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I manage a step before a familiar hand grips my arm and forces me to stop. Keane. I glance into his face, ready to snap at him, but his full attention is on Abigail as a deep frown creases his brow. “You didn’t kill my pack, did you?”

She shakes her head, sympathy filling her eyes. “I did not, wolf. That was an act of cruelty I never would have believed anyone in Madden Grove was capable of.”

“But you know who did,” he says, his expression unreadable.

“Someone neither of you are ready to take on. Not yet. Watch over her, wolf. I didn’t do a good job of it, but something tells me you might do better than I did.”

My frown deepens. “Why would he need to do that? And why don’t we have time?”

“Because you were followed.”

“By who?” I force my breathing to slow as panic rises in my belly.

“By someone who knew I would only reveal myself to you, Briar. And someone who has been searching for me for a long time now.”

“And who is that?” I whisper. “Diana? Layla? Who?”

Her lips part.

A force unlike anything I’ve ever felt punches me down to the ground. I open my mouth to scream, but before I can, darkness rips into me and drags me into a black void.

22

KEANE

Just as I’ve settled Briar’s unconscious body on the floor of a cave I wandered five miles to find, a snarl warns me of what’s waiting for me outside.

I straighten, shaking off my pounding head from far too many head-on collisions with trees in one day, not to mention a cabin crashing down on top of me, and stalk out of the cave.

If I had time to burn, I'd spend it thinking more about what Abigail meant when she said Briar wasn't a witch, how the hell I'm going to pull my family's souls from her, and what the hell happened to Abigail, since her body was nowhere to be found in the wreckage of her ruined house.

But all of that comes later. If I survive this.

I stop at the mouth of the cave, and a black wolf, standing a few feet from the trees, steps into the small clearing just outside. Its fur ripples under a sudden wind and a man with black hair dusted with white rises from his crouch.

"Unless I was mistaken, your alpha gave me a free pass," I say.

"The alpha doesn't always know what's in the best interests of the pack," Jonas responds.

I raise my eyebrow. "Is that so? You ever tell him that?"

Jonas shrugs, the lean muscles in his arms rippling beneath the skin. "No need. The alpha doesn't need to know everything. That's the beta's job."

My eyebrow rises even higher. "That so?"

Jonas nods. "It is. Now, I told you what would happen if you didn't leave at the end of an hour."

"You did," I admit. "Looks like Madden Grove is going to be needing a new beta."

His smile is dark as he growls deep in his throat. "I wouldn't be so sure about that."

A moment later, nine wolves emerge from the forest, their eyes fixed on me with predatory anticipation.

"Hmm, I was wondering when you would stop hiding." I'm reaching for my wolf when a small growl makes me jerk my head around.

Behind me, Briar scratches at the back of her head, her eyes wide with confusion as blood trickles from a small cut on her forehead, a faint wolf scent clinging to her. "Keane?"

“You growled,” I say.