s going to lunge at Diana. He won’t survive it, no matter how fast he thinks he is. Against another witch, maybe, but not an elemental coven leader like Diana Calla.

“I didn’t kill them, Diana,” I say as I get to my feet, hoping to draw her attention away from Keane.

Diana's expression doesn't change. "Do you take me for a fool?"

Keane's muscles bunch. Diana snaps her gaze his way. A snarl erupts from my throat.

She turns back to me and blinks. "What—"